Korea Between Empires, 1895–1919

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Introduction: A Monumental Story

In October 1905, a Korean newspaper announced an archaelogical discovery. A magnificent stele had been found. A hulking 6.5 meters of stone, it recorded the deeds of a famous king from the Koguryŏ dynasty, Kwanggaet'o (375–415). Originally erected by his son to commemorate the king's accomplishments, the stele had been lost over the centuries to the shifting soils of southern Manchuria, buried without any trace or memory of its existence. As readers of the announcement learned, despite Kwanggaet'o's reknown for victorious battles against China and the expansion of his realm to the farthest reaches of Manchuria, few specifics about his deeds had been recorded in traditional histories. Now, as the newspaper gleefully reported, this would change, for the stele was engraved with a detailed inscription, stretching around the four sides of the stele and numbering more than 1,750 characters.[1]

Nevertheless the report registered a certain degree of despondency. The stele had actually been discovered more than twenty years before the announcement to Korean readers in 1905. In 1882, hearing that a buried monument had become partially exposed, a Chinese official hired laborers to unearth what was to turn out to be the Kwanggaet'o stele.[2] Two years later a Japanese military officer traveling in China made a rubbing of the stele. This copy was now on display in Tokyo at the Ueno Park Museum, the editorial pointed out, unbeknownst to any Koreans.[3] Only when a Korean student in Tokyo obtained a copy of the rubbing and sent it to the offices of

the newspaper did the editors learn of the monument. To share the inscription with others, they reprinted the full text in the next six issues, allocating it to the prominent space usually reserved for editorials. By reading the stele's text, they wrote, other committed patriots would now be able to "know the level of civilization and degree of national strength" in the days of Kwanggaet'o.

To "know" these things, however, was not so straightforward, especially when the stele's inscription was written in an archaic style incomprehensible to all but the most highly trained classicists. Even the reprinted text in the newspaper included footnotes to explain key terms and obscure phrasings, marking the first Korean attempt in what was to be a long and still continuing struggle over the interpretation of this impressive hunk of stone.[4] Other pundits quickly emerged, each emphasizing the significance of the stele as a historical source that would provide direct access to a forgotten part of the national past. "Only one or two records out of thousands" concerning Kwanggaet'o were passed down, complained one.[5] Another commentator described the monument as "truly the most powerful historical material in ten thousand Korean generations."[6] It could serve, according to still another, to rectify "the shortcomings of thousands of years of historical records."[7] That the monument could be seen as revealing a glorious past was especially welcome in an era when heroes were sought.[8] It was Kwanggaet'o's military success and, more specifically, the resulting territorial aggrandizement that appealed to these early interpreters. To one writer, the very size of the stone was just one more reason to be in awe of the stele itself, as well as the man for whom it was erected. It had withstood the fires of war, and foreigners, despite their "love" for ancient relics, had been unable to move it.[9]

Yet because the stele had been buried for one thousand years, complained one writer, it had not undergone the "rubbing and handling of scholars."[10] This "rubbing and handling" — essential to what the newspaper's editors had identified as the need "to know the level of civilization and degrees of national strength" — was an early step in transforming a monument originally hewn from stone, engraved, and erected as an act of filial piety into a key element of a newly emerging national story. The meanings that were to be instilled in the Kwanggaet'o stele reflected many of the currents in nationalist thought during this era. Its metamorphosis — from discovery to publicity to the creation of its national significance — was part of a process central to all nationalist movements and the focus of this study: the production of knowledge about the nation. Broadly defined, the production of national

knowledge involved the many, often competing and contradictory, ways that Koreans defined and represented their national community to one another. More narrowly, it was in debates and discussions about specific issues, events, and objects — be it the Kwanggaet'o stele, ruminations over the concept of citizenship, debates about personal hygiene, questions of local governance, or the appropriate dress for officials — that writers metaphorically or literally, unconsciously or not, articulated various ways of thinking about the nation. Pursuing these questions — How did they see themselves as a single unit? How did they articulate their vision of the nation's particular character? — is a line of inquiry whose main concern is not testing the accuracy of defining statements. Rather than measure such claims empirically — Did a peasant in Chŏlla Province *really* live in the same style of house, eat the same type of food, and wear the same cut of clothes as pearl divers on Cheju Island, ginseng merchants in Kaesŏng, or a student of Confucianism in Andong? — this study asks how representations, narratives, and rhetorical strategies shaped the parameters and content of nationalist thought. It is this realm of self-knowledge, mainly as expressed in the most powerful public medium of the time, newspapers and journals, as well as some textbooks and monographs, published in the years between the conclusion of the Sino-Japanese War in 1895 and the early years of the colonial period that constitutes the focus of this study.

In these years, as the power of the Qing Empire in China ebbed and the reach of Japanese imperialism extended to the peninsula — an era when Korea was situated both temporally and physically between two empires — a disparate group of intellectuals, reformers, and publicists made the nation the premier subject of intellectual exchange for the first time in the peninsula's history. In their newspapers, journals, and textbooks, they pursued the possibilities offered by such specific objects as the Kwanggaet'o stele, their interpretations both shaped by and further developing a veritable outburst of thinking and writing about the nation. Often grouped together by historians as a single movement — what in Korean is referred to as the Aeguk kyemong undong (the Patriotic Enlightenment Movement) — these individuals were observers of and participants in a loosely aligned nationalist movement designed after the termination of the Sino-Japanese War in 1895 to protect their newly won independence and, then, once this sovereignty was forfeited to Japan in 1905, to recover their lost national rights. One of the major contentions of this book is that the knowledge produced by these individuals and groups established the basis of modern Korean nationalist

discourse. Armed with their presses and dominating the school movement, these nationalist writers produced many of the key texts and generated some of the most powerful social memories of the nation at an opportune time *before* the annexation of the peninsula into the Japanese empire — a situation quite different from the settings of most other colonized nations. Thereafter, the bounds of these debates in Korea were severely constricted by the colonial authorities, who were keen to subsume discussions of the nation into their goal of making Koreans loyal imperial subjects.[11] Whether the national knowledge these writers produced helped resist Japanese goals or whether it ultimately became complicit with Japanese colonial ideology was a dilemma they all had to face.

What interests me in this study is less the well-documented political struggle for nationhood than the cultural strategies of these groups in identifying just what denoted their particular nation as *Korean* during an era when the regional environment changed radically and they began committing themselves to the capitalist modernity that underpinned the global system. My approach distances itself somewhat from histories of nationalist movements which, because of their focus on the political fight for independence, have tended to draw stark divisions between external imperialist powers and indigenous forces of liberation, with the clash between the two offering the main narrative for national history and an important criterion for definitions of modernity.[12] Such histories have had the felicitous consequence of highlighting resistance against the abuses of power, yet in so doing they have tended to obscure an equally important story, the interplay between those internal and external forces that themselves constituted the nation. In recent years, much postcolonial research has sought to draw out this dynamic.[13] Eschewing a mode of analysis that sees nationalism as solely reactive to the impingements of foreign imperialism, these studies have traced the various ways by which both the colonized and the colonizer developed within these interactions. Most significantly, this approach problematizes the assumption that the nation was created independently of any cultural exchange with international forces or that self-understanding by various groups somehow arose from a deep well of knowledge that had lain untapped for generations. Strangely, we are often quick to acknowledge the socioeconomic impact of global participation, yet when it comes to questions of national identity, we hesitate to regard self-knowledge as anything other than the product of an autonomous imagination. I argue that the production of knowledge about modern Korea was a process deeply entwined with the international environment of that particular historical moment, that it was as much a part of the process of writers coming to terms with their new global position as it was one of rethinking their own nation, and that nationalism was the first consciously globalizing discourse. In the fifteen years between 1895 and annexation, nationalizing and globalizing forces intermingled, often to the extent that it is difficult to disentangle one from the other or to distinguish clearly the internal from the external. The two were neither as exclusive nor as oppositional as many pundits of globalization today assert.

This is not to deny the nationalist politics and goals of the era but, rather, to show that the urge to identify, express, and disseminate what many writers called the "character" of the nation was stimulated by the peninsula's integration into the global order at the end of the nineteenth century. As a number of recent studies by Arjun Appadurai, Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, and Prasenjit Duara have shown, the condition of globalization not only has influenced the political ideology of nations, ensuring that they define themselves as sovereign, but also has informed and structured the ways in which culture has been used, promoted, and forged in the name of the nation.[14] One of the ironies of a world order populated by nations is that claims to particularity are themselves universalized. The very act of possessing uniqueness is universalized: every nation is to have a unique character as part of its claim to nationhood.[15] It was this "national order of things," as Liisa Maalki has put it, that conditioned the desire of Korean writers at the turn of the century to think of the nation as a part of — though, to be sure, a singular part of — a larger ecumene, producing the types of knowledge necessary to identify what made this particular nation Korean in a world of many nations.[16] As is often postulated in studies of Korean nationalism, the outburst of writing about the Korean nation during these years certainly reflected a resistance to external political pressures, in particular to Japan after 1905. But this outburst also marked the greater participation of Korean elites in the global ideologies of capitalist modernity, ideologies that in themselves stimulated this rethinking of the nation and, as Harry Harootunian has observed, were the very signs of capitalist modernity rather than resistance to it.[17] The Kwanggaet'o stele was only one of a plethora of items through which this distinctive character was articulated.[18]

It is significant that the announcement of the stele and the claims about its nature were first made in the pages of that most modern of institutions, the newspaper. Many studies of nationalism have explored the relationship between this medium and the nation. Most famously, Benedict Anderson

has argued that the nation's very origins can be traced to the rise of print capitalism and the appearance of mass vernacular newspapers.[19] There has been much debate about the applicability of Anderson's schema to East Asia,[20] but what interests me in this study is not as much locating a certain moment in the past when the Korean nation can be said to have originated as understanding the ways in which newspapers at the end of the nineteenth century tried to express particular visions and definitions of the nation. The content of nationalist ideology is not of interest to Anderson, yet I contend that it is precisely the formation of particular ways of understanding and ordering the nation that determines the direction of nationalist movements, the activities of its members, and the participation of the nation-state in the broader global arena. In this sense, newspapers must be seen not just as circulating commodities that can alter consciousness but also as producers and disseminators of specific modes of knowledge that enable and encourage certain types of activities. In noting how Anderson and other students of nationalism downplay the content of nationalist thought, Partha Chatterjee has written, "It is the content of nationalist ideology, its claims about what is possible and what is legitimate, which gives specific shape to its politics. The latter cannot be understood without examining the former."[21] At a time when Korea stood between two empires, newspapers gave voice to a variety of national visions that shaped, directed, and reflected that period's growing nationalist movement.

As a medium for producing national knowledge, newspapers were unrivaled. Segmented into discrete stories in each edition; divided into separate issues unfolding over days and years; and featuring pieces as diverse as advertisements, letters to the editor, poetry, editorials, and the like, newspapers offered a powerful medium for bringing together in a single space the disparate topics and objects that writers explored, hailed, and used for making claims for the nation. The segmented nature of the newspaper at once enabled diverse issues to be investigated, issues that, though seemingly unrelated, were connected explicitly or implicitly by the efforts of editors to elucidate their significance in terms of the nation. Constitutions *could* be related to sewers, and railways *did* have a connection to how one blew one's nose. Such topics belonged on the same pages of the same newspapers, were written about with the same conceptual vocabulary, and as readers were told, all bore varying degrees of relation to the health and wealth of the nation. The classification of the myriad facets of social, economic, political, and cultural life at the turn of the nineteenth century into national categories

reflects the power of nationalism to offer an interpretative framework for everyday lives, as well as the ability of writers, in turn, to give voice to the nation through the quotidian.

This inclusivity, in which national significance could be instilled into all matters, did not translate into a uniformity, however. Despite all the editorial enjoinments to "solidarity" and "harmony," the segmented nature of newspapers enabled divergent visions of the nation to be expressed, often on the very same page of a paper. The cacophony of a daily newspaper — with its reports on happenings at court, complaints from irate readers, advertisements peddling fashionable hats, and editorials wishing more people would read the paper — captured the many voices claiming to speak on behalf of the nation and the diverse ways in which the nation could be invoked by these writers. It was the capacity to organize a wide range of issues, objects, and dissenting opinions and to relate them all to the nation that made the newspaper the organ par excellence for producing a wide and disparate body of national knowledge.

What is striking about the media of the era is the rather paradoxical juxtaposition of the sheer volume of national knowledge offered to readers at the same time as editors bemoaned the lack of information about the nation. This frustration may have been a necessary motivation for anyone wanting to write about the nation for an audience, but it also points to the continual urge to locate the nation in the constantly shifting political context of the period. The fifteen years between 1895 and 1910 were variously described as a time of change, an era of reform, a period of transition, and, most of all, a time of crisis. Korean newspapers detailed tremendous changes at a number of levels, whether on a world level as the peninsula was further integrated into the global system, on a regional level as Korea was annexed into the Japanese empire, or on national and local levels as shifts in the political balance of power on the peninsula buffeted the reform agenda of the various streams of the nationalist movement. The national knowledge produced in these years in many ways reflected a concatenation of these shifting local, national, regional, and global forces. Depending on the period and the particular issue at hand, the locus of the nation could be identified as residing in very different realms, creating various hierarchies of visions that might be simultaneously expressed in the same newspaper.

Most obviously, the nation was located in temporal and spatial terms. But as always, this worked at several levels. Seen as part of a new global ecumene, the nation needed to be brought into narratives of world history that plotted

the trajectory of all nations along the same lines, ultimately leading to the modern. As part of a region identified as the East (Tongyang), the nation was linked with its two neighbors, Japan and China, with their shared attributes presented as a product of a common past that could be folded into narratives of world history yet still show the unique historical accomplishments and future potential of the region. At the level of the nation, the newspapers offered histories that established the country's autonomous subjectivity, proof, it was argued, of Korea's rightful claim to sovereignty in a world populated by nations. In the years immediately after the Sino-Japanese War, these various spatiotemporal approaches to the Korean nation appeared seamlessly interwoven, serving the purpose of disengaging Korea from the types of knowledge that had long structured understanding of the peninsula within an East Asian regional order centering on China.

The tensions among these different levels were revealed as Japan colonized the peninsula. Endorsing, as did their Korean rivals, capitalist modernity but deploying it for opposite ends, Japanese colonialists wielded their accounts of regional and world history to undermine Korean claims to autonomy and to usurp Korean sovereignty. For Korean nationalists, this presented a number of problems. The forms of national knowledge that had served their purpose of disengaging from an earlier regional order now threatened to segue into Japanese colonial ideology. They had indeed located the nation away from China, but the very self-critiques that had enabled this reorientation were now being co-opted by imperial Japan, rendering the knowledge produced in these newspapers less amenable to nationalist usage, if not complicit with colonialism. This conundrum again led some writers to search for a new location for the nation, outside the reach of colonial authorities, where again the nation's autonomy could be resurrected and different strategies of resistance could be formulated. This search moved in various directions — some pointing to the spiritual character of the nation, others seeking refuge in ethnic definitions of the nation, and still others finding a locus for the nation outside its borders.

In concentrating on the production of national knowledge at the expense of a history of nationalism as a political movement, this study nevertheless returns to the question of the political import of national knowledge. Indeed, as I point out, the decisions made and visions articulated for the nation by these writers informed and guided the actions and strategies of the nationalist movement, ultimately influencing the fate of the nation. Questions of representation, narrative, and definition in themselves had political consequences for individual writers, newspapers, and the nation as a whole. While

the process of knowledge production was not in itself autonomous, the resulting knowledge was relevant to the political autonomy of the peninsula. It is in this sense that this book is a study of politics, except that the location of political struggle is not in anticolonial demonstrations, underground societies, or fund-raising drives but in the aesthetics of representation, the use of language, and the writing of history. Only by understanding the genealogies of these forms of national knowledge can the function of nationalist thought on a peninsula caught between two empires be understood. How this terrain was navigated by the editorial staffs of different newspapers and journals is the main topic of this book.

Civilization and the East

Korean editorial writers working at the beginning of the twentieth century would not have been surprised by recent scholarly trends emphasizing that self-knowledge was relational, part of a process in which cross-cultural representations function to distinguish the national self and to articulate difference or uniqueness.[22] On more than one occasion, writers acknowledged that the development of a sense of Koreanness had been enabled by comparative exchanges with the many peoples of the world — or as one writer observed, "Knowing others, one knows oneself [*chip'ijia*]."[23] I hasten to add, however, that in the case of Korea, this comparative endeavor was not marked solely by a duality between the East and West, a binary that has been the target of much criticism while still underlying many critiques.[24] To be sure, the West loomed large over the intellectual landscape of Korean writers at the beginning of the twentieth century. As discussed in chapter 1, nationalist intellectuals defined themselves as the bearers of "civilization and enlightenment," accepting both Western definitions and claims to the universality of these notions. It was in these notions of civilization, with their vision of historical progress, that Korean writers framed the nation as a member of a larger global ecumene. The nation was the product of these progressive forces of history, and it was through the nation, by means of commitment and willingness to reform, that the populace was to be civilized. In this way, civilization was positioned as an authority with the full backing of world history that could be invoked when calling for the transformation of the nation. The nation and civilization were seen as intertwined, inseparable parts of the same reform enterprise, in which the seemingly benign nature of civilized knowledge was to assist in preserving the nation.

Located as they were between two empires, one in decline and the other ascendant, Korean nationalists cast their gaze not just at the faraway West but at their two neighbors as well.[25] As I show in the following pages, shifting understandings of China and Japan were integral to Korean self-knowledge, largely overshadowing the East-West dynamic and giving Koreans several others against which to compare their nation's particularity. The tumultuous regional events in these years — the Sino-Japanese War, the Boxer Uprising, the Russo-Japanese War, and, finally, the 1910 annexation of the peninsula into the Japanese empire — resulted in historic changes in regional power formations that had important consequences for the ways that Koreans viewed not only their two East Asian neighbors but also, because of the deep linkages, the ways that they understood their own nation. In the years immediately after the Sino-Japanese War, the widely discussed situation of China became one of the primary ways of articulating notions of civilization and their relationship to newly emerging visions of Korea. One commentator on the Kwanggaet'o stele hinted at these changes when he detailed Kwanggaet'o's victories over the northern kingdom of Yan with its capital in Beijing, describing how Kwanggaet'o was "always able to take revenge against enemy countries, erasing the shame of previous kings and raising high the respect of the country within all the seas."[26] That historical victories in China were being remembered more than a millennium and a half after their occurrence was less a belated celebration than an indication of a deliberate cultural renewal that sought to recast the peninsula's historical relationship with its continental neighbor. Rethinking Korea meant reevaluating China.

In 1895, as part of the treaty that ended the Sino-Japanese War, the Qing Empire recognized Korea's independence, ending all the ritual ceremonies that symbolized Korean subordinance to the "Middle Kingdom." Although in the view of foreign powers, this treaty resolved the ambiguity of the peninsula's position vis-à-vis China, there still remained the far more complex cultural legacy of practices and knowledge shared with China resulting from centuries of exchange. The function of China as the "Middle Kingdom" in a transnational Confucian cultural realm had already begun to disintegrate by the time commentators on the Kwanggaet'o stele could hail his historical military victories as evidence that "our nation was originally strong and brave and did not have a weak and inferior character."[27] As I argue in chapter 2, this shift in China's function was an integral part of a process of reconfiguring the nation according to the new knowledge and notions of civilization that had been introduced and enthusiastically adopted by Korean nationalist writers. The "Middle Kingdom" was no longer seen as occupying the center but was decidedly on the periphery, both globally and regionally. And as peripheral, China was anything but civilized. This reorientation called into question the full range of practices, texts, and customs that for centuries had been shared by Koreans as part of their participation in the transnational Confucian realm. Formerly accepted as universal, these were increasingly deemed Chinese and thus alien to Korea. Somewhat paradoxically, during an age when China's power, both political and cultural, was ebbing, Korean writers devoted much energy to discussing China.

A movement for cultural retrieval ensued as nationalist intellectuals unearthed purely indigenous practices and beliefs from the accretions of Chinese culture — what I call the decentering of the "Middle Kingdom." As much of the literature on cultural retrieval has shown, efforts to regain a purely authentic national culture generally result in the development of hybrid cultures.[28] But in turn-of-the-century Korea, the culture targeted for expurgation was not that of the immediate colonizing power, as is so often the case with colonies of the West, but that of its neighbor, China. Hybridization did not originate with the arrival of imperialism but was conceived as having been under way for centuries in East Asia. For Korean nationalists, the task of recovery was one of disentangling this hybrid into what they viewed as its component national parts, disavowing one and cherishing the other. If the Treaty of Shimonoseki marked a formal end to tributary ties, these efforts sought to expunge Chinese culture, viewing its seepage into Korea as a major cause for national weakness and inimical to their desires for an independent nation. While such cases as the celebration of Kwanggaet'o's victories over a Chinese kingdom reflected these desires, implementing the changes was not always so straightforward. Practices and symbols that for centuries had been shared as universal were not so easily segregated into two distinct national categories — and not everyone, due to divergent political or ideological goals, agreed.

These legacies could also be used to advantage. One newspaper, the *Hwangsŏng sinmun* (*Capital Gazette*), despite its many calls for decentering the "Middle Kingdom," built on this common history to write about the East, or *Tongyang*, as a counter to the West. For a newspaper committed to a reform Confucianism, the East offered a means of not only expressing a vision of the region as a cultural entity united by its shared Confucian past but also showing how this past could be integrated into the new understanding of "civilization and enlightenment." As Stefan Tanaka has shown for

certain intellectuals in Japan, the editors of the *Hwangsŏng sinmun* similarly used notions of the East to establish an equivalence with the West that laid claim to an equally worthy, if not superior, past, as defined by the criteria of civilization — a move that, in turn, enabled them to affirm the claims of civilization to universality.[29] Enlightenment could be presented as being as much Eastern as it was Western. Accordingly, reform of the nation was not so much "Westernization" as abiding by this single principle of human history — the "Way," in the parlance of the editors — that had been mastered in the distant Eastern past and could once again make the nation strong. As a result, the histories of East Asia and Korea were recast in the framework of enlightenment history, creating a style of Orientalist history in which the accomplishments of the sages and Korean reform thinkers came to be valued only insofar as they contributed to the ineluctable march of progress in global history.

Although in the years immediately after the Sino-Japanese War, the commonality of region was defined in the eyes of the editors of the *Hwangsŏng sinmun* as a legacy of an earlier shared Confucianism, this definition began to change as Japan became ascendant. Reflecting these geopolitical shifts, regional identity increasingly began to place Japan at the center of the East. As I trace in chapter 2, by the early years of the twentieth century, the cultural definitions of the East blossomed into a style of racial Pan-Asianism as the editors began to participate in an espousal of social Darwinian doctrine across East Asia. The yellow peoples (*hwangsaek injong*) against the white peoples (*paeksaek injong*) — this was the true historical struggle. As the *Hwangsŏng sinmun* argued, only by uniting the three nations of the East could the individual nations survive the onslaught of the white peoples. Their commitment to Pan-Asianism led the editors to welcome Japanese cooperation with Korean attempts at reform. The political naïveté of this position was revealed when Japan, as a direct result of its victories, was able to impose a protectorate on Korea in 1905, giving credence to oppositional views that the greatest threat to Korea came not from the white West but from a fellow yellow country. Although the *Hwangsŏng sinmun*'s editor in chief was thrown in jail and the paper was suspended for its attack on the Protectorate Treaty, the paper did not stop espousing its Pan-Asian doctrine. Instead, this Pan-Asianism developed as part of an editorial platform that staked out a middle ground in the Korean political spectrum, between the pro-Japanese collaborators and what the editors viewed as the anti-Japanese nationalists who unrealistically sought the immediate removal of Japan from

the peninsula. Working under Japanese censorship from this politically exposed middle position, the paper struggled to hold onto its earlier notions of the East as one way of offering a critique, however muted, of Japanese colonial policies for violating the ideals of regional solidarity and Japanese responsibilities of leadership. What had at first seemed to be a shared enterprise was now turned by the editors against Japan, as Pan-Asianism could be wielded against the very nation that deployed it as part of its colonial ideology.

Colonialism and History

The aggression of Japan that led to the sundering of Pan-Asian ideals was hardly the only function of that country in Korean nationalist thought in these years. As the exhibition of the rubbing of the Kwanggaet'o stele in downtown Tokyo shows, Japan had already emerged as a powerful producer of knowledge about Korea. That a rubbing made in distant Manchuria, brought back for study, and displayed in Tokyo was discovered by a Korean student in Japan enabled the sequence of events and interpretations that enshrined the stele as a potent nationalist symbol. One of my arguments is that Korean self-knowledge in this period cannot be separated from the Japanese production of knowledge about Korea. That is, the expression of national identity in its many forms was not just a product of a reaction against the Japanese takeover of the peninsula but was also deeply engaged — whether to struggle against, to absorb, or, as was more often the case, some combination of these two — with Japanese writings about Korean culture and history. With the most powerful publishing industry in East Asia and media in which Korea frequented the headline news, more was published about Korea in Japan than anywhere in the world, perhaps even on the peninsula itself during the first few years after the Sino-Japanese War. This knowledge, like any other set of ideas, could be exported to Korea, and after 1905, the colonial authorities did their utmost to disseminate particular forms of representations about Korea that served to extend and maintain their rule.

This process was not just a question of colonial imposition. As I contend in chapter 3, regardless of their antagonistic political goals, nationalism and colonialism with their mutual endorsement of capitalist modernity shared much in their historical understanding and approaches to national culture. Most Japanese knowledge of Korea was framed in the very same vocabulary

of civilization employed by Korean intellectuals in their own rethinking of the nation. During the ten years of nominal independence before the imposition of the Protectorate in 1905, the knowledge produced in Japan could be used to good effect by Korean writers, more often than not to borrow the authority of a Japanese expert to reinforce an argument made by the author. Such exchanges were not seen as complicit with Japanese interests but as complementing the shared and parallel commitment to "enlightenment and civilization," which in the case of Korea was seen as affirming sovereignty. But as soon became evident, this knowledge was not so benign.

As Japanese intrusions into peninsular affairs quickened, culminating in the 1905 Protectorate Treaty, the tension existing in the nationalist project became apparent. The seamless interweaving of nation and civilization, as had been regularly touted for ten years by the nationalist press, began to unravel. Was the nation paramount? Or did the global task of civilization take precedence? "Civilization and enlightenment" were now being wielded by the very country to which these Koreans had granted a special authority in this realm; only now it served to legitimize the colonization of their own nation. What they had appealed to as a higher authority to strengthen the nation was now cited by Japanese colonial authorities as a higher authority to extinguish the nation. Satirize as they did Japanese colonial discourse and decry the contradictions between rhetoric and action, these writers were caught in the double bind of "civilization and enlightenment." The dilemma they faced, I suggest in chapter 3, was how to extricate themselves from these ideologies that were undermining their goals for independence but on which they rested their own leadership of the nationalist movement and in which they had framed their very definition of the nation.

This conundrum extended to questions of cultural representation as well. Both nationalism and colonialism shared an impulse to appraise cultural practices (if not national culture as a whole) in terms of their compatibility with the ideals of the civilized nation and capitalist modernity. This shared dynamic, together with the interchanges between Korean and Japanese writers, led to a remarkably high degree of commonality in the ways that Korean culture was represented by nationalist and colonial writers, despite their opposing political goals. The Chosŏn-dynasty (1392–1910) elite, known as *yangban*, served as one of the most convenient metaphorical devices to critique traditional Korean culture in both nationalist and colonial writing, with their focus on factionalism, laziness, corruption, and the like displaying thematic similarities. Where they differed, of course, was the goal for which

these images were invoked: in one case it was to urge the population to reform away from particular types of behavior, and in the other it was used to show that such practices made internal reform unthinkable. The danger for nationalists was that their own critique of past cultural practices, due to its representational overlap with colonial critiques, could be harnessed to the very colonial enterprise they were now resisting. This was the ultimate power of Japanese colonialism — the co-option of areas of nationalist thought developed autonomously before the 1905 Protectorate so that they not only could no longer be resorted to in defense of the nation but also segued into colonial ideologies. To be sure, such co-option was resisted. Korean nationalists even tried to convert colonial concepts to their own purpose. But with annexation and the closure of their presses in 1910, there was little time for these strategies to be fully developed.

Given this situation, both colonial authorities and nationalists paid great attention to how Korea and its culture were represented. Neither Japanese colonial authorities nor Korean nationalists needed to await the rise of postcolonial theory to understand that cultural representations were related to power, with consequences for the peninsula's political disposition. The contest between nationalists and colonialists extended into the realm of representation and the definition of terms. For nationalists, one strategy for escaping the dilemmas presented by the double nature of civilization was to create a separate realm in which definitions of the nation were not so deeply embedded in enlightenment-style notions of progress. Especially after Japan gained control of those state institutions that were central to the earlier visions of self-strengthening, resistance through reform appeared futile to many, since it meant working directly or indirectly with the colonial authorities. Consequently, as I show in chapter 4, some writers began moving away from state-centered definitions of the nation to contemplate an alternative location, one variously called the national soul (*kukhon*) or the national essence (*kuksu*). Like so much of the new conceptual vocabulary of the nation, this was a language shared by nationalists throughout East Asia. But in Korea, its political importance and usage were tied up with the politics of the Protectorate, in particular the search for a national locus outside the purview of the colonial state. This spiritually defined nation offered a form of resistance rooted not in civilizing reform but in the cultivation of language, religion, and especially history. Partha Chatterjee has shown how Indian nationalists developed similar notions of a spiritual realm under British rule, but unlike the situation in India, in Korea there was great concern

that even this national soul could be violated by colonial power.[30] The spirit of the nation, as they regularly pointed out, might be located in history, but as became clear after 1905, it still was not clear who would control interpretations of that past.

Indeed, from the middle of the Meiji period (1868–1912), Japanese scholars had exhibited much interest in early Korean-Japanese relations. Myths from the first recorded Japanese histories offered intriguing accounts of Japanese relations with its closest neighbors on the peninsula. As part of their first modern national histories, scholars used these early relations to extol the accomplishments of the Japanese imperial house. These histories were quickly taken up by the Japanese media and used by colonial authorities, as certain aspects of these myths — particularly the claim that Empress Jingū had conquered the peninsula and set up an administration over its southern portion — were woven into colonial ideology. These novel Japanese theories appeared on the peninsula at precisely the time aspiring Korean historians were exploring the possibilities of writing their own national histories. Consequently, as I show in chapter 4, even before annexation, Japanese historical theories about Korea had begun to appear in Korean school textbooks and geographical studies. Other authors were more leery, treating these theories with skepticism. Nevertheless, all historians in this period engaged in some way with Japanese versions of the Korean past, whether this was to accept them outright, adapt them to their own purposes, or set them up as a foil to develop oppositional histories. It is in this broader context that the development of modern Korean historiography must be situated.

Because of the power of Japanese versions of the Korean past, it remained for Korean historians to develop a locus for the nation that could escape the conundrum presented by "civilization and enlightenment." It is in this sense that the work of Sin Ch'aeho, an editorial writer working for the *TaeHan maeil sinbo* (*Korea Daily News*), is so important. As I explain in chapter 5, Sin offered in 1908 a new interpretation of the past that capitalized on a number of the era's intellectual tendencies to offer some solutions to these problems. In keeping with the trend away from state-centered definitions of the nation, Sin adopted an ethnic definition of the nation, what was known as the *minjok*. He also highlighted an old foundation myth about Tan'gun (a mythic figure himself) to create a history that descended through time in a manner reminiscent of the patrilineal family records used in the Chosŏn dynasty. The result was a genealogy for the Korean people that, when combined with the type of martial historical figures promoted as national heroes,

offered a masculine conception of the nation. Adopting a social Darwinian vision that left little room for an enlightenment-style history, Sin made the bloodline of the ethnic nation his subject, with its survival amid constant threats of extinction serving as his main narrative dynamic. In placing the ethnic nation at the core of his history, Sin deliberately distanced himself from earlier Confucian narratives focusing on the court. By so doing, he created an autonomous subject for the nation that had no external referent or measure other than its own action, a move that made China irrelevant to the story of the Korean *minjok*, constituting the final step in decentering the "Middle Kingdom." His history also offered an objective definition of the nation, a nation that existed through historical time, regardless of whether the Korean people were aware of its existence. But in the special circumstances of a colonized nation — when state and territory, in the parlance of the time, had been "stolen" — the continued existence of the ethnic nation depended on mass awareness, and Sin's history promised to forge and sustain that collective memory. Sin's historiographical maneuveurs served many purposes at this time, but most important, they created an autonomy for a nation squeezed by two empires, simultaneously decentering Korea away from China in the past and offering a version of the nation that enabled a particular form of resistance to Japan in the present. These maneuveurs were quickly taken up by other historians, who proposed a wide range of alternatives within the parameters set out by Sin. The repercussions of Sin's history spilled over into many other issues, one of which was the question of national space.

The Boundaries of the Nation

Discovered on the northern side of the Sino-Korean border, the location of the Kwanggaet'o stele raised a number of questions about territorial limits. What were the spatial bounds of the nation in the past, and where should they be in the present? For a unit that was seen as a territorial entity, this was a question touching the fundamental definition of the nation. Nationalism tolerates no ambiguity in the disposition of lands; sovereignty over territory must be clearly delineated. But at the end of the nineteenth century, the exact location of the Sino-Korean border to the east of Mount Paektu in the upper reaches of the Tumen River was anything but certain. This was not a novel issue, but in the last quarter of the nineteenth century when

both Korea and China began to explore the new conceptual vocabulary of territorial sovereignty for ordering their own territorial realms, this remote section of border became hotly contested as each side sought a different location for the limits of their nation.

Much of the work on the modern nation emphasizes the disruptive effects of nationalism. This has often been presented as a "clash" between premodern and modern forms of collective organization. Or to use more recent terminology, it represents "epistemic violence," in which the indigenous and the Euro-American are equated with the premodern and modern, respectively, the latter riding roughshod over the former as capitalism extends from the West to the rest of the world. Whichever set of terms (together with their divergent assumptions) is used, one tendency in these studies has been to point to the paradoxical force of appeals to tradition at the time when the nation itself is being "invented," "constructed," or "imagined."[31] These approaches have opened new ways of analyzing the nation and shape much of the work in this book as well. Yet by describing the origins of the nation as a move from and to the essentialist categories of modern and tradition, respectively, these approaches have tended to neglect the interactions between nationalist and prenationalist discourses, thereby oversimplifying the genealogy of the modern nation.

Research on the spatial character of nations has often taken this general approach, stressing the modern nature of territoriality, in particular its linkage with Western forms of cartographic knowledge. This approach contrasts the modern with the premodern and Western with indigenous to offer a vision of the nation as an externally generated transition from a nonterritorial entity to a territorially delimited nation.[32] In chapter 6, I show how the transition toward defining the peninsula as a sovereign, delimited unit of space was more complicated that the mere replacement of indigenous geographic discourses with their Western counterparts. By the time the Western powers arrived, the centralized state bureaucracy of the Chosŏn dynasty had administered a relatively stable realm for well over four centuries. Out of administrative practices and geographical studies, both sponsored by the state and individually written, a sense of territory had already developed well before concepts of sovereignty arrived. Works on territory and history written since at least the seventeenth century, if not earlier, had created a sense of space that transcended any single dynasty. This was not a nationalist conception of the territory, in which notions of citizenship were extended to the entire population within the borders of the nation as a locus of political

sovereignty. Nor was there a movement that actively sought to produce and disseminate spatial knowledge. But that such a spatial understanding existed was crucial in the late nineteenth century, since it meant that early nationalist writers did not need to imagine from scratch the nation as a spatial entity. The Chosŏn dynasty was not a blank sheet waiting to have Western definitions of space written on it. Instead, the texts from and social memories of the late Chosŏn dynasty needed to be reconfigured, even retrofitted, in line with the new knowledge of the West while at the same time these understandings mediated the reception of Western discourses on space.

This long-standing sense of space was central to the Korean position on its border dispute with China at the end of the nineteenth century. The basic position of the Korean government in this territorial dispute followed arguments that had a long history in the late Chosŏn period. Although differences over the positioning of the border were contested in a new international vocabulary based on the notion of territorial sovereignty, these new concepts came to be interwoven with themes and issues dating back to the mid-Chosŏn dynasty. In many cases, Koreans used new notions of space to affirm and rearticulate received understanding about the border, and in turn, this rearticulation resulted in certain shifts in the way that space was claimed for the nation.

The dispute over the northern border ensured that the peninsula would emerge as the dominant spatial metaphor for the nation. Yet the location of the Kwanggaet'o stele on the other side of the border — outside the peninsula, so to speak — led many writers to ponder the relationship between the peninsula and the vast lands of Manchuria. As I show in chapter 7, this tendency developed into a romantic vision as writers cast their historical gaze back to an earlier age when the nation extended beyond the peninsula into the lands of Manchuria. During the Chosŏn dynasty, some Koreans had felt nostalgic about the north. But now with a new national subject, the *minjok*, linked to its mythical progenitor, Tan'gun, a novel way of claiming Manchuria as central to the nation arose. As most extensively explored in the work of Sin Ch'aeho, the rightful realm of the *minjok* was defined as the lands initially settled by Tan'gun and his early descendants, in other words, the peninsula *and* Manchuria. The vicissitudes of the *minjok*'s presence in Manchuria emerged as a measure for narrating national success and failure — a poignant assessment of the Korea of the day. Such a history, though most boldly envisioned by Sin, found its way into rival newspaper editorials, essays by other prominent writers, and textbooks produced by re-

ligious groups, leading to a widespread sense of the centrality of Manchuria in Korea's national history. In this vision that rested on historical interpretation and vacated the language of territorial sovereignty, the nation's spatial dimensions were defined as much by what had been lost as by what had been retained. For some, the solution to the nation's crisis rested beyond the peninsula in an irredentist hope that a history with Manchuria at its center would enable Manchuria to be reclaimed in the present. This was a history of loss, in which regaining the north was the only route to redemption.

Contemplation of Manchuria's role for the past and future of the peninsula was not the only way the locus of the nation could be shifted beyond the peninsula. It had, after all, been a Korean outside the country who had first stumbled across the rubbing of the Kwanggaet'o stele and reported its existence to those back home. This migration abroad, not only to Tokyo, but also to Hawai'i, Mexico, Russia, Manchuria, and the United States, became the subject of much editorial scrutiny in the domestic press. That Koreans were crossing their borders to distant lands at the very time that the nation was regarded as a population congregated in a discrete territorial space raised troubling questions about the dominant definitions of the nation. These individuals had left behind the national territory that supposedly defined them. Reports back from diasporic communities, especially San Francisco, forced domestic writers to conceptualize the relationship of these deterritorialized immigrants to the peninsula. What is clear from the domestic press of this era is that the diaspora was integral to general debates about the nature of the nation — a centrality that I believe must be reincorporated into our understanding of the nationalist movement and not relegated to an external history of "Koreans over there." I argue in chapter 7 that the dichotomy of inside/outside developed in these reports on the diaspora enabled new strategies for exploring questions of national character and, ultimately, enabled the dominant spatial logic of national discourse to be turned inside out. This logic — namely, that national territory and culture are isomorphic — was challenged by both domestic and overseas writers as the colonial presence of Japan deepened while the patriotic activities of Koreans in San Francisco increased. As diasporic newspapers crossing the Pacific Ocean disclosed to the chagrin of peninsula-based editors, the future of the nation might best lie with those beyond the peninsula who were uninhibited by colonial power. Koreans in San Francisco eagerly accepted this responsibility, claiming that they alone could preserve a nation whose physical boundaries had been tainted by Japan's presence. With the homeland stolen, the assumptions that allowed some domestic writers to scold Koreans abroad for not preserving their culture were reversed: deterritorialization now became a prerequisite for true nationalism, and in the eyes of some, it was better to live outside than inside the peninsula.

In these many ways, the Kwanggaet'o stele, like so many other objects, debates, and events, became a specific issue through which writers explored various ways of locating the nation in relation to shifting national, regional, and global environments. This exploration did not stop with annexation in 1910 but continued throughout much of the colonial period, though always constricted by the vacillating press restrictions of the colonial government. With liberation in 1945 and the reemergence of a powerful indigenous publishing industry, writing on the nation freed itself from some of the most obvious constraints of colonial rule, allowing an unabashed nationalism to be explored on the peninsula for the first time in almost four decades — although now constrained by the politics of the cold war. On the peninsula, this nationalism was manifested in the entrenchment of two rival regimes, who after their internecine war (1950–53) invested many resources in competing interpretations of the past in support of their claims to sole legitimacy. As I maintain in the epilogue, the official histories of both the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and the Republic of Korea (ROK) have treated the legacies of turn-of-the-century newspaper writers quite differently, the former dismissing them as ineffective in the face of Japanese colonialism and the latter embracing them as part of a nationalist movement that eventually resulted in the formation of the southern state. Regardless of these divergent appraisals, I believe that one of the legacies of these early newspaper writers was to solidify many of the parameters and conceptual frameworks that continued to shape nationalist discourse throughout the colonial period and into postliberation Korea.

The crisis that at the end of the nineteenth century shook the institutional and ideological foundations of the nearly five-hundred-year-old Chosŏn dynasty created the opportunity to rethink modes of collective life in the capitalist modernity of the global system, a system that, despite tremendous changes since the outset of the twentieth century, remains with us today and continues to structure our national lives. Issues first raised in early Korean newspapers still are part of contemporary debates about the Korean nation in areas as diverse as language, history writing, and spatial limits, demonstrating the power of the national knowledge produced by these writers and the ability of their conceptual frameworks to adapt to changes in the do-

mestic and international environments. The stir caused by the announcement of the Kwanggaet'o stele at the beginning of the twentieth century has certainly subsided. But just as the stele is featured in the official narratives of both the DPRK and ROK and models of the stele are prominently displayed in both Seoul and Pyongyang museums, the lines of inquiry first established in early Korean newspapers and journals continue to shape debates about the nation in both Koreas today.

1 The Universalizing Winds of Civilization

Who will breathe in the winds of this new civilization that are night and day crossing over to this side of the Pacific Ocean, accompanying the ships and telegraphs? Who will light a torch in the deep and long night?

— *Sŏbuk hakhoe wŏlbo*, February 1909

Nationalism thrives on crisis. And in the closing years of the nineteenth and the opening years of the twentieth century, perhaps the only area of agreement across the full spectrum of Korean society — from conservative Confucians residing in the countryside, to leading reform officials in the capital, to resident foreign observers — was that the peninsula was in quite a predicament. Editors did not shy away from colorful metaphors to portray the crisis. A single article could describe the nation as a "flimsy ship crossing a raging river," "an old house threatening to collapse," and "a sick body."[1] The people were referred to as "fish in a boiling cauldron," "sparrows on a burning column,"[2] and "crows in a basket,"[3] while the imperialist powers were likened to tigers and wolves surrounding the nation,[4] a group of thieves encircling a house,[5] and a typhoon advancing from all four directions.[6] It was as if Korea were being "shot on four sides by arrows."[7] Others avoided such dramatic language, suggesting only that the national situation was so dire that "it was unspeakable."[8]

In such a precarious situation, the people should be "preparing the house for a huge storm" — and a growing number tried to do just that.[9] These were nationalist writers and publicists who tried to escape the crisis by producing and disseminating particular types of knowledge about the nation in support of a reform agenda. In the newspapers, journals, and textbooks that they created, these writers for the first time made the nation the unrivaled subject of public discourse, linking all matters however seemingly trivial or however seemingly grand — from the style of haircuts to constitutions, from popular

rights to the use of umbrellas — to the nation's health and wealth in a global order. The diversity of information about the nation was largely united by an underlying commitment to the ideologies of capitalist modernity as captured in the period's most popular phrase, "civilization and enlightenment" (*munmyŏng kaehwa*). Touted as universal, *munmyŏng kaehwa* spurred a reform package that sought to strengthen and enrich the nation by disciplining the population into certain modes of behavior and bringing both individuals and the nation in line with international standards. In this way, *munmyŏng kaehwa* offered a new spatial and temporal unit that linked all three levels: the behavior of individuals shaped the fate of the nation that performed within the historical laws that, in turn, were seen as having produced the contemporary global ecumene. Nationalism in these years resorted to a form of globalization as a way of salvaging the nation, a project informed by the temporal and spatial vision of *munmyŏng kaehwa*.

With their segmented format and long runs, newspapers were ideally suited to investigate and disseminate the many new ways of articulating national visions in this changing ideological environment. In an era when no other media could rival the power of newspapers and journals, the writers who controlled them dominated public discourse about the nation and world, enabling them to offer visions of Korea that positioned themselves as enlightened leaders while shunting aside alternatives that might contest the assumptions of their nationalist reform project.

Internal Disorder, External Calamities

Events both on and surrounding the Korean peninsula in the last few years of the nineteenth century neatly fit the classical Confucian definition of crisis as captured in the phrase *naeu oehwan*, "internal disorder, external calamities." At this time, few writers committed to new notions of progress were keen to employ such a mode of analysis with its connotations of cyclical dynastic decline. Nevertheless, most contemporary analysts, as well as historians today, agreed with the basic premise of *naeu oehwan:* that the crisis of the waning years of the Chosŏn dynasty resulted from the confluence of internal and external trends. Externally, the conspicuous arrival of the West's new technologies, capital, and knowledge had helped spur a reconfiguration of state-society relations while internally, less conspicuous but equally significant long-term socioeconomic trends had undermined the state's ability

to rule. Parochial matters that in an earlier age had been the concern of only village heads and magistrates were now interlinked with globalizing processes, and what had been seen as local matters came to be interpreted anew in world historical terms. No other period in the previous few centuries had witnessed such profound shifts in the ideological makeup of Korean society.

The sense of crisis took a specific form in 1894 when a peasant uprising almost overthrew the 502-year-old dynasty. Led by Chŏn Pongjun, the peasants in a southwestern county rose up against their corrupt local magistrate, who, after coercing them into building a water reservoir, had the temerity to charge them for using that water. By the end of May, slightly more than one month after the outbreak of hostilities, the peasant armies captured the capital of Chŏlla Province. Historians have tended to contextualize the events of these days as long-term trends marking the decline of the Chosŏn dynastic order. The magistrate who initiated the uprising with his demands, Cho Pyŏnggap, has come to personify the corruption that made state institutions in the last century of the dynasty unable to adapt to a changing socioeconomic order, thereby exacerbating the pressures on the rural economy through their personal exactions from the peasantry. The ability of the uprising's leaders to mobilize peasants rapidly in areas far removed from the site of the original crisis are seen as a reaction to the widespread difficulties in the countryside resulting from long-term changes in the agricultural economy and intensifying commercialization.[10] These shifts brought with them various types of dislocation between status and economic power while arguably impoverishing large numbers of participants who had been unable to take advantage of the changes.[11]

Other historians have paid close attention to the affiliation of many of the peasant leaders with a new religion that since the 1860s had expanded throughout the country. Called Tonghak, or Eastern learning, this syncretic religion provided some of the organizational infrastructure for the peasants, and as some scholars have contended, its advocacy of social equality and calls for social change posed an indigenous ideological challenge to the state's Confucian orthodoxy.[12] Despite these differences over the precise origins and nature of the peasant uprising, historians generally agree that the successes of the peasant army and the ineffectiveness of the state were rooted in a growing imbalance in the institutions and ideology that had served the dynasty for more than half a millennium.

Never was this clearer than in June 1894 when government troops failed

in their attempts to retake the capital of Chŏlla Province from the peasant armies. With their troops routed by the "Green Bean General," as the leader of the peasants had come to be affectionately known, the court telegraphed Beijing for assistance in suppressing what had developed into a virtual civil war that threatened the very existence of the dynasty. When Qing officials responded affirmatively, Japan, which had been carefully monitoring the events, seized the opportunity to send its own troops to the peninsula, setting up the conditions for the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War. What had begun as a dispute over a reservoir in a remote county escalated into a war that fundamentally changed the geopolitical landscape of the region.

From the earliest years of the Meiji period, Korea had been an important foreign policy issue for Japanese leaders. Since the "Conquest of Korea" debates (Seikanron) of 1872–73, the question of how best to protect and maintain an ever shifting array of Japanese political, security, and economic interests dominated discussions of Korea.[13] Outside the government, various groups pursued their own, often highly imaginative efforts while the government sought to do so by mastering the conventions of international law, even though brute force was always a ready option.[14] In a demonstration of how quickly Japan had learned the style of gunboat diplomacy, which only a short time before had been used against it, a ship was sent off the shores of Korea to provoke an incident. The following year, beating the Western powers at their own game, Japan signed the Treaty of Kanghwa with the Korean government, opening the peninsula to an ever widening array of international commercial activities. One of the treaty's objectives had been to weaken Korea's ties with China, but in fact, because of various political shifts within Korea, combined with a newly aggressive Chinese stance on the peninsula, the treaty did not translate into an attenuation of Sino-Korean ties. State and private support for reformers inside the country dominated Japanese efforts to shift the political balance for the next two decades, but by the early 1890s, despite a burgeoning trade, Japan had been unable either to persuade or to force a reconfiguration of Korea's relations with the Qing.[15]

When in 1894 the Chosŏn government requested assistance from Qing officials to suppress the Tonghak peasant armies, Japan used the opportunity to end Chinese influence on the peninsula. That the government and peasant armies had agreed to cease hostilities before the Japanese troops arrived was a minor inconvenience. Japan rejected proposals to withdraw. In July 1894, Japanese troops captured the Korean palace and sequestered the king, actions that triggered the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War. In control of

the government, the Japanese established a reform-oriented cabinet that launched a sweeping reform movement, known as the Kabo reforms. In the countryside, however, news of Japan's actions led the Tonghak armies to reorganize, this time directing their attacks against the foreign invaders. Hopelessly outarmed, they were defeated by Japanese troops, and Chŏn Pongjun, together with other key leaders, were captured. By the next spring, Japan's success in the Korean countryside was followed by an even more resounding victory when its army and navy completely routed the Qing forces. In the Treaty of Shimonoseki, the document signed to conclude the war, the first clause forced China to recognize the objective pursued by Japan for many years, an end to tributary ties with Korea.

Within a week of each other, Chŏn Pongjun was executed and the Treaty of Shimonoseki was signed.[16] While these two events may have been satisfying to many Japanese, they did little to assuage the sense of crisis that prevailed in Korea. The independence acquired from the Treaty of Shimonoseki, while certainly welcomed by many Koreans who had long been working to end the tributary relationship, was seen as a hollow sovereignty. Granted rather than earned, it was sovereignty in name only, according to one style of critique. Independence proffered by outside forces, it suggested, could never lead to a completely sovereign nation.[17] Internally, although the defeat of the Tonghak peasant forces dispelled the immediate military threat to the dynasty, sporadic local uprisings, sometimes involving Tonghak members, continued for many more years. Indeed, the central government's reform program, with its top-down and heavy-handed approach, often aggravated the situation in the countryside. These years were also the high tide of concession diplomacy in East Asia. Whether it was Americans seeking railway construction or gold mining rights, Russians demanding forest concessions, or Japanese obtaining fishing rights, the Korean government was regularly pressured and cajoled into handing over concessions to foreign commercial interests.

The history of the next fifteen years until annexation is often recounted along three narrative lines, all tracing various dimensions of the crisis. The most prominent narrative, focusing on the royal house, offers a high-level political history in which the king and his family serve as a metaphor for the nation. A legacy of lingering court-centered Confucian historiographical practice, this narrative line renders the drama surrounding King Kojong into a style of national history that follows the steady decline from nominal independence to colonialism. It was not a happy slide. In one of the most

telling moments in the history of the royal house, on October 8, 1895, a group of Japanese ruffians organized by Miura Gōrō, the newly appointed Japanese consul to Korea, broke into the royal palace. The queen was targeted for removal, having been vilified in the Japanese media as a conservative obstacle to reform and the expansion of Japanese interests. She was slain that night by Japanese swords. In a vain attempt to hide evidence of the deed, her body was burned at the back of the palace, an action that earned international opprobrium for the newly "civilized" Japan, but not enough for Miura to be convicted by the Japanese courts.[18] Fearing for his own safety, King Kojong shortly afterward hid in his consort's palanquin leaving his residence for the Russian legation, where he remained ensconced for a contentious eleven months. Upon his return to the palace, he and his officials launched a series of reforms—a restoration (*chunghŭng*), in the classical parlance in which the changes were framed—that tried both to salvage the throne's tarnished reputation and to strengthen the court's hold over the state bureaucracy and society.[19]

Despite these efforts at reform, the state was unable to resist Japan's sustained encroachments. During the Russo-Japanese War, the court declared the peninsula to be neutral, but Japan took advantage of the wartime emergency to wrest control of many government functions. Two months after Japan's victory, Itō Hirobumi, accompanied by a group of soldiers, marched into the palace to force the official imperial seal to be placed on a treaty making Korea a protectorate. In a letter published on February 1, 1906, in a national newspaper, Kojong announced he had never consented to the treaty, and the following year, he dispatched a secret mission to the International Peace Conference in the Hague, only to have his delegates refused admission to the proceedings. These acts of recalcitrance were enough for his Japanese handlers to force Kojong to cede the throne to his reputedly more feckless son, Sunjong. The military was disbanded, and in 1907, a new treaty effectively handed control of internal administrative matters to a coterie of high-level Japanese advisers. Three years later on August 22, Emperor Sunjong proclaimed the annexation of Korea, relinquished his throne, and was soon, in a move symbolic of Japanese claims to reuniting a long separated family, accepted as a "prince" in the Japanese imperial line.

A second narrative thread through the years after the Sino-Japanese War traces the ultimately doomed efforts at state-generated reform. Attempts by various groups to initiate change in the 1880s gained new impetus in the postwar environment. With Japan now pressuring the court to pursue a reform program, many officials and even exiled reformers had an opportunity to pursue the style of government and social changes that they had long advocated but had never had the political power to implement.[20] Between July 1894 and February 1896, wide-sweeping reform decrees announced what amounted to a thorough overhaul of Korean institutions and social legislation. Socially, the status system of the Chosŏn dynasty was officially abandoned. The hereditary elite, or *yangban*, at one end of the social spectrum was deprived of state support for many of their traditional privileges while, at the opposite end, the remaining slaves were freed. One of the defining features of the patrilineal system—the prohibition of widows' remarrying—was outlawed, although the patrilineal ordering of families was not challenged. The king's authority was limited: the imperial purse was separated from the state budget, and his control over the bureaucracy was restricted. The traditional examination system was abandoned as a means of recruiting officials, while schools with a new curriculum were opened and students were sent to Japan at government expense. Over this year and a half, more than 660 reform documents were announced.[21] Certainly for the local official receiving this onslaught of unprecedented orders from the capital, it was a tumultuous time indeed.

After King Kojong finally left the Russian legation in February 1897 to return to his palace, a new set of reforms was initiated. Frequently referred to by the new reign date, Kwangmu, these reforms were more restrained than the Kabo reforms, in some cases even resurrecting pre-Kabo administrative practices. Reform was now equated with the strengthening of royal powers, and the king was elevated to imperial status.[22] Financial reform was pursued, in part so as to alleviate the pressures on the royal household. In addition to the imposition of new taxes on various services and ginseng, a land survey was launched. Although a lack of capital hampered the efforts to measure landholdings and to issue ownership certificates, eventually about two-thirds of the nation's land was recorded.[23] Efforts were made to strengthen the military. Investments, often underwritten with foreign loans or concessions, were made in the nation's economic infrastructure, in telegraph lines, road improvements, or the construction of major railways.

By 1907, when King Kojong was forced to abdicate, it was clear that in the last ten years of his reign, immense changes in both the apparatus and ideology of governance had taken place. That the designs for reform were often bolder than their implementation was a common critique. How effectively these changes were carried out by a state that could not confidently

impose its will on the localities remains a question of much debate. The difficulty of extending reforms outside the capital is one reason that questions of local governance were discussed so widely in these years. Whatever the answer, it is clear that even in the more conservative Kwangmu reforms, the assumptions about governance had shifted as dramatically as the old balance of forces that had maintained the stability of the dynasty for more than half a millennium had been undermined.

A third story line for these years, one interwoven with the account of reform outside the state, is the growth of a nationalist movement. Besides the now scattered forces of the Tonghak peasant armies, two nationalist streams arose. One was the "righteous armies" (*ŭibyŏng*), who traced their intellectual pedigree back to the earlier "Protect the Orthodox, Repel the Heterodox" (Wijŏng ch'ŏksa) advocates who in 1876 had vociferously opposed opening the country to Japan. Now, in addition to the inflammatory memorials submitted to the king, they added to their repertoire armed resistance to the Japanese presence on the peninsula.[24] Until 1911, when the few survivors were squeezed out of the peninsula into Manchuria, skirmishes of various sizes with the Japanese military dotted the countryside.

The second stream of the nationalist movement, often called the Patriotic Enlightenment Movement—the focus of this study—similarly traced its origins to before the war.[25] In the short term, this included the Enlightenment Party of Kim Okkyun, Pak Yŏnghyo, Sŏ Kwangbŏm, and others who, out of frustration at their inability to reform the government from within, switched tactics. In December 1884, at a dinner celebrating the opening of a new postal system, they captured King Kojong in a coup d'état. For three brief days they ruled, proclaiming radical reform proposals in the name of the king. But Chinese troops, led by Yuan Shikai, attacked the new government, killing those who did not manage to escape to Japan. Several later returned to take prominent positions in the cabinet during the Kabo reforms. In the longer term, many of these intellectuals saw themselves as the heirs of reform thinkers of the late Chosŏn dynasty, such Pak Chiwŏn, Yi Ik, and Chŏng Yagyong.[26] Some intellectuals could even trace their teacher affiliations back to these thinkers. Kim Okkyun and many of his co-conspirators in the 1884 coup d'état had studied in the home of Pak Kyusu, the grandson of Pak Chiwŏn, renowned for advocating an open door policy before the Treaty of Kanghwa.[27] The advent in the late nineteenth century of a style of reform thought that engaged with the West cannot be separated from the long history of reform thought in Korea during the seventeenth through

nineteenth centuries. Other leaders of this movement, as much of the English-language literature has pointed out, were deeply influenced by their conversion to Christianity.[28]

The year 1905 occupies an important position in all three of these story lines. On November 17, the Japanese imposed a protectorate on Korea, assuming control of its foreign affairs. It is all too easy to draw a direct line following Japan's gradual accumulation of power starting with the end of the Sino-Japanese War until the Meiji government was able to annex the peninsula in 1910. As a number of studies on decision-making processes at the upper levels of the Japanese government have shown, however, Japanese leaders were divided over how best to pursue their economic and security interests in the peninsula.[29] It is less easy to recapture Korean reactions to this tumultuous series of events without imposing our historical hindsight on the figures of these years. What is striking is that until the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War, very few Koreans predicted the train of events that eventually culminated in the loss of sovereignty at the hands of Japan. To be sure, there was a general sense of crisis to which Japan was seen as contributing with its special concerns and specific challenges to Korean sovereignty. But until Japan's actions during the war revealed its less than benevolent intent toward the peninsula, there was no generally shared understanding in the public media that Japan presented a greater threat than Russia or that the imposition of a protectorate was imminent. Until this time, newspapers were just as likely to recall with a degree of gratitude Japan's function in forcing the Qing government to recognize Korean independence as to condemn Japan for its peninsular activities. One overseas student in the United States recalled this situation in 1908 in a letter to a Korean newspaper. He described coming across a copy of an old American magazine from 1905 that had an editorial cartoon depicting Japan, Russia, and the United States struggling over two dishes, one called Korea, the other Manchuria. It went on to illustrate how Japan would get the right to eat the dishes with no American interference. Such prescience in an editorial cartoon confounded the student, who expressed wonderment and disillusionment that at a time when foreigners clearly understood that Japan was seeking to acquire the peninsula, many Koreans placed their trust in Japanese claims of charitable intentions.[30] If the Protectorate Treaty of 1905 caught Koreans off guard, many responded over the next few years by forming nationalist associations and building schools for the promotion of a nationalist curriculum.

To writers in the newly arisen press — people who were participants in these events as well as their recorders[31] — what proved most frustrating was the ineffectual response of officials and the general population. In what emerged as one of the most common metaphors of Korean nationalists — indeed, of nationalist intellectuals around the world who were dissatisfied with the results of their attempts to mobilize their compatriots — the nation was said to be still "asleep," undisturbed by recent events.[32] Such a description, of course, assumed that the observer, unlike his compatriots, was not only awake but also knew how to shake the nation out of its slumber. In the years immediately after the Sino-Japanese War, the number of groups willing to appoint themselves this task grew dramatically. To sound the reveille, they outfitted themselves with newspapers in which they propounded a new message.

Globalizing the National and Nationalizing the Global

That new message was *munmyŏng kaehwa* — "civilization and enlightenment." Although most exuberantly promoted by the newly emerging newspaper presses, by 1895 the message had become familiar. It had insinuated itself into speeches by the king, and even regulations listing changes in the curriculum of that venerable Confucian academy, the Sŏnggyungwan, appealed to *munmyŏng kaehwa*.[33] At the extreme opposite, advertisers, always quick to capitalize on the latest trends, flogged their products — whether medicine or milk — as suited for a "civilized age" and fitting the discriminating taste of "civilized" consumers.[34] Able to sell both reform and products, *munmyŏng kaehwa* emerged as the vocabulary of the era.

The power and seductiveness of *munmyŏng kaehwa* lay in its ability to link seamlessly the individual, nation, and globe into a historical and spatial unity. As a modern discourse par excellence, *munmyŏng kaehwa* offered a conceptual framework in which various groups could come to terms with their recent integration into the global capitalist system. At the same time, its underlying drive for change served to deepen that participation. Today, although nationalism and globalization are often juxtaposed as oppositional or exclusive processes, in Korea at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the two were mutually constitutive: nationalism was the vehicle for accelerating the peninsula's inclusion in the global capitalist order, and these globalizing forces — in particular what was called the "new knowledge" (*sinhak*) — stimulated a radical rethinking of the nation and its identity. One editorial captured this relationship: "In this era the joint advancement of globalism [*segyejŏkchuŭi*] and nationalism [*kukkajuŭi*] constitutes the path toward civilization."[35] The appropriation and dissemination of *munmyŏng kaehwa* resulted in a historical shift in the spatiotemporal definition of the peninsula. Now the nation was seen by nature as just another member of a community of nations that stretched around the world, sharing a historical trajectory.

While *munmyŏng kaehwa* claimed a temporal and spatial universality — applicable to all nations at all times — its usage was conditioned by its long history in the West. As Norbert Elias has shown, the idea of *civilité* had originally been a means for medieval European, especially French, aristocrats to separate themselves from the lower classes. By the eighteenth century, this idea had been diffused across the social spectrum to become a widespread social precept, spawning its nominal form, "civilization."[36] As Europeans traveled beyond their borders, they carried this notion of civilization with them, moving it from the domestic social sphere onto the international stage, as it offered a useful rationale for both protecting their citizens in faraway lands and using force to extend their political and economic interests.[37] By the time Korea established relations with outside powers in the latter half of the nineteenth century, civilization had become the foundation of international law and, with its claims to universality, had become the central tenet of an international modern discourse.

It was within this discourse that Korean intellectuals tried to position their nation, and in so doing they accepted this Western-derived concept and promoted its claim to universality. As evident in the early efforts to provide didactic introductions to this concept, Korean writers focused not on its particular history but on its universal validity. Yu Kilchun, one of *munmyŏng kaehwa*'s greatest advocates, wrote that enlightenment was what leads "the thousand affairs and ten thousand matters of humanity to reach the stage of greatest good and greatest beauty." There were various types of enlightenment, he explained, ranging from the enlightenment of government to that of machines; only when these various types were combined could one begin to constitute a "complete enlightenment."[38] A prominent newspaper described enlightenment as a means "to open wide one's state of absolute ignorance and strive to undertake myriad tasks while taking into account actual circumstances and natural laws."[39] On a later occasion the editors explained this meant that the fundamental way of progressing toward en-

lightenment consisted of correcting mistakes, learning new knowledge, and pursuing superior ways of doing things.[40] Such nebulous definitions suggested that anyone, anywhere, and at any time could, with the appropriate effort, become "enlightened."

These definitions also reveal the activist impulse at the heart of *munmyŏng kaehwa:* something needed to be *done* to the nation. Precisely what reform was needed was the question around which much of the political jockeying of the era revolved. It was over the issue of reform that observers of the political scene at the time, and historians today, divided activists into various political stripes: conservative, moderate, or radical. Editors vied, officials clashed, and speakers debated over whether the cutting of hair was a necessary step for enlightenment, how much Confucian teaching could be inserted in an enlightening curriculum, how the currency should be reformed, and what system should be used to hire and promote officials in the localities. Underlying these specific, contentious issues were a number of assumptions about reform and its relation to the nation that reflected the power of *munmyŏng kaehwa* to link individual efforts to the nation and, more broadly, the world.

The very structure of reform writing revealed these relationships. A typical piece began with a laudatory description of some feature of the civilized world before shifting — usually after an exclamatory cry of despair, *aigu!* (alas) — to what was presented as the benighted or ignorant status of that same phenomenon in Korea. Comments about what a shame this was, leading Korea to be derided in the world, were followed by reform proposals of varying specificity on how to bridge the gap. As illustrated in one newspaper's celebration of the founding in 1904 of the TaeHan Women's Association (TaeHan puinhoe), by concentrating on a specific reform issue, such pieces served to group Korea into the same global community and historical narrative as the countries of the West.[41] One of the most written-about subjects of the time, gender issues — the status of women, women's education, early betrothal, the sale of girls, or the remarriage of widows — were commonly used as markers of national backwardness. Women were metaphorically equated with the past, a past that needed to be overcome by altering their status and behavior.

In this editorial, the universality of *munmyŏng kaehwa* was established from the outset by a description of the earliest periods of humanity, when all people, wherever they lived, were in the same benighted state. "In the countries of both the East and West, during the age when society was extremely ignorant, the status of women was such that they were considered nothing more than a piece of property or a plaything of their men." Then the editors followed a narrative of progress, recounting how in the history of the West the position of women continually improved. Continuing until the French Revolution, the editors observed that the freedoms and rights of women continued to expand so that at least in terms of their ability to serve in national politics, they enjoyed the same status as men. Especially impressed by the fact that in a number of countries women had acquired the right to vote, they asserted that "it is no exaggeration to say that today in America and the countries of Europe, when the position and rights of women are compared with those of men, there are no large differences." This initial passage established progress as the narrative and the West as the measure, setting up a contrast to the situation in Korea:

> As described earlier for the prehistoric period of ignorance, [in Korea today] women are in the situation in which they do not have the tiniest of freedoms and are only fettered and oppressed by their husbands. Even if they are women with intelligence and skills, they have no way of making use of their natural abilities. They are simply one of the abandoned goods of human society.

In these Korean representations of the West, the (in)accuracy of statements — "there are no large differences"! — was less the issue than the way the exaggerated successes of Western women and the overly pessimistic view of the achievements of Korean women were woven together. Western and Korean women, ancient and contemporary, were brought into the same story of *munmyŏng kaehwa.* The "beautiful deed" of founding the TaeHan Women's Association was not solely a Korean matter but was also Korea's contribution to the furthering of this global process. "This is important not only to the glory of the single country of Korea, for it also expresses sincere sympathy for the human way [*indo*] of today's civilized world." In this way, Korea was being written metaphorically through specific reform issues — here the status of women but also in such diverse areas as habits of hygiene, government systems, and education — into a universal vision of time and space.[42]

According to the temporal logic of *munmyŏng kaehwa,* the contrast between the superiority of specific Western practices was not an essential difference, but one of time. Such comparisons underscored the potential for

catching up to the West but always presented Korea as lacking or backward. "Looking back at the history of Western countries, two or three centuries ago their repressive and barbarous customs as well as their corrupt and chaotic governments resembled those of Korea today."[43] One editorial compared a generic "Western farmer" — whatever this may have been — with a Korean farmer, depicting the latter as five hundred years behind his Western counterpart, with the gap explained as the consequence of "enlightenment."[44] Even chicken-raising techniques could be structured in this fashion. As one enterprising company advertised, better techniques in the West had created magnificent fortunes, while in Korea, chicken-raising techniques were still "immature and childish."[45] The ad offered a book for only thirty-five *chŏn* that would allow one to master these techniques, in effect insinuating that Koreans could become enlightened by the "mature" raising of chickens. Whether in a grandiose scheme of reform or something as pedestrian as chicken raising, the very method of urging reform illustrates how the concept of *munmyŏng kaehwa* was predicated on a division between the East and West, serving to reinforce Eurocentric definitions of a historically inferior East. Used sweepingly, representations of the West had less to do with the social reality on the other side of the world and more to do with a writer's desire to contrast a targeted feature of his nation with that of a superior Other in order to muster a rationale for reform.

The blandest invocation of this sort could carry great power. Readers could be shown the way something was done in "ten thousand countries" (*man'guk*) and "every country" (*gakkuk*) in order to learn that Korea, too, could match these supposedly universal practices. As was always the case, these universal ways were conflated with an idealized and reductive vision of "Western ways." When readers learned that "every nation" had an arboretum day, the implication was clear: Korean schoolchildren should devote a day every year to planting trees.[46] When an editorial asked, "Where in the world are there countries that do not have insurance companies?" the expected answer was "Korea," confirming that the peninsular nation did not conform to the "civilized" ways of the world.[47] When a horse galloping on the streets of Seoul injured a mother and child, a report could castigate the government for not passing the type of "regulations of ten thousand countries" prohibiting such careless activity.[48] It was this representation of Korea, according to the logic of *munmyŏng kaehwa*, as "lacking" or "behind" that supported the nationalist intellectuals' chorus for reform.

Determining how far a nation lagged behind this ideal was the key task

in the common practice of ranking nations into hierarchies of civilization. At its simplest level, the differences between nations were twofold: those in the dark and those in the light.[49] More commonly, however, a three-tiered typology was offered. Yu Kilchun divided the world into the civilized, the semicivilized, and the barbarian. Countries in the middle rung, as he defined them, were content with small accomplishments, had no long-range plans, and did not commit themselves to the various forms of enlightenment. Below them, at the foot of the hierarchy, were "the most pitiable under Heaven," countries where one cannot even "distinguish what they can and cannot do."[50] For most writers busy creating such taxonomies, Korea fell firmly into the middle rank. But semicivilized, viewed from the opposite perspective, could be read as semibarbaric, and more often than not writers focused on these less than enlightened features, venting their rage and sighing in despair at these uncivilized characteristics to the point that they seemingly forgot their claim about Korea's middling rank. As one writer demanded to know, "How has it come about that in all the world, Korea is the weakest, Korea is the poorest, Korea is the basest, and Korea receives the least respect from others?"[51] The answers to the question were many, and they all positioned the nation as an object in need of reform.

Munmyŏng kaehwa was always linked with another complex set of ideas derived from the West, social Darwinism. Like *munmyŏng kaehwa*, social Darwinism was considered spatially and temporally universal, but if *munmyŏng kaehwa* was the result of the progressive lessons of history, then social Darwinism represented the inviolate laws of human society. It, too, had hierarchies of nations, hierarchies that neatly overlapped with those of civilization. The civilized countries, after all, were usually the strongest countries. The same types of knowledge distinguished nations for these two hierarchies. Although *munmyŏng kaehwa* implicitly offered an idealistic, perhaps even naïve, vision of a common enterprise uplifting all of humanity and viewed the ideologies of capitalist modernity as a benign force, social Darwinism saw this same knowledge in more utilitarian terms, enabling the "strong to make the weak their fodder," as the expression went. In this sense, social Darwinism had a much bleaker vision of the world, one of struggle, in which to act other than self-defensively was to threaten the future of the nation. In its emphasis on carnal metaphors — eat or be eaten — social Darwinism regarded the nation less as a collection of individuals seeking to acquire knowledge for the betterment of the collective unit and more as a biological entity seeking to ensure its survival. On the question of law — an

issue central to *munmyŏngng kaehwa* as a rational regulator of human society—social Darwinism stressed its use as a tool of the powerful. As one paper had a person in an editorial declare about international law, "These so-called public laws, righteous principles, alliances and treaties, and morality all are nothing more than words on a piece of paper." Put more bluntly, "In the world we live in today, if one wants to treat people with benevolence and righteousness, then one must be a very stupid person in a deep sleep."[52]

While these two strands of thought coexisted in the same newspapers and journals, after the Protectorate was established in 1905, the naïve confidence that many writers held for *munmyŏng kaehwa* began to waver. To be sure, they had always been aware of its double standards, since they had closely observed how the powers invoked civilization as a self-serving platform for their own political and economic interests. But with the creation of the Japanese Residency General in 1905, they could now witness firsthand how *munmyŏng kaehwa* was used to undermine their national sovereignty and even push them out of the civilizing process. As the double nature of *munmyŏng kaehwa* became more apparent, many writers began to steer away from its most obvious uses toward its counterpart, social Darwinism, which now seemed to offer a more realistic accounting of Korea's slide into colonialism. Although they pointed out the underside of *munmyŏng kaehwa* and stressed social Darwinism, no writers went the extra step to question or challenge the concept of "civilization and enlightenment" itself. Their vision of the nation in a new global order was so dependent on the historical and spatial underpinnings of *munmyŏng kaehwa* that it was difficult to speak of national reform at the same time as they tried to extricate the nation from its logic. Moreover, their self-definition of leaders of the nationalist movement rested on this conceptual framework. As a result, writers switched between *munmyŏng kaehwa* and social Darwinism according to their whim or purpose. In some cases, fully cognizant of the double standard, they urged a rise to the top of the heap where the benefits would work in their favor. More often, however, civilization continued uneasily to underlay their writings about the nation as they tried to preserve nationalist uses of the concept, resisting its complete co-option by Japanese colonial authorities.[53]

The Pundits of the Nation

This vision of the nation as an entity to be reformed was fundamental to the self-definition of newspaper writers as progressive individuals in line with

the forces of world history. More than any common social or geographic ties, it was the shared commitment to these goals that linked their efforts, even though they did not hesitate to rail at one another over specific issues. As professed in their charters and manifestos, the newspaper writers' commitment to *munmyŏng kaehwa* implied that their organizations were open to any person willing to adopt their goals. This was an age, after all, when active citizenship (*kungmin*) was offered as a panacea for the nation: all the people, being equal, would work in solidarity to reform the nation. For a country that had been structured primarily around status affiliation and family lineage for several centuries, this openness itself was quite radical. The often-acclaimed power of nationalism to level social differences received one of its earliest boosts in Korea in the ideological realm.[54] Although equality was hailed as a social goal in its own right, it was harnessed to the purpose of self-strengthening. The people *were* the basis of national power. Any obstacles to the participation of any social group in national life was seen as inhibiting the potential of the nation, even though in practice these calls were easier to make than to realize.

This supposed openness was frequently used vis-à-vis class and gender, two divisions criticized for having weakened Korea in the past. The celebrated example of Pak Sŏngch'un served in the eyes of many reform leaders as positive proof of this openness. As part of the demonstrations sponsored by the Independence Club on the downtown streets of Seoul, this member of the *paekchŏng*,[55] one of the most despised social groups of the Chosŏn dynasty, gave a speech that exhorted those who in an earlier era would have been seen as his "betters." Pak opened his speech with a nod toward the traditional linkage of social status and knowledge, admitting that because of his status, he was largely ignorant. He then proceeded to debunk this very notion in a series of remarks that would have been fitting from the mouth of any senior leader of the club. "The idea of loyalty to the sovereign and patriotism is the way to benefit the country and the people," he declared, "but this is only possible once the people and the officials have united their hearts."[56] The publicity surrounding this speech presented Pak as the new citizen, formerly discriminated against because of his status and now elevated to an ostensibly equal level by his commitment to self-improvement and national reform. That even a lowly *paekchŏng* could join the cause of the nation was the message underlying his public display as well as reports of his speech.

Just as common as claims about the movement's openness to class were assertions that the nation could transcend gender. Accordingly, the period

witnessed the beginning of a redefinition of gender roles to suit the needs of a civilizing nation.[57] In this tumultuous period, when reformers hoped to abandon unenlightened past practices to move toward a more civilized age, women were a common measure of progress — if only because women served as the prevailing metaphors for backwardness. Family was juxtaposed with nation, the former being the source of superstition and the latter associated with "civilization and enlightenment."[58] Any woman able to reform and leave "the women's chambers where they had been locked up for two thousand years"[59] was considered a boon to the nation and its reputation, a development to be hailed by reprinting the charters of women's groups and schools. Consequently, women's education emerged as the most commonly featured gender issue in the media. Espoused as a means of overcoming the backwardness of the past, women's education was also deemed a source of national power.[60] Since women constituted half the population, the reasoning went, the nation would be only half as strong if women were not educated.[61] In an age of competition, according to the charter of the Academy for the Education of Women, "the need for women's education is one of the means for national survival."[62] As another commentator bluntly warned, countries without women's education are destroyed.[63]

The function of women's education was still largely conditioned by their gender, primarily as mothers to ensure that the next generation was not raised in a household full of superstition and as wives to support husbands in their missions to reform the nation. This point was encapsulated in one editorial:

> When boys grow up , they become officials, scholars, merchants, and peasants. When girls grow up, they become the wives of these people. If these women have the same learning and knowledge as their husbands, then household affairs will turn out well. Moreover, when they bear children, these wives will know how to raise the children and educate them. . . . As a result, we should not value the role of women less than [that of] men. All the responsibilities of nurturing future generations of the nation rest with the women.[64]

Educate women, many editorials overtly urged, even though the implicit assumption in these enjoinments was that they would be educated *as* mothers, *as* wives, and *as* the reproductive bearers of the nation. Given this approach, it is not surprising that few, if any, women were active in the era's press. Even publications specifically targeting a female audience were operated and largely written by men.[65] As an issue for publicly exploring issues of national modernity, women's education remained mainly the domain of the male leaders of the nationalist movement. To be sure, women were to be brought into the national fold, only this was a nation to be led by men, whose publicly acclaimed heroes were male and whose history was largely masculine in orientation.[66] New women's associations could be congratulated, the opening of women's schools hailed, and the occasional letter by a female reader published, yet such entries in the period's newspapers invariably affirmed the civilizing assumptions of the reform project.[67] By profiling the achievements of women, they purported to offer an inclusive image of the nationalist movement, one that claimed to be just as open to gender as it was to class.

Claims of inclusivity were tempered by the reformers' self-appointed status as leaders, however. In Yu Kilchun's exposition on enlightenment, he equated his own role and that of his fellow reformers with those of the civilized leaders in the West, noting how in every country, whatever the national level of development, enlightened individuals existed. The crux of the matter, he explained, was the ratio of these individuals to the bulk of the population.[68] This formula immediately separated Yu and the other self-appointed custodians of enlightenment from the people, granting themselves status as part of an international cosmopolitan elite while saddling the people with the primary responsibility for the nation's woes. People like Pak Sŏngch'un and the students of the Academy for the Education of Women were the exceptions in the eyes of the leaders, the ones who verified the validity of the enlightenment project and could be offered proudly in the presses as indications of successful leadership. And as hortative exceptions, they confirmed the view of the population, in the parlance of the time, as little more than "ignorant people" (*umin*). Harsher depictions — "like children who cannot understand"[69] or "stupid and illiterate people no different from dolls of earth"[70] — were just as common.

The cover of Yu Kilchun's textbook (*Nodong yahak tokpon*) for laborers attending night school captures these nationalist reformers' ambivalence toward the population (see the cover of this book).[71] Standing on the right of the frame, the author has symbolically doffed his hat in the presence of a worker, who in turn is not only engaged in a Western-style handshake with Yu but is also, in a departure from Chosŏn-dynastic practices, looking Yu in the face rather than casting his gaze to the ground. The dialogue has Yu urging the worker to labor and learn for the nation. The speech levels are

somewhat ambiguous, again not indicative of what in the Chosŏn dynasty would have been clearly delineated speech levels separating a scholar from a worker. Yu speaks in a formal level of speech, indicating respect for his interlocutor, while the worker registers his affirmative response in a somewhat more colloquial level of speech while still using a form of respectful address. These speech forms suggest that the worker, as a nameless representative of the people who, at least in theory, were the basis of the nation, deserved the respect of the teacher. These signifiers of social equality were novel for the era, an indication of the efforts to level traditional social categories. Nonetheless, the worker's significance is somewhat moderated by the artistic flourishes that privilege the author. Identified by name, as opposed to the generic depiction of the worker, Yu is shown with the emblems of civility — frock coat, top hat, and full moustache — marking him as a man of this internationalized age. It is Yu, it appears, who has taken the initiative to strike up the conversation and extend his hand, as if symbolically inviting the worker to join him. Yu's erect posture, frontal perspective, and highlighted coloring, in contrast to the worker's slight slouch, rear perspective, and lighter coloring, makes Yu the center of attention, even though this is a book for laborers. The two might join hands in the same struggle, but in the author's eyes, it was clear who actually spoke for the nation.

This ambivalence is partly explained by the fact that while the much-lauded goal of the movement was the protection of national sovereignty, the immediate task was teaching the population to adopt certain behaviors. This was where nationalism intersected with the various ideologies of capitalist modernity on issues as seemingly dissimilar as the body and economy. Countless articles and editorials deployed a style of chain logic, beginning with the individual or, more precisely, the behavior of an individual and then explained how through education this improper behavior could be modified into a more desirable form. If everyone pursued this path, the nation would inevitably become stronger and richer. Such chains of logic could focus on virtually any practice or belief and by promoting education, that all-important disciplining action, offer a strategy for becoming a more "civilized" nation. In the blunt language of one editorial writer, "If Koreans want to become like the people of other countries, they must correct the way they think."[72] Consequently, at a time when the specific concept of capitalism had yet to be introduced, much of the writing in the economic realm did not focus on structural questions but on how the behavior of the population could be modified and regulated so as to encourage commerce

(*sangŏp*).[73] Nurturing an entrepreneurial spirit, encouraging self-help, respecting merchants, making good use of talent, knowing market prices, valuing time, and standardizing weights and measurements — all these became areas for modifying individual behavior as the immediate way of revamping the country's economic orientation and aligning it with the capitalism of the world system. This globalizing function helps account for the appeal and power of nationalism during this period in Korea.

Resorting to chain logic, however, was not the only tactic available to writers. Just as common, and perhaps more powerful, were the efforts to inculcate shame and anger into the readers. This could be at the general level of the nation — shame or anger, for example, at Korea's lowly place on the ladder of civilization and the resulting humiliating treatment, in the words of more than one editorialist, received by the world's powers.[74] Shame and anger also could be deployed on a more personal level to alter individual conduct. Modern discourses on the body used embarrassment as a way of spurring change, as seen in the flood of writings on hygiene, exercise, and comportment. As Norbert Elias showed for what he called the civilizing process in Europe, shame was a powerful motivating force for individuals to change their behavior. According to Elias, if Europeans had to be taught that farting at the dinner table was shameful conduct, then many Korean writers similarly tried to embarrass those, who "without any sense of shame, urinate and defecate in the streets."[75] It was embarrassing and, moreover, unhygienic.

In one of those metonyms that found its way into nationalist reform movements around the world, the health of the nation ultimately rested with the health of the individual.[76] In these ways, the urge to discipline the population linked questions of hygiene and the body through the same self-strengthening logic to issues such as the proper utilization of resources and the construction of railways. For these writers and speechmakers, leadership was not just a benign didactic exercise but one that used all the tools of rhetoric to cajole, hector, and badger as well as sway, convince, and persuade their audience to adopt behaviors deemed beneficial for both the nation and *munmyŏng kaehwa*. In this self-contained logic, all who resisted these enticements were easily dismissed as benighted. Their position on the outside of the project affirmed the leadership of the writers and the urgency of the project.

Not everyone, of course, was prepared to act like the idealized worker on the cover of Yu's book, nodding agreement and thanking intellectuals for

their hectoring prose and efforts to control popular behavior. Who speaks for the nation is a question just as much concerned with local power, the relation among different segments of the national movement, and the political consequences of defining the nation in certain ways. Nationalist intellectuals were fully aware of this political competition. With their newspapers, their close associations with the burgeoning school movement, and their speaking tours in the countryside, these nationalist intellectuals attempted to be the sole voice for the nation, even if it meant shunting aside rival groups. Any individual or group that stepped outside the bounds of its project risked becoming the object of the intellectuals' invective, which the "righteous armies," or *ŭibyŏng*, who were fighting the Japanese in the countryside, knew all too well.

At the time of Queen Min's assassination in 1895, these various militia groups formed to offer armed resistance to the Japanese presence in the peninsula. With the establishment of the Protectorate in 1905, the ŭibyŏng received a new injection of energy as more men joined their forces. Prominent scholars in the countryside used their authority to encourage uprisings and organize militia, even if as in the case of one famous seventy-three-year-old Confucian, Ch'oe Ikhyon, his aged legs did not allow him to take to the hills with the forces he called to arms. In a daring maneuver in December 1907, Yi Inyŏng led more than ten thousand *ŭibyŏng* in a coordinated attack that reached the northern outskirts of Seoul before being repelled by the superior-armed Japanese military. The Japanese response to this escalation in fighting was ferocious. More troops were deployed to hunt down the scattered remnants of the *ŭibyŏng*, and the consequences for any villages supporting them, according to a number of foreign observers, included being burned to the ground.[77] Between 1907 and 1911, Japanese police reports estimate that more than 17,600 people were killed.[78] Despite Japanese claims to the contrary, annexation was anything but a peaceful process.

Newspapers kept a careful eye on these battles in the countryside, offering many reports to their readers.[79] Although editors displayed a certain degree of sympathy toward the patriotism of the *ŭibyŏng* leaders, they were united in condemning their tactics, since the leaders' use of violence conflicted with the editors' own vision of civilizing reform and education as the primary means to rescue the nation.[80] The editors of one newspaper encapsulated this divergence in their use of the classical dualism *munmu*, the first syllable

of which indicated the cultural or literary, as distinguished from the latter syllable, *mu*, the martial. "In this era, the way to recovery is not to resort to military means [*mu*] but to cultural methods [*mun*]," it stated.[81] This artful use of the phrase *mun*, the same character used as the first syllable of the word *munmyŏng*, established a link with the central purpose of the newspapers.[82] As the editors argued more explicitly, even if all the people devoted themselves to education, working for the country, and advancing civilization, it still would be difficult to recover the country's national rights — how much more so, they asked, when the eight provinces were aflame with uprisings?[83] The *ŭibyŏng* might be called ignorant people (*umin*), but unlike the general population, the *ŭibyŏng* were deliberately pursuing a line of action that undermined both the nation and the leadership of the intellectuals, ensuring that the censure leveled in their direction would be especially severe. They were "calamitous demons who are ruining the country and poisonous sores that are harming the people."[84] The paper repeatedly denied them the use of the term *ŭi* (righteous), arguing that this was an empty name that their actions did not merit.[85] An alternative offered was *t'obi hwalchŏk*, (bandits and thieves), a form of mudslinging that was taken up by others.[86]

A second newspaper was hardly any more supportive. It also criticized the *ŭibyŏng* as "bandits," frequently pointing out that despite the patriotism of its leaders — who, it admitted, in some cases might deserve the title "righteous" — many others in the armies took advantage of the turmoil caused by the fighting to extort food and money from the population.[87] The editors stressed the inevitability of the *ŭibyŏng*'s loss: "Even if the power of the entire nation was garnered to resist Japan, it would certainly be dispersed with a mere shake of Japan's hand and a kick of its foot."[88] Like other papers, it stressed patience, urging that a program of reform must be undertaken to nurture national strength and await the proper moment to move.[89] Their sympathy for the patriotism of the *ŭibyŏng* had its limits, however, for ultimately the best outcome, they contended, was for the *ŭibyong* to be suppressed by the government as soon as possible.[90]

This criticism did not relent even when the substance of the *ŭibyŏng*'s demands shifted. After many of the early *ŭibyŏng* leaders were captured or killed, a new leadership less attached to the classical learning that had shaped their predecessors' worldview began to command the rural forces. This was especially true after the Korean military was disbanded by the Japanese Resident General in the summer of 1907, when former officers and soldiers

who had received modern military training and were likely avid readers of the press moved down into the countryside to join the anti-Japanese movements. Gradually the early movement's designs shifted: calls for the protection of King Kojong and his family remained, but the prior focus on the need to preserve the teaching of the sages was replaced with demands resembling those being articulated in the nationalist press. Included in the thirty demands sent by Hŏ Wi, a leading general, to the Japanese Resident General in 1907, freedom of the press, education, and association were combined with demands concerning Japanese concessions, control of Japanese immigrants, and circulation of Japanese currency.[91] These new demands indicate the power of the *munmyŏng kaehwa* message. Now even the *ŭibyŏng*, despite tracing their intellectual line back to the isolationists who had been committed to expelling heterodox thought, were reading newspapers and "breathing the airs of civilization." Regardless of this expanding common ground, the newspaper editors did not relent in their criticism, and no effective alliance was ever established between these two segments of the nationalist movement.[92]

Accordingly, the many calls for the solidarity (*tanhap*) and unity (*kun*) of the population, found in all publications in these years, amounted to little more than an enjoinment to follow the leadership and program of the writer. It was behind their own visions for the nation that nationalist reformers expected the people to unite.[93] Although the newspapers offered a voice for the nation, it was the cacophonous voice of intellectuals committed to *munmyŏng kaehwa*, who could just as easily use their papers to try to drown out rival strategies or divergent visions. "Who speaks for the nation?" was a politically fraught question, which, put differently, meant "Who could struggle up onto the national stage to make his voice heard?" Getting onto that platform included nudging others out. Their control of newspapers meant these groups had unrivaled power over the means of disseminating knowledge about the nation. The state had no equivalent way of reaching out to the population. Other streams of the nationalist movement, whether the remnants of the Tonghak forces or the *ŭibyŏng*, could not, with their handwritten manifestos posted on doors and lists of demands nailed to trees, challenge the dominance of the Seoul-based intellectual elite. Although these publications did not offer the only visions of the nation at this time, given their dominance over knowledge production, anyone dealing with national questions had to engage with the specific forms of national

knowledge disseminated by this most public of media that had risen so rapidly.

The Eyes and Ears of the Nation

In 1895 there was not one privately managed Korean-language newspaper on the peninsula.[94] A dozen years later, more than a handful of newspapers and a dozen educational magazines were circulating throughout the country and even overseas. Called "the eyes and ears of the nation," newspapers were the preeminent medium of the nation. Indeed, rather than just witnessing and hearing, as the metaphor suggested, they gave vision to and informed the nation in multiple ways.[95] At a time when universities and research institutions had not yet been established, these newspapers and journals served as the primary producers of knowledge about the nation. With their diverse reportage, poetry columns, foreign reports, editorials, advertisements, letters, reprinting of documents, and personal solicitations, newspapers offered a single space for the many voices that lay claim to the nation and explored its various facets. Newspapers rarely featured detailed treatises on the nation — the pace and finances of publication did not permit long essays — but within their often bewilderingly wide-ranging articles, newspapers reached across the spectrum of the day's social, economic, and political concerns, relating them all, whether explicitly or merely by their position on the page, to the national concerns of their editorial staff. With so many articles in a single issue and long publication runs, newspapers did not reflect a united voice with an unwaveringly consistent editorial policy. Rather, the papers' shifts and contradictions often reflected tensions in the nationalist movement or, just as frequently, ambivalence in the beliefs of the editorial staff that played themselves out in different issues.

The rise of the press shortly after the Sino-Japanese War began with the *Tongnip sinmun* (*The Independent*). Established in 1896 by Philip Jaisohn,[96] a returned Korean American, and Yun Ch'iho, a prominent Christian and essayist, it was the first vernacular newspaper in Korean. The most iconoclastic paper of the time, it combined its zealous calls for reform with a pro-Christian message, before being shut down together with its supporting institution, the Independence Club, in 1899 for what was seen by the court as its overly aggressive political tactics.[97] One year before its suspension, more

moderate members of the Independence Club, who were less enthusiastic about its Christian message and more interested in advocating a hybrid mix of reform rooted in Confucian traditions, established the *Hwangsŏng sinmun* (*Capital Gazette*, 1898–1910). Lasting thirteen years until annexation, this paper, with its mixed vernacular–Chinese character script (*kukhan hon-yongch'e*) and classical allusions, targeted the Confucian-trained elite, urging them to participate in a renovation of government and society that both headed in new directions while remaining faithful to certain core practices of the past.[98] The *Cheguk sinmun* (*Imperial Post*, 1898–1910) chose its name in celebration of the emperor, but as its first editorial stated, the paper was for the people. Like the *Tongnip sinmun*, it published in the vernacular and was said to have the widest circulation among the uneducated and women.[99] The *TaeHan maeil sinbo* (*Korea Daily News*, 1904–10) covered Japanese actions on the peninsula in more detail than any other paper of that period. Owned by an Englishman, the *TaeHan maeil sinbo*'s protection under extraterritorial laws gave the paper and its Korean staff the political leeway that guaranteed its spot as the most popular paper of the day. By 1907 it was publishing three daily issues, one each in vernacular Korean, mixed script, and English.[100]

Editors and writers came from all over Korea to the capital city to work in the press. While some local Korean-language newspapers did exist, the tradition of Seoul as the heart of the peninsula's intellectual activity was only reinforced by the rise of the new media.[101] After 1905, with the widespread formation of groups to promote education, regional associations assumed a more vital function as the organizing principle for nationalist writers. Chŏlla, Kyonggi-Ch'unchŏng, the northwest, and southern Kyŏngsang, among others, had their own associations to raise funds for schools in their area and publish monthly journals. These monthlies advertised their efforts and offered a voice to regional perspectives and differences on the nation. A form of gentle one-upmanship — Who was the most enlightened? — can be found in these writings, presenting the people of their region and their group as contributing the most to the nationalist project. The Northwest Educational Association, for example, teased readers from other regions about how their own members were the most advanced, boasting about their region's special connection to the nation's founders.[102] Central dailies would comment on the level of reforms in certain regions, comparing them with their own past records or other areas of the peninsula, such that northern P'yŏng'an could

be praised as the province that had sold the most books, bought the most newspapers, and built the most schools.[103]

Yi Songhŭi has examined the Northwest Educational Association, analyzing the social background of its membership. Between 1906 and 1908, the number of people willing to pay the one-time entry fee of one *wŏn* and monthly dues of twenty *chŏn* (later reduced to ten) expanded from the 108 founders of the organization to some 1,027 individuals. These included school principals, teachers, and students as well as county magistrates, prefecture heads, an assortment of minor officials at both the central and local levels, and individuals identifying themselves as lawyers, translators, and businessmen.[104] Significantly, for many people, membership was determined by the new category of career, as opposed to the status affiliations of the Chosŏn dynasty. This was a new professional elite combined with the old elite of officialdom. Biographies of leading writers and editors reveal that all were highly educated, usually in traditional Confucian schools, and that some had even passed the government examinations before they were abolished in 1895.[105] Most were of either *yangban* status or what Kyung Moon Hwang has called "secondary status groups," those groups between the *yangban* and the commoners, including the *chungin*, who filled technical positions in the bureaucracy, the *hyangni* or clerks, who ran day-to-day operations in local districts, and the *sŏŏl*, the illegitimate offspring of *yangban*.[106]

As the membership roles of the Northwest Educational Association suggest, there was a great deal of interaction among government officials, nationalist organizations, and newspapers. The Independence Club, sponsor of the *Tongnip sinmun*, was known in its early years for its debates on current affairs that brought together leading government officials with its nonofficial members. Only in its last year, when its reproach of the heads of ministries intensified and the court's support began to erode, did officials withdraw their membership.[107]

At a time when journalism had yet to emerge as a stable profession, career paths reflected this interaction as well, as many people involved with the press served stints in the bureaucracy. For those people who wanted to coax and berate the state into undertaking reforms, it always must have been tempting to move into positions of power where they could do what they themselves had urged. Yun Ch'iho, one of the prominent publishers of the *Tongnip sinmun*, served in various positions in the government after the paper was shut down. In 1903, he became the magistrate of Ch'onan County

and later a cabinet minister. Sŏng Agyŏng, general manager of the *Hwangsŏng sinmun*, left after nine years at the paper to become the magistrate of P'ŭngch'on County in 1907.[108] Less typical was the peripatetic career of Kim Kyohŏn, a major publicist and second patriarch for the Tan'gŭn-worshiping religion, Taejonggyo. Kim resigned from a string of official positions at the age of thirty-one to join the Independence Club, only to return to the employ of the government as an editor of its publications after the club was disbanded in 1899. In 1906, he accepted an official position in local government, transferring once again to the government-publishing bureau in 1909 before finally quitting in 1910 to devote himself full time to the Taejonggyo.[109] The desire of the members of some organizations like the TaeHan Hyŏphoe to enter the government was sufficient, according to Pak Ch'ansŭng, for them to refrain from any serious criticism of officials for fear of alienating potential future employers.[110]

Except for the most prolific and prominent writers, journalism was a less than reliable career path, in part because the newspaper and journal enterprises rested on shaky financial foundations. To be sure, newspapers were commercial enterprises, but for the most part they were undercapitalized, their ability to stay afloat indicating more their commitment to nationalist causes than an elusive profitability. The *Hwangsŏng sinmun* raised capital with an initial offering of five hundred shares at ten *yang* each, with the profits from advertising and sales to be distributed to the shareholders. Like so many of its competitors, however, the *Hwangsŏng sinmun* hardly rated as a successful enterprise: not all the shares were sold at first, and a subsequent offering made in 1905 to alleviate financial pressures also proved disappointing.[111] Those with the resources to invest were clearly wary of committing their capital to such a newfangled institution. Their apprehension was well founded. Few newspapers in this period attained financial stability. The *Cheguk sinmun* closed its offices on four occasions between 1899 and 1907 because of financial shortcomings, and readers of the *Hwangsŏng sinmun* were constantly greeted with front-page notices warning of the paper's imminent collapse.[112] Part of the problem stemmed from advertising revenues, which despite editorial enjoinments to businessmen explaining that ads "open the eyes and ears of all under heaven . . . and reap enormous benefits," were insufficient.[113]

Another difficulty encountered by the press, as every editor bemoaned at one time or another, was inadequate readership. Newspapers may have caused a stir in the heated political environment of these years, but their

readership still constituted an exclusive club. The editors of the *Tongnip sinmun* complained that Koreans were not even interested in becoming enlightened, citing popular purchasing habits as proof: they will buy cigarettes but will not spare a single coin for a newspaper.[114] Many Koreans "don't even know what a newspaper is," lamented the *Hwangsŏng sinmun*. "This newspaper has already been published for eight or nine years, but still there are people who have not given it a glance."[115] Notices in the *Hwangsŏng sinmun* stated that circulation over its thirteen-year history hovered around three thousand copies. The *Cheguk sinmun* fluctuated more dramatically. Averaging between two thousand to three thousand copies, its circulation fell as low as one thousand and, for a number of months, even topped four thousand copies.[116] The *Tongnip sinmun* wavered between two thousand and three thousand copies.[117] Educational journals published after 1905 reached similar levels of circulation.[118] The *TaeHan maeil sinbo* captured the widest readership. At its inauguration, fewer than four thousand copies were printed, but by 1908, once it had set up separate Korean-language, mixed-script, and English-language editions, its total circulation reached more than thirteen thousand.[119]

Most distressing for the papers' financial backers was that these figures represented printed, not paid, copies. It was common practice to send off copies before payment. As many editorials complained, readers too frequently were tardy in remitting their subscription fees. This situation was exacerbated by the eagerness of some papers, like the *Cheguk sinmun*, to send multiple copies to local officials with the expectation that these would be made available to the people in their jurisdiction, only to be surprised that not all officials wished to support the press with timely payments for unrequested subscriptions.[120] According to one likely exaggerated accounting, the *Tongnip sinmun* was owed the staggering sum of more than U.S. $175,000 by delinquent officials.[121] Distribution difficulties abounded as all the papers depended on the newly founded and not always reliable postal system.[122] Late deliveries became worse after 1905 under the Japanese Protectorate. Readers' letters regularly complained that they did not receive the paper for days on end and that their copies often arrived in bunches.[123] A priest in Pongsan County listed each issue that he had failed to receive: a total of forty-one over a five-month period, which was still better than the predicament of another reader who complained that he had missed about half the issues.[124]

Because of the lack of capital and the difficulties in persuading readers

to send in their subscription fees, most of the publications depended on the largesse of their readers. Only with subventions could they stay afloat. On a number of occasions, Emperor Kojong made significant donations, in 1903 contributing five hundred *wŏn* to the *Hwangsŏng sinmun*, in addition to two thousand *wŏn* and a new printing press to the *Cheguk sinmun*.[125] Even the popular *TaeHan maeil sinbo* is said to have depended on regular, secret contributions from the emperor to avoid bankruptcy.[126] The *Hwangsŏng sinmun* at one point launched a subscription and donation drive, in which the names of all contributors were regularly printed under the title "A List of the Civilized" (Munmyŏngnok).[127]

Circulation rates alone do not capture the full range of the newspapers' audience, however. Newspapers appear to have quickly become a part of the oral culture of the cities and villages. "Every time one passes through the streets or markets," described one observer of the *Cheguk sinmun*, "there is either a youth or a white-haired old man, holding a copy of a paper in his hands, reading aloud at the top of his voice."[128] Reform-minded county magistrates would have someone at public gatherings read from a paper such as the *Tongnip sinmun*, and at least one reader wrote letters to the paper, urging other officials to do the same.[129] Still others noted how frequently newspapers exchanged hands, one hearing of a case in the countryside in which a single copy of the *Tongnip sinmun* was read by no fewer than eighty-five people.[130] Another reader noted he received his copy of the *Hwangsŏng sinmun* from his scholarly friends.[131] Even a conservative scholar residing in the countryside noted that when the *Hwangsŏng sinmun* arrived in his locality, people in "all four directions" competed to be the first to buy and read it. A perhaps overly nostalgic former publisher of the *Tongnip sinmun* remembered that when a subscriber had "finished reading it [the paper], [he] turned it over to his neighbors, and in this way each copy was read by at least two hundred people."[132]

The small circulation of newspapers also belied their political influence during this period. Isabella Bird, the famous Victorian traveler, testified to their impact, commenting that the *Tongnip sinmun* was "becoming something of a terror to evil doers."[133] Indeed, the best indication of their power was that these so-called evil doers repeatedly tried to muzzle the press. Korean government officials, unaccustomed to the external scrutiny and criticism of their activities, mulled over the possibility of restricting the press on a number of occasions after the inception of the *Tongnip sinmun*. Foreign diplomats secretly encouraged controls, especially after the *Tongnip sinmun* published in 1898 some secret documents divulging Russian and Japanese attempts to exact concessions from the Korean government. An active nationalist press, it was feared, could interfere with their concession diplomacy by mobilizing public opinion against the granting of special privileges. By 1899, Emperor Kojong ordered that appropriate laws be prepared, but none was actually promulgated.[134]

It was not until the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War that editors had to take censorship into account. On August 20, 1904, the editors of the *Hwangsŏng sinmun* and *Cheguk sinmun* were called into the offices of the Japanese military command and informed that reports on military movements would be prohibited.[135] All newspapers would be reviewed and censored before they were published, a process that over the next few years expanded to include impermissible topics well beyond military matters. Initially explained as a wartime measure and not formalized in any legal statutes, the power to censor was not about to be relinquished due to the inconveniences of peace.

Although the war ended, censorship did not. After 1905, censorship was under the control of the police, though still not legally codified. Writers, generally a more clever breed than censors, nevertheless found creative ways to get their message past the police.[136] Two years into his mandate, the leading Japanese official remained less than satisfied. As Itō Hirobumi told his audience in a 1907 Tokyo speech, one stroke of a Korean editorial pen had far more power to move Koreans than "one hundred words from my own mouth."[137] Coming from a man whose record in Japan showed that he brooked no dissent, such a public statement, while attesting to the influence of the Korean press, was an ominous signal. Sure enough, less than half a year later, the first set of formal censorship laws was announced, intended to rein in the press and make Itō's words more powerful than Korean editorial pens. Any overt challenge or criticism of Japanese rule was sure to be blocked out. Over the next three years, the editors of Korean publications had to work within these laws, leaving readers with the added titillation of trying to puzzle out just what words might lie under the censor's black stamp.

Only the *TaeHan maeil sinbo*, a paper owned by a former reporter for the London Daily Chronicle, the Englishman Ernest Bethell, escaped the scrutiny of the censor. Protected by Bethell's extraterritorial status, Korean writers worked unhindered by the censor, often writing scathing articles about Japanese policy on the peninsula and thus ensuring it the largest audience of any newspaper. Political pressure by Japan through its ally

Britain did succeed, however, in tempering the tone of the paper and even landed Bethell in jail.[138] But the paper maintained a critical editorial platform until it was effectively shut down upon annexation and turned into the official mouthpiece of the colonial authority, the *Maeil sinbo* (*Daily Newspaper*). From this point on, no other Korean-language newspaper operated on the peninsula. A few magazines stripped of any overt political content continued, but otherwise this was a period that historians of the Korean press have often termed the "dark period."[139]

Whether due to press restrictions, problems with distribution, or the disinclination of much of the population to take this new institution seriously, none of the papers that arose during the period grew to the level of mass-circulation dailies. The Korean nationalist movement grew rapidly between the 1890s and the March First Movement of 1919, when as Japanese-arrest reports show, participants in the pro-independence demonstrations numbered as many as 2 million people, ranging across all socioeconomic classes, both genders, and various geographic regions.[140] Newspapers and journals, though not the sole agents, were certainly handmaidens to this growth.

Print media were also just as important to mediating the incorporation of the peninsula into the larger global ecumene, explaining changes on and around the peninsula and making them part of their readers' daily lives. They were the most visible public organs engaged in redefining the Korean nation, both spatially and temporally. To use Benedict Anderson's terms, newspapers were the primary location for the *re*imagining of the nation away from the conceptual framework inherited from the late Chosŏn dynasty toward a nationalist vision rooted in global ideologies of capitalist modernity. It is in this sense, as producers and disseminators of knowledge about the nation, that newspapers were so important to the nationalist movement in Korea. From the initial printing of the *Tongnip sinmun*, when only four pages were offered three times a week, to the last years before annexation, when there were literally hundreds of pages available each month for every reader, the Korean nation emerged for the first time as the primary subject of public discourse. In these pages immense quantities of information about the nation as well as new conceptual treatments of the peninsula were produced to shape the social, political, and economic behavior of their readers. In the years immediately after the Sino-Japanese War, one of the top priorities in this process of reimagining was both to disengage from and to reconstitute the ways in which the nation had been understood in relation to China and the region.