



# English-Language Journals in Korean Studies: *Their Significance and Challenges*

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## Abstract

*It has been sixty years since English-language journals in Korean Studies began to be published in Korea. During this time span, Korean academic circles and journals have undergone various changes, which resulted in the transformation of both the journals and their surrounding environment. With due consideration of these changes, this paper attempts to investigate the significance and agendas of English-language journals in Korean Studies. First, it investigates why Korean intellectuals felt the need to learn English during the modern transitional period by examining the case of Yu Gil-jun. It then examines the initial goals of English-language magazines and journals in Korea. In the early phase, these publications tended to deliver one-way statements, almost sounding like publicity pitches, but they gradually took on the facade of an arena of scholarly discussion and output. The now defunct Pictorial Korea began publication following national liberation to inform the world about Korea by using photographs accompanied by brief texts. Korea Journal, which began publication immediately following the May 16 Coup (1961) for the prospective readership of overseas Koreans as well as foreigners, has transformed itself multiple times over the years and acquired the characteristics of a specialized academic journal. Seoul Journal of Korean Studies, which began publication following the 1988 Seoul Summer Olympics, initially took the approach of transmitting to the world research outcomes in Korean Studies in Korea. English-language journals published in Korea are expected to play a role in the advancement of Korean scholarship. This is because they can serve as a sphere of symbiosis and debate between Korean Studies inside and outside Korea. It is particularly hoped the journals will contribute to complementing or overcoming the closedness of the disciplinary system of the Korean academy.*

**Keywords:** Korean Studies, English-language journals, *Korea Journal*, *Seoul Journal of Korean Studies*, *Pictorial Korea*, disciplinary system

## Introduction

The *Korea Journal* celebrates its 60th anniversary in 2021, boasting the longest history among English-language journals in the field of Korean Studies. Beginning as a monthly periodical released by the Korean National Commission for UNESCO in September 1961, it switched to a quarterly in 1991 and has been indexed in the AHCI (Arts and Humanities Citation Index) since 2001. In 2018, it began being published by the Academy of Korean Studies and editorial work is now performed by that academic institute. As shown, the journal has experienced quite a few changes in its sixty-year trajectory.

Over this same period, Korea has achieved enormous political and economic development, and the country's academic circles have also grown in quantity and quality. Glancing at statistics compiled by the National Research Foundation of Korea (NRF), Korea had a total of 9,821 registered academic institutes as of February 2021, of which 5,716 (including academic associations) are in the humanities and social sciences. Of the 5,824 research journals published in Korea, 1,827 are registered with the NRF in the domains of the humanities and social sciences. These figures show an explosive quantitative growth, incomparable to the early days of the *Korea Journal* when there were only a handful of discipline-specific associations, e.g., the Korean Historical Association (Yeoksahakhoe, 1952), the Society of Korean Language and Literature (Gugeogungmunhakhoe, 1953), and the Korean Philosophical Association (Hanguk cheolhakhoe, 1953).

With the growth of academic associations and organizations and the growth in number and coverage of research journals, appropriate support systems were put in place. While journals and their publishing institutes established guiding rules and regulations, the government established foundations to provide academic support and to establish guidelines on journal editing and publication. The Korean Science Foundation (Hanguk gwahak jaedan, 1977) and the Korea Research Foundation (Hanguk haksul jinheung jaedan, 1981) were formed, followed by the Korea Foundation for International Cooperation of Science and Technology (Gukje gwahak gisul hyeomnyeok jaedan, 2004) to promote international cooperation in

science and technology. In 2009, the three were merged to launch the NRF. Currently, the NRF oversees the journal registration system, which provides practical management guidelines and standards for journal editing and publication, albeit some of its elements remain under dispute. In short, previously, academic associations and organizations collected manuscripts and published them in journals according to their own objectives and criteria, but today they adopt the standardized approach of referring to the journal registration guidelines prepared by the NRF to review and publish submitted manuscripts.

English-language journals in Korean Studies have experienced similar changes in the environment, thus acquiring a different facade from 60 years ago. This certainly deserves serious attention in the context of academic history, and its specific aspects need to be examined to prepare for their future. As a matter of fact, these issues were examined in a forum organized on the occasion of the *Korea Journal's* 50th anniversary,<sup>1</sup> so it does not seem very efficient to try to discuss what changes have occurred over the past decade since then. There have, obviously, been some changes, including the change of the journal's publisher and some modifications of the NRF's journal review principles, but the effects are, apparently, yet to be explicitly

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1. The Korean National Commission for UNESCO convened a symposium in September 2011 on the theme, "Strategies for Advancing Korea's English Humanity Journals in the Globalization Era," commemorating the 50th anniversary of the *Korea Journal*. At the event, four papers were presented and a roundtable talk was organized that included the editors of English-language journals in Korean Studies published in Korea. The participants examined the status of English-language journals published in Korea with focus on the *Korea Journal* as well as institutional approaches with the view of helping those journals grow into world-class academic journals of international recognition. The four papers were: "What Makes a Prestigious Journal?: Conditions for a World-class Humanities Journal" (Roger T. Ames); "Gungnaeoe hangukhak yeongujadeul-ui *Korea Journal* hwalyong mit insik josa" (An Analysis of the Utilization and Perception of the *Korea Journal* by Researchers of Korean Studies in Korea and Beyond) (Han Do-Hyun and Gun Park); "*Korea Journal*-eul tonghae bon hangukhak-ui gukjehwa" (Internationalization of Korean Studies Examined through the Analysis of the *Korea Journal*) (Park Myoung-Kyu); and "Gungnae inmunhaksulji-ui gukje inyong saekin DB deungjae hyeonhwang-gwa gwaje" (The Current Status and Agenda of Korea's Humanities Journals in Their Indexation in International Citation Index Databases) (Ko Young Man).

manifested. Meanwhile, the Autumn 2011 issue of the *Korea Journal* released included five articles on the special topic of “Korean Studies Viewed through Academic Journals and Organizations,”<sup>2</sup> which delved into various facets of changes in Korean Studies since national liberation as reflected in journals, social criticism magazines, academic institutes at universities and in the private sector, associations, and dominant theories. Although there is a time lag of several years, they seem to provide sufficient resources for an overall understanding of the changes in Korean Studies over the period, which constitute the basis of the *Korea Journal*.

Therefore, if we are to investigate the current status and future agendas of English-language journals in Korean Studies, we need to take a slightly different approach on the basis of the outcomes of the *Korea Journal*'s 50th anniversary. This paper attempts to investigate the significance of English-language journals and magazines in Korean society and academia by reviewing some cases from its early modern period and ponder the future tasks of English-language journals in view of the current reality of Korean Studies both within Korea and beyond.

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2. Unlike existing discussions on the history of Korean Studies, which often reveal a tendency to dwell on its inception period, the Autumn 2011 issue devoted the analysis to the institutional aspects forming the backdrop of Korean Studies in the post-liberation period, thereby exposing its current conditions and drawing out the challenges now facing it. Although they do not pay particular attention to English-language journals, the papers enable us to speculate on the formation and development of Korean Studies which formed the practical basis of English-language journals. The five papers were: “Shifts in Korea’s Intellectual Community and Academia in the Early Years of Nation-Building: A Study of *Hakpung*, an Interdisciplinary Journal by Eulyoo Publishing” (Jeong Jong Hyun); “Transition from Far Eastern/Eastern/East Asian Studies to Korean Studies: Focusing on the Practice of Korean Humanities Institutes in Their Early Period” (Kim Hyun-ju); “Time of Capital, Time of a Nation: Changes in Korean Intellectual Media in the 1960s–1970s” (Lee Hye Ryoung); “Korean Studies between the Social Sciences and Historical Studies: Debates over Modern and Contemporary Korean History” (Kim Baek Yung); and “Changes in the 1980s Nationalist Minjung Academic Communities and the Alternative Academic Communities” (Kim Won).

## The Need for the Use of English in the Early Modern Period and the Emergence of English-Language Magazines Published by Koreans

Today, English is regarded as a universal language. But not everyone speaks it fluently. Even fewer can express themselves or convey information in English as correctly and as profusely as they would do in their mother tongues. As can easily be presumed, it was much more the case in Korea during the modern transitional period, when the Chinese script had not completely lost its status as the common instrument for writing, and when English had not yet attracted large popular interest. What was the view of English held by intellectuals of the day when there were very few people desiring to learn the language? Intellectuals of the early modern period—who displayed interest in English or writing in English despite their lack of English proficiency—seem to have regarded English only as one Western language of many, or a language that belonged to the group of horizontal scripts, often dubbed “crab walk scripts” (蟹文),<sup>3</sup> and not as one having the privileged status it enjoys today relative to other Western languages. In a word, it was just one of multiple mediums one might use in order to learn about the new world.

As a matter of fact, however, English was virtually a universal language in the world by then, and Koreans in public office, media, and educational organizations—though very small in number—had relatively abundant opportunities of exposure to the language. That is, English was in a fairly different situation in comparison with French or Russian,

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3. For an example of the term “crab walk scripts” used in a text from that period, see Jang Ji-yeon, “Jungdeung segye yeoksaseo” (Foreword to World History for Secondary Education), *Wiam mungo* (Collected Works of Jang Ji-yeon), Book 4, p. 153: “噫. 苟非淹博於萬國之史, 能通於外國之文, 鍊達於自國之習慣, 斟酌於學界之程度, 何敢與議於萬國教科史之編述也耶. 吾友南宮君憶, 實惟其人也, 識精學博, 而通曉蟹文, 又於本國習俗與教育程度, 諳鍊者, 已數十年矣” (Ah. Unless one has ample knowledge of the histories of all nations, understands foreign languages, is familiar with one’s own country’s practices, and discerns the degree of development of the academic circles, how can one venture to write history textbooks on the nations of the world? My dear friend, Mr. Namgung Eok, is such a person in a true sense. He has broad and precise knowledge, understands crab walk scripts [蟹文], and is well-versed in the nation’s customs and educational development over dozens of years).

which only an even smaller number of people had access to learning in a religious or regional context. A few intellectuals, among them Namgung Eok (1863–1939), a graduate of the Dongmunhak (an English language school), partook in textbook publication and English interpretation. As a result of his political exile from Korea, Philip Jaisohn (1864–1951) went to the United States to study and later returned to Korea to become actively involved in media. They made use of the Western knowledge which they had obtained in English for the enlightenment of the Korean public. They also communicated to foreigners who resided in Korea or neighboring countries what was going on in Korea by communicating in English or publishing English-language newspapers, but this was not apparently their main activity. Of the intellectuals who possessed English skills, Yu Gil-jun requires special attention. Yu went to Japan for studies at Keiō Gijuku 慶應義塾 in 1881. In 1883, he visited the United States as a member of the entourage of Korea's first diplomatic delegation (報聘使) and stayed there to study, entering Governor Dummer Academy in Massachusetts. He authored *Seoyu gyeonmun* 西遊見聞 (Observations on Travels in the West), which provide his insights into the Western world gained through his experience and residency in the United States, notably, various facets of enlightenment, in a new writing style that used a mixture of Korean and Chinese characters.

It has been alleged that Yu composed this work by referring to or emulating Japanese translations of Western literature, including Fukujawa Yukichi's 福澤諭吉 *Seiyō jijō* 西洋事情 (Things Western), but in fact he relied directly on English books; David Warren's *An Elementary Treatise on Physical Geography* (1869) was a main reference for Parts 1 and 2 of the book (Seo 2019).<sup>4</sup> For many of the book's other descriptions, for which the references are unknown, it is assumed Yu drew largely on the knowledge and experience he obtained in America, including through the reading of English-language works.<sup>5</sup>

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4. This book was used then as a third-grade natural geography textbook.

5. This possibility is detected in Part 15, which describes a wedding, funeral, how to make friends, and proper etiquette towards women. For the intrinsic context of Part 15, see Hwang (2021, 104–105).

Aside from using English as a means of acquiring knowledge and information, he was interested in English as a language in and of itself. In his work to compose a Korean writing style that would represent the ideal form of speech and writing, Yu took English as the target of comparison. Believing that “English and French, which initially had foreign elements borrowed from other languages, were developed into their authentic forms as we know them today by analyzing grammar,”<sup>6</sup> Yu was convinced that Chinese characters would gradually disappear from Korean sentences. While it is unclear how much interest he had in writing works in English, he was seemingly more into publishing Korean grammar books and school textbooks. As noted, English was certainly employed as a useful instrument for obtaining Western knowledge, but this does not mean in any way that Koreans of the modern transitional period or the early modern period had no desire to write in English, because it was undeniable that they needed to use English to move beyond the borders of Korea and speak something to the world. This is well illustrated by some period newspapers, e.g., *Dongnip sinmun* (The Independent) and *Daehan maeil sinbo* (Korea Daily News), which published the English editions as well. Later, when declarations such as the Declaration of the March First Independence Movement (1919) were released in the papers, their English translations were also printed as a way of reaching foreigners or global citizens.

After Korea became an independent country following its liberation from Japanese colonial rule in 1945, it increasingly felt the imperative to speak to the world. Notably, it hoped to inform the world of its history and culture, and by doing so, publicize the legitimacy of its independence. But publishing English-language journals of academic significance required more time. Translating the need into a concrete outcome upon liberation was a daunting task considering the lack of development of a freestanding academia and the struggling publishing sector; even today, there are not

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6. “Joseon munjeon seo” (Preface of *Joseon munjeon* [Grammar of the Korean Language]), *Yu Gil-jun jeonseo* (Collected Works of Yu Gil-jun), Vol. 2, p. 7.

many English-language journals that inquire into Korea.<sup>7</sup>

Considering the state of things in the post-liberation period, it can be said that English-language magazines released in the name of the International Publicity League of Korea (IPLK) had special significance. The IPLK published a magazine titled *Gukje bodo* (Pictorial Korea) in November 1945, which was followed in January 1950 by *Pictorial Korea*. The two magazines could be regarded as one,<sup>8</sup> for the former's English title was *Pictorial Korea* and it gradually became akin to the latter in structure and size.<sup>9</sup>

While they both had the basic format of presenting pictures and photos with brief relevant text, the early issues of *Gukje bodo* contained a fair amount of text in addition to pictorial images. It also contained, albeit disproportionately, reportage and information on the external world as well as Korea. Below is the *Gukje bodo*'s table of contents for its 12th issue of April 1948 (author's supplementary notes in brackets):

Prologue / March First Independence Movement Memorial Ceremony / Ahn Chang-ho [short biography] / Extraordinary News from Overseas / Japanese War Criminals Put to Punishment in China / International News / First Steps of Democratic Elections / Commentaries on International News: Public Welfare and Politics / Profile of an Outstanding Korean: Shin Ik-hee / Who Will Be the Next US President? / China's Best Comic

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7. Park Myoung-Kyu examined the inception chronology of English-language journals focusing on Korea and found two appeared before 1960, three in the 1960s, six in the 1970s, eight in the 1980s, seventeen in the 1990s, and six in the 2000s (Park 2011, 57.) These figures include not just domestic journals but those printed overseas.
  8. The greatest difference between *Gukje bodo* and *Pictorial Korea* was their prospective audiences, which were explicitly described in their respective newspaper advertisements. While the former was described as "a publication which people would want to send to their overseas friends," the latter was to "offer foreigners an overview of Korea in pictures and photos." They both may fall under the category of photobooks or photojournalistic magazines. For the features of the two, see Julianne N. Kelso (2015).
  9. The first issue of *Pictorial Korea* was published on January 10, 1950, had 229 pages, and included a prologue, the National Anthem, and photos of Korean cultural assets and paintings accompanied by short English texts. *Gukje bodo* had only 40 pages in its early stages, but grew to around 200 pages over time.

Strips / Voyage to Mt. Halla / Budding Artistic Talents [photos of dancers] / Visage of Spring [footage on the drama performance of *Chunhyangjeon*] / Essays (Jeong Bi-seok, Song Jeong-hoon, and Lee Eun-hui) / Maiden of Patriotic Martyrdom “Ryu Gwansun” / Art [6 paintings] / Local Breakthrough: Daegu, Magnificent City of Southeastern Korea / Industry Visits: Gyeongseong Textile Co., Hanseong Leather Co., Construction of New Transformer Station in Anamdong (Seoul), and Dongyang Mining and Manufacturing Co. / Editor’s Notes

All the items on the list—except the Prologue, Essays, and Editor’s Notes—were translated into English.<sup>10</sup> The translation was allegedly done by Choi Weon-yeol, an IPLK founding member (Choi 2003, 10). With only the main texts translated, the magazine does not seem to have had a systematic editing style of presenting Korean and English texts side by side. Yet this does reveal that overseas or foreign readers were part of its target audience. Meanwhile, commentaries (editorials) and brief biographies of outstanding figures (such as Ahn Chang-ho, Shin Ik-hee, and Ryu Gwansun) had relatively lengthy texts, implying the greater weight given to written information over visual images for these items. But overall, *Gukje bodo* tried to transmit information and construct its messages via photos and pictures.<sup>11</sup>

Putting aside the brief coverage of international news, the core message that it intended to convey was, in short, the facade of Korea on the path to development, as illustrated by the featured biographies of patriots, the cultural and arts scenes, and visual images of urban and industrial growth. This can be understood in the same context as that of *Pictorial Korea*, which took some photos from foreign magazines (e.g., *Life*) and altered their

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10. It is unclear why the three elements were not translated into English. Also, in the case of “Extraordinary News from Overseas,” photos, along with their captions, were copied from foreign magazines, making Korean translations look as if they were added to the English captions.

11. Song Jeong-hoon, a leading figure in the International Publicity League of Korea, was originally a painter. The front section of the first issue of *Gukje bodo* printed in November 1945 had photos taken by him under the caption, “Scenes of Seoul overwhelmed with joy after arrival of Allied Forces.”

captions in a way to highlight Korea's development as a sovereign state.<sup>12</sup> The purpose of publishing in English was to send a unidirectional message to the outside world.

### **Publication of English-Language Journals in Korean Studies and Their Aims**

*Pictorial Korea* and *Gukje bodo* were photo-oriented magazines, differing from academic journals involving academic experts in the writing of research manuscripts. A magazine with a structure and an editorial body befitting a scholarly journal finally appeared with the publication of the *Korea Journal* in September 1961. Yet at the outset the *Korea Journal* did not have the full visage of a journal, as its early issues displayed a mixture of journalism and scholarship, with the focus gradually shifting toward the latter over the years (Park 2011, 62–67). Let us examine the structure of the journal's early issues, taking the December 1961 (No. 4) issue as an example. Featuring Hangeul (the Korean Alphabet) as its main theme, its table of contents is as follows:<sup>13</sup>

- [Editorial] Five Centuries of Hangul [Hangeul]
- [Article] Hangul in Comparative Linguistics (Lee Sung-Nyong)
  - Hangul—A Historical Review (Chang Dok-Sun)
  - Chu Si-kyong and Modernization of Hangul (Kim Yun-Kyung)
  - King Sejong, Versatile Monarch gives the Nation own alphabet (Whang Won-Koo)
- [Interview] Yu Dal-yung, NRM Director
- [Year in Review] Revolution Spurs Nation to “New Start”
  - Economy Strives to Move toward New Horizon
  - Education Undergoes Renovations

12. For concrete examples of the alteration, see chapter 3 of Kelso (2015).

13. Only full-length articles are currently posted at the homepage of the *Korea Journal* at the Academy of Korean Studies. To see the journal's overall structure, one needs to check the physical copy. Some items, such as *sijo* (traditional Korean verse) in English, are missing in the table of contents.

- Sidelights from Local Papers
- City Square
- [Pictorial Pages] National Art Exhibition
- [Review] National Art Exhibition
  - Western Painting and Sculpture
  - Oriental Painting
  - Calligraphy
  - Reports on “Chosen Gagukai”
- [News in Summary] Education, Science & culture
- [Personalities]
- [Chronology]
- [Bibliography]
- [Universities & Colleges] Yonsei University

Although some of the contents seem a bit odd for an academic journal (e.g., newspaper report summaries and a university review), it had the structure of a journal in that it contained articles by specialized researchers who were representative of the academic circles of the day and had an editorial body, including a chair. These were new features not found in *Pictorial Korea* or *Gukje bodo*. Despite the political undertones of the journal’s contents, e.g., an interview with the chair of the National Reconstruction Movement (NRM), it did seek to communicate academic trends by showcasing scholarly papers and major publications. It also covered the arts scene with pictures of the National Art Exhibition, Western and Eastern paintings, and calligraphy, and inserted English translations of literary works here and there, exposing its intent of publicizing Korean culture and arts to the world. While it has been noted that the *Korea Journal* in its early days displayed the “traits of sophisticated publicity journalism” through its conveying of Korea’s political and economic issues to a foreign audience (Park 2011, 65), its publicity strategy appeared more somber and refined in comparison with *Pictorial Korea*, laying a considerable emphasis on culture, arts, and academic endeavors.

On the same page as the table of contents of the aforementioned issue also appears a Foreword under the signature of the director-general of the Secretariat of the Korean National Commission for UNESCO. It draws

our attention in that it contains two parts, one in Korean and the other in English and each with differing content. This was the greeting presented in the December 1961 issue (No. 4):

[In Korean]

Dear Korean Students Studying Abroad and Other Koreans Living Abroad!

The eventful year of 1961 draws to a close this month.

This is the year of the May Revolution which harbors new hopes for a true democracy and a better future. We, as a people united by blood, are filled with strong emotions, passing the last month of the year.

The *Korea Journal*, which has endeavored to bridge you and your remote motherland and to connect Korea with the world, is also transitioning to a new year and the publishing and editorial staff on this end feel the same.

This year-end edition features works on the special topic of Hangeul and the National Art Exhibition. We appreciate the warm support you have given to us and promise to make our utmost efforts to be a faithful partner to you and the new world in the coming year.

From deep in our hearts we hope that the Nation marches forward to a bright new future and wish you continued growth and good fortune in the years ahead.

[In English]

Dear Readers,

On behalf of the staff of *Korea Journal* and the Korean National Commission for UNESCO, I wish to extend to all of you the season's greetings and appreciation for your continued patronage to our publication.

The year-end greeting was two-fold: a Korean-written part addressed to "Korean Students Studying Abroad and Other Koreans Living Abroad" and an English one for its general audience, i.e., foreigners. The rather long message to Koreans was presumably associated with the domestic political conditions of the time, and yet it clearly reveals that Koreans living abroad were one of its major audience groups. *Pictorial Korea*, too, also revealed a consciousness of Koreans abroad as a target audience, as demonstrated

by the inclusion of writings by Korea-born foreign adoptees in which they imagine what their motherland might look like (Kelso 2015, 130–131),<sup>14</sup> but it would be far-fetched to say that they were expected to be a primary audience.

The *Korea Journal* gradually transformed itself in the direction of an academic journal. For example, the contents of the April 1972 issue—which took the format, Hangul & Hanmun [Special Topic] - Review - Outlook - Departments—displays stronger elements of an academic journal compared to the December 1961 issue. The *Korea Journal* became a quarterly in 1991 in line with the typical publication schedule of journals published in Korea, and in 2018 the Academy of Korean Studies, an academic research institute, took over publication. During this process, papers published in the journal gradually began to cover a wider variety of topics and authors (Park 2011, 67–73),<sup>15</sup> which could be regarded as resulting from changes in the spectrum and characteristics of its target audience.

The *Seoul Journal of Korean Studies*, which began publication in 1988, is probably the first English-language journal in Korean Studies that had the purported goal of being an academic journal from its inception. It has been speculated that there were political forces at work in the background that influenced its publication, directly or indirectly. Just as *Gukje bodo* began publication the same year as national liberation (1945) and the *Korea Journal* in the year of the 1961 military coup and subsequent installation of a military regime, the *Seoul Journal of Korean Studies* came out immediately after the 1988 Seoul Summer Olympics. Culture and the arts figure prominently at the Olympics, so the context was somewhat different in this case. However, in the sense that the Olympics generated the opportunity to publicize to the world Korea's past history, current realities, and future potentiality, its implications were not much different from that of liberation or the emergence of the military regime.

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14. In her essay, "Song Echoing Inside a Mountain Pavilion," Jennifer Kwon Dobbs writes how she envisions images of the motherland inspired by pictures of the Seokguram Grotto.

15. Reviewing the changes in the *Korea Journal* from the 1990s, Park notes that an increasing number of research articles try to tackle diverse subjects and methodologies, influenced by interaction with Korean Studies communities abroad.

The first issue of the *Seoul Journal of Korean Studies* included a “Letter from the Editor,” the editor here also being director of the Institute for Korean Studies at Seoul National University. The letter states that the Ministry of Education of Korea provided financial support for the journal’s publication and the Institute for Korean Studies had editorial responsibility. It also mentions that Korea was in the limelight on the occasion of the Seoul Olympics and received worldwide attention for its rapid economic growth, becoming one of the newly industrializing countries, and that this helped increasing numbers of people to explore Korea’s history and cultural traditions, which were at the roots of its economic development. This created the need for an English journal to function as an instrument to inform the world of Korea’s history and culture, with the *Seoul Journal of Korean Studies* being released in response.

Further, the letter remarked on the journal’s immediate tasks and direction for future development. Setting as a top priority the need to tackle prejudices against Korea, especially those caused by misunderstandings and distortions of imperialistic scholarship, the letter claimed the journal sought to establish a forum for objective scholarship without slipping into self-laudatory dogmatic biases. The proposed direction for scholarship—though the extent to which it was actually realized is another issue—was in line with the goal pursued by Korean scholars after national liberation. All four articles and five review articles in the first issue were authored by Korean scholars, and the issue’s Book Notes dealt with research results produced in Korea, covering a selection of 37 new publications in five different fields. The articles were mostly translations of Korean-language manuscripts. In a word, the journal’s approach was to introduce to overseas readers research outcomes and trends from Korean academia. In the journal’s early issues, each article concluded with a glossary that provided brief notes on major terms used in the paper (personal names, book titles, etc.), seemingly a device to give foreign readers accurate information on them.

However, even considering the presence of unusual circumstances, such as the specific demands of the financiers or the difficulties in collaborating with overseas Korean Studies communities, the practice of a journal presenting research outcomes made solely in Korea undeniably

deviated from the goals of most other journals. This was also remote from the long-term goal spelled out in the “Letter from the Editor” in the journal’s inaugural issue: to be “an indispensable and authoritative space of academic discussions in the field of Korean Studies.” Recognizing this, the *Seoul Journal of Korean Studies* gradually reduced the ratio of English translations of already published Korean-language papers while increasing the publication of original articles written in English, to include the work of foreign scholars. Currently, the journal, like its peers, publishes articles from both Korea and abroad after peer review. It also pays more attention than before to research trends in Korean Studies in other countries, e.g., introducing foreign books in its Book Notes section. It appears, at least in form, to have moved away from making one-way statements originating from Korea and to providing a footing for mutual dialogue via “academic discussions.” This is similar to the approach that subsequent English-language journals published in Korea in the field of Korean Studies took from their outset, exemplary cases being *Acta Koreana* (1998) and *Sungkyun Journal of East Asian Studies* (2001).

### **Prospects and Challenges for English-Language Journals in Korean Studies**

In the modern transitional period, Koreans aspired to adopt knowledge, foster mutual understanding, and present their new ideas and views by using English. It was not until national liberation that they had a means to realize this aim, i.e., English-language journals. Yet English-language journals in their early days were, as mentioned above, generally less an instrument of mutual understanding than of unilateral statements directed at the outside world. Later, these journals gradually took on new roles concomitant with the development of Korean society and academia. Undoubtedly, these journals made considerable contributions, particularly, in the aspect of international academic exchange. In recognition of this, let me examine the role played by English-language journals in Korean Studies in the advancement of the Korean academy and their future potentiality. English-

language journals also exist within the Korean academic system, so I believe it worthwhile to ponder their role in Korea's academic development.

In the early phase, English-language journals set as their primary goal the introduction to the world audience "outstanding research outcomes produced in Korea." The *Seoul Journal of Korean Studies*, in particular, made this explicit from the beginning. The publication process can be summarized as follows: select research results worth introducing to a world readership—practically, foreign researchers of Korean Studies; translate these into English; add to this a review of research trends in Korea; and disseminate the publication to overseas scholars and libraries. It was actually a rough and rugged process. The editorial team members, coming from different fields, needed multiple rounds of discussion to finally select outstanding examples of already published papers. Coming to an agreement was not easy due to variances in paper selection criteria employed across disciplines. Besides, papers selected through the process were written primarily for specialized researchers in the relevant fields, using specialized terminology not in common use and often referring to materials written in Chinese characters or employing archaic vocabulary. This caused difficulties for translators who did not possess the relevant background in conveying authors' meaning. Despite all the efforts poured into their output, however, English-language journals did not really have a large impact on the Korean academy. The papers were hardly new and simply English versions of what had already been published in Korean, so Korean researchers did not naturally feel the need to read the English-language journals.<sup>16</sup>

How did this all change after these English-language began to operate as mediums for original research papers? Since the 1990s, Korean academic communities, which had to be conscious of the *view of the external world*, have brought changes to Korean Studies by trying to move beyond the

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16. Meanwhile, some people doubt that it would have been of any use, in a practical sense, to foreign researchers of Korean Studies, who were supposed to be a primary audience of the journal. Because foreign scholars who would conduct research in Korean Studies would have probably read the studies in their original Korean. However, unlike today, journals published in Korea were not easy to come by at that time, so the utility of English-language journals cannot be ignored.

exclusive realm of *gukhak* 國學 (national studies) and interplay with the US-centered research system of regional studies. It has been noted that this has resulted in the *Korea Journal* picking up special topics associated with the Western academy's problem awareness (Park 2011, 67–73), and yet this change seems confined more or less to sociological inquiries and the study of modern Korea.

In reality, not many papers on Korean classical literature or premodern Korea are given opportunities to be published in English-language journals, and even if published, they are rarely recognized as being of high value in the Korean academy. Also, papers published in English-language journals tend to be not often cited by subsequent studies, or included in reviews of prior studies. Why does this happen? Probably because there is a relatively small number of foreign scholars who specialize in premodern Korea, particularly, Korean classical literature. As a matter of fact, Korean classical literature specialists often have a hard time trying to locate overseas experts whose specialty areas are close to their own for international exchange.

Under this reality, people seem to think it not advisable to recommend a Korean scholar publish a paper in an English-language journal. This is because for a non-native speaker it is not easy to express one's views and present a cogent and precise argument in English, and apparently there are not many readers who are willing to read it. Despite all this, however, more and more papers produced by Korean scholars are written in English. Why is that? Obviously, there are some internal factors within academic circles, such as active scholarly exchange in related fields and the increase of fluent English speakers among faculty. But it hardly can be denied that there are external ones as well, such as the NRF-led systemic reform that stressed a journal registration scheme and consideration of the degree of internationalization in various evaluations of universities and professors. Under the given circumstances wherein the number of papers published in journals is a core criterion of university employment, promotion, and government funding, researchers may seek to write papers in English even while feeling it will not necessarily help them improve their scholarly credentials. If so, it may be argued that, despite their remarkable growth in scope and quantity, English-language journals have not produced

corresponding meaningful outcomes in terms of advancing scholarship in Korea.

This may, of course, be a temporary and transitional phenomenon, and the trend will certainly change with the progression of internationalization in Korean Studies. In fact, much has been achieved in the sixty years since the appearance of the *Korea Journal*. The tendency toward seclusiveness in Korean Studies in Korea—as alluded to by the term *gukhak*—disappeared long ago, and the initial trend of English-language journals simply delivering Korea’s internal voices without mutual communication with the outside is now difficult to find. The journals now publish many papers that tackle new topics and issues based on interactions with overseas communities of Korean Studies, though to varying degrees according to field of study. These are no small accomplishments and deserve to be noted.

What about the future of English-language Journals in Korean Studies? Further development in their external features can be easily anticipated. No so easily forecast is the extent to which such growth will translate into academic advancement. One possibility is that resolutions to the challenges facing Korean Studies in Korea and Korean Studies in other countries may be found through their mutual interaction. Even if they are both expressed as Korean Studies in English, they differ in scope and content and their respective academic communities inhabit different environments. It is not desirable to attempt to forcefully merge them, or to insist that one be the *global standard*, as this can lead to obliterating their respective strengths and potential.

While it is difficult to determine the precise conditions of Korean Studies in foreign countries, Andre Schmid’s presentation of 2007 offers us a glimpse of it (Schmid 2007). Under the expanding influences of the Korean Wave, the status of Korean Studies may have changed since 2007, but this change is likely limited to certain disciplines. Noting that Korean Studies, which developed from regional studies in the United States, is in a “doubly marginalized position,” being on the periphery of peripheralized departments, Schmid warned of the danger of the “Korean Studies ghetto,” namely, practicing isolated scholarship that does not circulate in the broader intellectual community beyond it. He emphatically stressed that

this was at complete variance with the situation of Korean Studies in Korea. Schmid also mentioned that its isolation in universities would deepen if peripheralized Korean Studies was to be viewed as “Korean Studies for Korean Studies’ sake.”

Korean Studies in Korea seems to be in a relatively more favorable condition than its overseas counterpart. Yet there are voices which alert to its complacency regarding the present condition. Among them, Park Hee-byoung’s diagnosis of the conditions surrounding Korean scholarship is worth harkening to. He identifies five of them from a critical viewpoint—the problem of quantitative evaluation, the crisis of humanities, the issue of the disciplinary system, unrelenting progress of science and technology and digital civilization, and estrangement of life from nature (Park 2020, 17–54), and suggests “integrated humanities” as an alternative.

The first one, the problem of quantitative evaluation, is closely related with the NRF journal registration system mentioned above. Despite the strength of permitting objective performance management of researchers by expressing their achievements in concrete figures, the journal registration system can pose a considerable threat when it becomes a tool of controlling and managing scholars’ academic activities. Park Myoung-Kyu expressed concerns that such a measure might “undermine scholarly creativity or uniqueness by intensifying formalism and standardization” (Park 2011, 66). Criticizing the current practice that the results derived from the journal registration system are used as criteria in faculty performance assessment, Cho Dong-il (2008) warns that the evaluation system—by which faculty are given a minimum required number of paper publications to make in a certain period and are requested to submit the information as evidence of their research achievements—has the built-in risk of producing fake or substandard papers in large numbers (Cho 2012, 26). There may be nothing wrong with the system per se, for it provides the basic standards of papers for journal publication. But researchers who are affected by it may respond by producing a fair number of nominal papers that do not contain much substance and whose value as academic output is barely enough to circumvent reviewers’ criticisms and make the cut, which can be harmful to academic development down the road.

Of the five conditions mentioned by Park, the issue of the disciplinary system—which is related to the problem of quantitative assessment above—is, interestingly, in contrast with the milieu of Korean Studies in the United States as described by Schmid. Park points out that, despite the merit of promoting specialized expertise, its rigidity impregnates the danger of producing a mass of functional and normal papers. Many of them would likely be criticized in the United States as “Korean Studies for Korean Studies’ sake.” Notwithstanding, however, no one can say that discipline-based papers are not useful, because their results can feed into “integrated humanities” and Korean Studies in the United States, presenting basic materials and a place to start.

The closedness of the disciplinary system sometimes functions to preempt debates between fields, which is not infrequent in Korean Studies in Korea, but nearly non-existent in Korean Studies in the United States. Park shared his experience; he once wrote a paper in a different field from his own and was criticized for it by researchers of that field (Park 2020, 108). Most scholars who have tried to expand their research areas beyond the scope of their own disciplines can probably relate. In the case of Korean literature, it has a number of subfields broken down by period and genre, and even surpassing those confines is not easy. While it is possible that one may make unsubstantiated or erroneous statements when producing a paper on a subject of another field or subfield, brushing such attempts aside out without discussion for that reason only is unproductive for academic enhancement. This problem seems to seldom occur in the milieu of Korean Studies that maintains some distance from the disciplinary system or adopts a rather broader concept of majors.

What can English-language journals in Korean Studies do to realize mutual collaboration between the Korean Studies community in Korea and Korean Studies communities overseas? While will take a more rigorous study to come up with a concrete mechanism, such an endeavor should aim to establish an arena where both can work in symbiosis and engage in interactive discussions.

For this, the lower degree of external intervention, e.g., the Korean journal registration system, can work to positive effect. Under the current

arrangement, which excludes from review those journals indexed in foreign citation indexes, English-language journals are subject to fewer externally imposed requirements for editing and publication, compared to Korean ones.<sup>17</sup> This is a favorable condition for their coexistence with Korean journals, and English-language journals need to take advantage of this to generate a space for direct and indirect discussions. Needless to say, the coexistence may be meaningful only when the Korean Studies communities of both sides have journals that promote their academic achievements, and this requirement seems to have already been met. Therefore, exchanging academic stimulation in the realm of English-language journals, they can function as a platform for disciplinary integration or convergence.<sup>18</sup>

## Conclusion

Today, Korean scholars are urged to engage in *international exchange* at various levels. Exchange does not mean delivering one-way statements, but collaborating with overseas scholars in research and discussion. In reality, however, this is not as easy as it sounds, especially for researchers in certain fields such as Korean classical literature. It is quite challenging to identify foreign scholars who have the same research interests in terms of temporal period, authors, and writings. If there are any, it is not easy to decide on the research topic, perhaps due to differences in scholarly environment. A considerable number of researchers in Korean Studies who have attended international meetings would agree with Schmid's statement that Korean Studies conferences are a typical form of the "Korean Studies ghetto." If they

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17. There is a registration procedure for English-language journals in Korea as well. In this process, a journal is required to specify its area, which can prove frustrating to the journal editor. As soon as an area is selected, its identity as a Korean Studies journal is thrown into chaos; in this regard, the requirement does not seem appropriate.

18. Here integration or convergence does not signify consilience or interdisciplinary research. Consilience, a concept from sociobiology, is close to embracing different fields under a loop, while interdisciplinary research often ends up listing the views of various disciplines one after another.

continue to insist on research topics of their own interest, they run the risk of creating something similar to such a ghetto.

English-language journals in Korean Studies are an important channel for international exchange. The aim spelled out in the first issue of the *Seoul Journal of Korean Studies*, to create “an indispensable and authoritative space of academic discussions in the field of Korean Studies,” pinpoints it exactly. If international exchange can be made in the arena or in the mediation between them, such an exchange should strive to move beyond the “ghetto.” For its realization, this paper calls for making use of English-language journals for mutual collaboration between Korean Studies in Korea and Korean Studies in other countries, which are intrinsically heterogeneous. Researchers, as paper submitters or readers, should acknowledge and respect differences between them and learn to receive academic stimulations from one another, while journal editors need to pay attention to nurturing harmonious stimulation.

What is the ultimate goal to be pursued by English-language journals in Korean Studies? As long as international exchange in Korean Studies is, after all, an instrument for its academic advancement, they should strive to induce and accommodate scholarship that surpasses the boundaries of individual disciplines, including Korean Studies itself. It would certainly be unfair to say that English-language journals have not performed such a role. What I’m trying to convey here is that only if English-language journals maximize their special strengths as English-language journals published in Korea under the current condition of Korean Studies, will they be able to carve out a scholarship that addresses universal issues of humanity through international exchange in Korean Studies, and open the way to that scholarship’s dissemination worldwide.

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