

Korean Studies as Integrated Humanities

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Trajectory of Korean Studies Research

The development of Korean studies, established as a modern ~~discipline~~-field in the 1920s, may be classified roughly into two periods: pre- and post-liberation of Korea from Japanese colonial rule in 1945. Before liberation, research in Korean literature, language, history, folklore, and philosophy ~~were~~-was conducted under the category of “Joseon studies” (Joseonhak) or “National studies” (Gukhak). At the time, there were two groups of scholars who were engaged in Joseon studies. One was a group of scholars educated at Keijyo (Keijo?) Imperial University (later named Seoul National University) in Seoul or other universities in Japan, who were acquainted with the methodology of modern academic disciplines. The other group consisted of scholars who inherited and developed Korea’s traditional learning methodology, particularly the Silhak (Practical Learning) school of thought in the latter half of the Joseon dynasty. Both groups had their merits and demerits. The former was strong in positivism, logical rigor, and academic systematization, but weak in the sense that it gradually shut down interdisciplinary dialogue as a consequence of stressing disciplinary separatism. The latter, inferior to the former in logical rigor and systematization as it was, had the merit of maintaining a more holistic attitude by not distinctly separating literature, history, ~~thoughts (or philosophy)~~, language, folklore, and arts from one another, but attempting

rather attempted to understand them by interrelating them in terms of their connections with one another.¹

After liberation, most scholars of the two groups taught in colleges, and it appeared that the two research trends blended together in the these academic institution of collegess. In reality, however, the fences between the different academic disciplines became higher, and they were more tightly closed off from each other. Leaving aside the quality of individual disciplines, it seems in this regard that the Korean academic topography during the post-liberation period, with disciplinary separatism being consolidated, became uniformed in comparison to that of the Japanese forced occupation era.

The April 1960 Student Uprising against the Syngman Rhee regime served as a turning point for Korean academia to critically reflect on itself and expand its academic scope and boundaries. Following the 1960s, Korean academia began to delve deeper into the concept of the “subject” based-that was based on a resistant nationalism. This trend continued through the 1970s and 1980s, which were eras dominated by authoritarian regimes, with-and Korean studies research became marked by a nationalist consciousness and *minjung* ideology under the banner of anti-dictatorship and democracy.

As a result of the June 1987 democratization movement, formal and procedural democracy has been tentatively consolidated in Korea, and current-day Korean society has maintained its continuity. While the ideological framework of our academic pursuits from 1960 to 1987 was constructed by the April 19 Student Uprising, Korean studies since the 1980s seems to show different aspects, linked directly and indirectly with the so-called “1987 regime.” What are the differences then? First, it is worth noting the doubts about and criticism of nationalism and *minjung* ideology. Also Additionally, Korean studies during the post-1987 regime was characterized by the conspicuous disappearance or weakening of historical or political consciousness as well as class and critical consciousness, as well as a preference for a microscopic discourse of debate to over so-called “big theory,” and-which went along with an attempt to popularize Korean

¹ For the sake of convenience, the latter is called “National studies A” (Gukhak A) and the former, “National studies B” (Gukhak B). It is noted that the term “National studies” mentioned in this paper is used with “national studies A” in mind.

studies by pursuing superficial or sensational writing and eschewing logical rigor. In addition, Korean studies during this period ~~have~~ has been epochal in that they began to examine other issues that had been ~~wittingly~~ knowingly or unwittingly suppressed, excluded, or despised in favor of nationalism and *minjung* ideology; these issues included women's rights, the environment, "communitarian oppression," and the rights of the disabled. As a result, Korean studies during this period lost its critical edge in some senses but adopted new forms of criticism in other areas.

It should not be overlooked that the emergence of such distinctively new signs and developments in Korean studies since 1987 was buttressed by the democratic diversification of Korean society and the replacement of "big theory" by ~~the~~ a more versatile and spellbinding post-modernism.

What Are the Problems?

The trajectory of Korean studies research since it was established as a modern discipline was reviewed briefly above. In terms of ~~time period~~ periodization, this trajectory can be divided into the following four categories.

- A. Korean studies under Japanese colonial rule
- B. Korean studies from the 1945 liberation to the April 1960 Student Uprising
- C. Korean studies from April 19, 1960 to the 1987 democratization movement
- D. Contemporary Korean studies since 1987

Period A saw the establishment of Korean studies as a discipline under the colonial academic system on the one hand, and a modern transformation of traditional schools of thought, like Silhak or the Wang Yangming school and bibliographical study, which were prevalent during the latter years of the Joseon dynasty, on the other. Korean studies founded in this period as a discipline were reinforced during period B. Serious questions about the identity of Korean studies were asked in period C, but ~~without~~ being ~~were not~~ accompanied by doubts about Korean studies as a discipline. As a

consequence, Korean studies in this period, too, were conducted totally under the model of disciplinary separatism. The situation somewhat changed in period D. Although the disciplinary separatism model still dominated university curricula and academic institutions, some raised doubts about the problems inherent in the model. That was mostly connected with post-modernism, with “traversing” and “border crossing” being stressed in writing.

Doubts raised about the dominant paradigm of disciplinary separatism in this period are significant and noteworthy. Nonetheless, these doubts are thought to be defective in that they were thoroughly defined by the external factor of post-modernism. Needless to say, external and internal factors can hardly be distinguished from each other in academic development and the deployment of academic thinking—external factors can be as important or more important than internal ~~factorsones~~. This must be acknowledged. The history of modern Korean studies, however, is characterized by the unilateral imposition of others’ thinking on Korean academia, which does not possess its own academic foundation, ~~and thereby filling the void,~~ rather than having others’ thinking grafted onto ~~or appreciated by the foundation of one’s own thinkinga~~ pre-existing set of ideas or principles as a foundation. Taking this into account, the adoption of post-modernism in Korea, too, at least when we make an issue with the formula of linking one’s own and others’ thinking itself, does not seem to be essentially different from the past pattern. It must be related to the fact that some academic or pseudo-academic² results achieved in period D based on doubts about the dominant framework of disciplinary separatism were regarded as dangerous acrobatics performed ~~on~~ at the borderlines of science and journalism. [This explanation is too vague.]

It is very significant that while the limits and problems of the disciplinary separatism that took place in a self-~~closed-enclosed~~ way were questioned in period D, such doubts ~~are-were~~ flawed in that they largely relied on others’ thinking without due reflection on Korean academic tradition and methodology. In this context, we paid attention to the so-called research method and attitude of “National studies,” which evidently existed during period A, but which later lost influence and disappeared from view.

² The term “pseudo-academic” is used to underline a lack of academic rigor and logic, the basic requirements of science.

Dialectic Renovation of the Research Methodology of National Studies

“National studies” (Gukhak) under Japanese rule ~~were-was~~ essentially a discourse for confronting the “Joseon studies” that were conducted by the Japanese as part of their colonial project.³ Of course, the term *gukhak* is not so pleasant because it reminds one of its Japanese equivalent *kokugaku*. We nonetheless must pay attention to the *gukhak* of that period because it displayed an integrated approach, covering literature, history, philosophy, folklore, culture, and arts without being buried in a discipline. A case in point is the studies of Jeong In-bo. Jeong In-bo carried out academic activities based on Korea’s or East Asia’s traditional concept of learning that saw literature, history, philosophy, and art not as separate things but rather things interconnected with one another. Jeong In-bo’s studies are linked particularly to the academic attitude of scholars belonging to the Silhak school of thought during the latter half of the Joseon dynasty, and from this it can be surmised that the features of “national studies” thus originated in Silhak.

The research methodology and attitude of Yi Ik, Jeong Yak-yong, Hong Dae-yong, and Choe Han-gi were, in fact, holistic in nature. They not only studied and researched literature, history, and philosophy in an integrated manner, but also conducted research, put in contemporary terms, in the direction of intermingling humanities with social sciences and humanities with natural sciences. This was probably because they had to conduct such integrated research in order to solve the problems and contradictions of Joseon society at the time. In other words, interdisciplinary and integrated research was unavoidable for explaining the reality of “complex systems” and finding alternatives ~~toward-solvingthat might solve~~ these problems.

Since liberation, the Korean academic community has done a large quantity of research on Silhak and made many academic achievements. These achievements, however, were confined to individual disciplines ~~like-such as~~ literature, history, philosophy, and arts; there was no attempt to ~~graft-adopt or sublimate~~ the study

³ The ideological motives behind “Joseon studies” were identical to those behind the “Chinese studies” Japanese scholars conducted in response to imperial demands.

methodology and attitude of Silhak, paying attention to the school as a system of integrated learning, as the basic principles of contemporary Korean studies. In other words, they looked into what pertained to their own fields only, splitting Silhak into pieces, and were indifferent to the methodological essence that permeates the entire Silhak school of thought. This is not only an irony of Silhak; it eloquently tells us how much contemporary Korean studies has forgotten its own tradition and lost its senses. Some may refute the assertion that the integrated research methodology and attitude inherent in Silhak were pre-modern academic patterns, and that modern learning cannot but be specialized into various disciplines, and that this is-all signified progress. The space allocated does not permit me to delve into such a possible refutation, but let me just point out briefly that the notion that modernity represents progress and is superior to pre-modernity is not necessarily right a correct one, and that we, in overcoming problems of modern learning and finding alternatives, can seek-find certain suggestions useful knowledge from the principles of pre-modern learning.

As discussed above, “National studies” is significant in that they-it inherited the integrated academic methodology of Silhak in the latter years of the Joseon dynasty and shifted it in the direction of modernity. In this respect, “National studies” cast a glimmer of hope on our attempt to direct Korean studies toward integrated humanities at the threshold of the twenty-first century. Nonetheless, “national studies” at the time had many limits that have-to must be sincerely dealt with. “National studies” at the time, above all, were piecemeal and inclined to data enumeration, bo-re-were laden with some degree of pathos, and were lacking in or-short-of strict logic and theory. They sought erudition but failed to attain “simplicity in erudition,” consequently being-becoming disorderly and diffuse, and-lacking in depth in many instances. We should never follow suit-in the footsteps of any of them; they should be overcome. All in all, what we should learn from “~~Nnational~~National studies” are their integrated research methodology and attitude, sueeeding-which were the successors to Silhak. To properly inherit and develop these traits, we have to renovate-excavate the-these older research methodologies iesy and attitudes, while overcoming the shortcomings inherent in them. What is needed for such an excavation renovation- is a dialectic fusion of the experiences and achievements Korean studies underwent and made from the April 1960 Student Uprising til-until the 1987 democratization movement and the issues and

achievements Korean ~~S~~studies ~~have~~has made since 1987.

Why Should Korean Studies Pursue Integrated Humanities?

Korean studies, in fact, ~~do~~does not belong to the humanities alone; some areas belong to the social sciences. Nor are humanities and social sciences practically separated and completely independent fields. They are often interconnected and deeply related to ~~each~~one other. Theoretically, it is proper to discuss the nature of Korean studies not only as an integrated humanities but also as “integrated humanities and social sciences.” Nevertheless, I will focus on the theme assigned to me, that being “Korean Studies as Integrated Humanities.”

Although I am discussing Korean studies as integrated humanities, I do not assert that they should be conducted ~~without differentiation~~ in an integrated manner without differentiation. In-depth research should continue by individual discipline and field. The point of my contention is that the direction and paradigm of Korean studies, as well as~~and~~attitudes toward research methodology ~~and attitude~~ held by those engaged in Korean studies, ought not ~~to~~ be set that way. That approach is eventually bound to fall into extreme specialization and ~~reinforce~~fall into the trap of reinforcing disciplinary separatism, thereby failing to generate interdisciplinary dialogue and hampering the normal development of the sciences.

Let me ~~tell~~relay you one of my own anecdotes. I started my research life as a student of Korean classical literature. Having been interested in the history of Korean thought for about a decade, I have published the results of my research from time to time. During that time, I heard not only poorly nuanced comments, but also remarks bordering on threats. [About what?] Unpleasant as they were, they could be laughed off. What was more serious is that my research results were apparently not read in the Korean classical literature quarter, nor reviewed in the Korean history and philosophy quarters. In other words, as far as the history of thought is concerned, the outcome of my research exists in a sense but does not exist in another sense. [I am completely confused at this point. The author is being far too vague.] This is not only my personal

loss but also a loss for Korean studies.⁴ What brought this consequence about? Simply put, it is because of extremely disciplinary egoism. Translated into vulgar terms, it is because researchers are preoccupied with defending their own territory. If a researcher in one field writes an article related to another, a researcher from that other field is apt to be offended, ~~vise-versa is also true~~. Once offended, he or she ignores, does not read, nor discusses the article in question. As a consequence, dialogue is thoroughly confined to one's own field. Disciplinary separatism is not without its merits, but its evils have reached ~~such~~ a lamentable extent.

Needless to say, a researcher who has delved into a particular discipline for a long time is bound to accumulate knowledge in that field. If a researcher from another specialty takes issue with some aspects of one's discipline based on insufficient studies and weak logic, the researcher will be ill at ease. Such an occasion can ~~just be~~ merely dismissed, and the same must be the case within one's own discipline. The problem lies in that instances are not confined to such cases. Problematic is the fact that research done by specialists in another discipline are almost unconditionally ignored or regarded as an invasion into one's specialty, whether or not they are up to the standards of the discipline, contain points worth listening to, or provide something new or thought-provoking that is unavailable ~~in~~ outside one's own specialty. Little vibrant, creative, and wide-ranging research representing a broad, provocative spectrum can be produced under such circumstances. This is the reason why the framework of Korean studies today, established on the ideology of separate disciplinary systems, should be rectified.

It is not only because of this, which has often been cited in the past, that Korean studies should strengthen its nature as an integrated science. A more important reason lies in the fact that only then can Korean studies secure ~~their~~ its academic "subjectiveness" and practicality. So long as Korean studies ~~rely~~ relies on ~~the~~ separate disciplinary systems, as is the case now, profound, holistic, and interdisciplinary ways of thinking can hardly be fostered, and consequently, the Korean studies research will continue to be ~~done~~ run in the manner it is, ~~of~~-importing and adapting ~~others'~~ the

⁴ My loss in the sense that I have been deprived of an opportunity to further my intellectual progress through suggestions and criticism from academic circles, and a loss to Korean studies in that no varied academic discourse was materialized.

thoughts of others. As previously noted, the problems accompanying the accommodation of post-modernism need to be understood in this context. If and when Korean studies successfully manages to restore ~~themselves-itself~~ as an integrated humanities ~~field with toward~~ the goal of being “divided but unified, unified but divided,” Korean studies will be much more independent than now in terms of thought and theory. Should it reach such a status, Korean studies would be able to absorb ~~others’ thoughts outside concepts~~ not in ~~a-the~~ one-way direction of traffic ~~of import~~ ~~asthat~~ has ~~so far~~ been the case this far, but rather based on creative and critical appreciation. Only when we have reached this stage will we be able to properly meet and dialogue with others and engage in discussion, mutual criticism, and intermingling.

Korean studies will be able to attain such independence by strengthening itself through the pursuit of integrated humanities, and eventually it will be justified by the pursuit of practicality. In other words, the pursuit of Korean studies as an integrated humanities is meaningful in that the independence of Korean studies will breed its practicality, and that practicality in turn will back up its independence. Practicality in this sense means ~~for that~~ Korean studies ~~to will~~ provide help to Korea’s specific and realistic problems and the question of Koreans’ lives, and to present alternatives through self-examination and reflection and the criticism of contradictions. Given that realities or phenomena as complex entities are neither demarcated nor separated from one another, but constitute an overall process in themselves, it is evident that a separate discipline alone cannot grasp the various links this overall process covers. It is also evident that a practicality of learning can be secured only when complicated links of realities or phenomena are grasped. Thusly viewed, Korean studies as an integrated humanities is expected to contribute toward reinforcing its own academic practicality.

[this paragraph is vague and circular]

Korean studies’ strengthening of independence and practicality by way of pursuing integrated humanities does not mean enclosing itself within the fence of exclusive nationalism, or dragging itself into self-centered nationalism. Rather the opposite is the case. Formally, Hong Dae-yong and Choe Han-gi, through the concept of the “soft or flexible subject,” theoretically formulated an idea of coexistence and peaceful cooperation with others on the basis of proper self-reflection and firm

rejection of egoism. That is the subject that eventually protects peace while countering all sorts of suppression and invasions. The subject that can open itself up to others widely, being humble—or rather because it is humble—must be made the subject of Korean studies as integrated humanities. With this being the case, integrated humanities may be able to convey new theoretical models, academic experiences, and meaningful intellectual perspectives to others in East Asia, non-Western countries incorporated into world capitalism through colonization like us, and even the West. We should then be able to begin talking to others with understandings and theories gained in the course of our own search for solutions to our problems and contradictions. This is a way to come for Korean studies, which began as a particularity, to be able to achieve universality, *aufheben*. [Unpack this – what does this mean, again? I speak German, but most of the readers won't.]

How Can Korean Studies Be Pursued as an Integrated Humanities?

How can we introduce Korean studies as integrated humanities? In other words, what institutional conditions and research efforts are needed to secure the features of Korean studies as such? Let us try to be more specific about the discourse by considering this question.

A number of ways can be considered by-through which the nature of Korean studies as integrated humanities may be reinforced in institutional terms. First, it will be helpful to conduct research and education on Korean studies on an integrated basis by retaining ~~the~~ Korean studies departments in liberal arts colleges. Second, an integrated Korean studies course may be established as a cooperative graduate program in qualified universities. Third, subjects featuring Korean studies as integrated humanities may be introduced in undergraduate and graduate curricula. Outside the campus—given that academic societies are subdivided, and some scholars, in an attempt to obtain better research conditions, are desperate to organize nationwide societies by rallying their associates as if they were interest groups and have them registered with the Korea Research Foundation—it may be a good idea, running counter to this general trend, to create a group like the “Integrated Korean Studies

Society,” responding to ~~its~~-this just and great cause.

The methods discussed above, both big and small, can be of help and are not bad ideas in themselves. When we look at the realities of Korean universities and the academic community, however, they ~~could~~-may well be no more than mere daydreams.

What should we do then? No inspiring ideas are available. The next academic generation equipped with a new mind-set and newly trained an set of training could be fostered only through university and academic institutional reform; however, these institutions are not ready for reform. Why? Because of vested rights [tenure?]. Academic vested rights allow professors to be complacent with what is convenient to them, to assert and persist in what is convenient to them, and to package what they are familiar with as the truth. Those academic vested rights are ceaselessly reproduced in collusion with the egotism of departments and academic specialties. As a consequence, graduate students of Korean literature are unable to write degree theses on themes that link their interest in literature-arts with an interest in social sciences, history or philosophy, as their European and American counterparts do.⁵

An ignorant student who has written a thesis ~~oriented that way~~ stat steps at all outside their rigid disciplinary lines, ~~if any~~, is bound to be reproached without exception, “How ~~could~~-can this be called a Korean literature thesis?” “Isn’t this a sociology thesis?” “Isn’t this a history thesis?” and asked to completely deconstruct it and rewrite one matching ~~the~~-so-called “literature-literature” thesis guidelines.² This must be the case with Korean history and Korean philosophy as well. Consequently, no degree thesis can be produced in Korea at all that is based on a specific major, but at the same time is rich in integrated inquiries traversing institutional academic boundaries. In other words, they seem to conduct Korean studies in universities with each discipline shut up within locked doors, ~~and with nobody~~-no one attempting or finding it necessary to get step outside of their doors and exchange dialog with others. Cracking the door open even slightly and sneaking a look into another room, if anydone at all, is regarded as a deviation from the norm. Unless one is insane, none would dare to do so at their own expense.

⁵ This is primarily an outcome of self-censorship on the part of graduate students. What matters is that the self-censorship is a product of censorship imposed by both academic practices and institutions, including academic advisers and faculty members of the relevant departments.

Nothing would be more fortunate than to see reform of our university and academic institutions in a direction favorable to pursuing integrated Korean studies. Since it is futile to merely look forward to it, however, let me stop here, just raising the issue, and instead discuss some points we should pay attention to when we research Korean studies from the perspective of integrated humanities.

First, researchers pursuing Korean studies as integrated humanities should ~~basically~~ harbor a basic “cooperative” mind-set. ~~The c~~Cooperation referred to here does not exclude academic criticism and competition. In fact, it *naturally* contains ~~academic criticism and competition~~these things. Nevertheless, cooperation is considered to be a virtue more basic than academic criticism and competition. The cooperative mind-set referred to here represents an attitude of intellectual openness that does not look coldly on or exclude other specialties, but, recognizing that others’ specialties are related both directly and indirectly to one’s own, is willing to converse and learn from other specialties, ~~having an interest in them always~~. The flexible and humble subjects ~~of~~ Hong Dae-yong and Choe Han-gi, ~~who~~ were open to ~~others~~other styles of thought, as discussed above; their lessons can be applied to individual researchers of Korean studies working in the present-day. Securing a cooperative spirit and mind-set does not require costs; all that is needed is a shift in perception.

Second, we must acknowledge that routes to the summit of Korean studies vary, but they all meet at the top. Especially, we need to understand that the so-called dialectic of “one for all, and all for one” is the essence of researching integrated Korean studies. We may equally reach the peak by taking the route of literature, history, philosophy or arts. These Korean studies routes are thus not one but many. The scenery, too, may be quite different depending on which route one takes. Insofar as we all climb the same mountain, however, we can share many things and exchange a great deal of information with one another. What is important in this metaphor is that specialists in each area of Korean studies ~~should be able to~~ proceed with an integrated viewpoint based on their respective specialties. Only then will the strengths and research purposes of various disciplines be harmonized, enabling Korean studies to secure multi-visual and multi-vocal dimensions, casting off the simplicity of Korean studies, and develop higher-~~quality~~ and richer content. Further, once Korean studies begins to develop in such a direction, each disciplinary component of Korean studies

will be revitalized ~~with~~ through increased research topics and broadened viewpoints. Only in that context will great scholars in the field of Korean studies be able to be born, who are qualified to move beyond being simply erudite, macroscopically investigating the links between basic principles in various fields, to look more deeply into Korean studies, to conceptualize their findings in refined language, and to create higher-level systems and theories.

Third, in order to approach Korean studies in a manner that sees the study as integrated humanities, the research methodology of Korean studies itself must be changed substantially, as briefly mentioned earlier. To begin with, Korean studies researchers, whether interested in the pre-modern, ~~era-or~~ modern, ~~and-or~~ contemporary eras, need to acquire a high level of reading comprehension in Chinese. For research into the pre-modern era, in particular, an integrated pursuit is totally impossible without proficiency in Chinese; the higher one's proficiency in Chinese, the greater the possibility that one will achieve truly integrated research. In this sense, the reinforcement of proficiency in Chinese cannot be overemphasized.

One may think that simple understanding of primary sources or texts written in Chinese is sufficient, but such a low level of Chinese proficiency renders it difficult to achieve integrated research. Just as researchers in philosophy and history should be trained to easily read and thoroughly comprehend sophisticated and subtle literature texts, so researchers in literature must be able to do the same with historical and philosophical primary sources. Chinese poems are very important for researching the history of thoughts or arts, particularly when one intends not only to clarify external phenomena and causal relations but also to delve deeply into the essence of ~~thoughts-or~~ ~~arts~~ conceptual phenomenae. But Chinese poems are now excluded from courses on history of thoughts or arts, probably because students have not been trained to study Chinese poems. Under such circumstances, it is difficult to maintain a high standard in the history of thoughts or arts research as a discipline, let alone integrated research.

High proficiency in comprehending Chinese alone, however, is insufficient for pursuing Korean studies as integrated humanities. Important as it is, it is just one of several requirements. Equally or more important than proficient comprehension of Chinese is broadening one's intellectual perspective by accumulating a basic education in the liberal arts, fostering a broad and deep critical consciousness, and building one's

capability for setting forth a humanities agenda [what does this really mean?]. Proficient comprehension of Chinese, unaccompanied by these qualities, is not only empty but also reckless. Being insufficient-deficient in critical consciousness of humanities, though proficient in Chinese, can hardly enable one to surmount the limits of “National studies,” as discussed in connection with the problems of “National studies” under Japanese colonial rule. All in all, a researcher who intends to pursue Korean studies as integrated humanities ought to undergo training designed to foster logical and theoretical capabilities. Only then will she or he be able to logically and theoretically reformulate all things Korean—Korea’s traditions and realities and all of its texts—and elicit and ruminate on their modern and universal meanings.

~~It~~ This is why Korean studies researchers should always pay close attention to foreign academic tendencies and ideological and theoretical trends, have a clear grasp of the results of those observations, and exchange academic and critical dialog with foreign scholars. As was the case with most countries excepting the first world, Korea experienced colonization during the early years of the modern era, saw the country nation divided in the wake of liberation ~~due to~~ that came with the Cold War, and underwent a fratricidal war.

In South Korean society, procedural democracy has been tentatively consolidated thanks to anti-dictatorial and democratization movements, and civil society functions as an influential power. As a result, multi-faceted introspection has begun to take place on “ourselves,” internal suppressions of “ourselves,” and the violence and exclusion “we” impose on others. Consequently, active debates, noisy as they are, are now underway in Korea on democracy, human rights, equality, peace, ~~establishment of relations~~ the relationship between the self and others, confrontation and tension between traditional and Western values, rivalry between globalization and anti-globalization, gender, and the environment. Korea is asked to set forth new agendas for resolving problems and promoting better lives and values.

Facing such social and historic conditions, Korean studies ~~are~~ is asked to make an academic contribution toward resolving problems by probing the present and past and looking into the future. To cope with these problems, a starting point from which Korean studies can launch itself as an integrated humanities field is needed. The process and experiences of pondering ~~on~~ over and resolving these ~~agonies~~ conflicts and

problems, as mentioned repeatedly, will be of help to other countries, to a certain extent, —as well as to Korea.

Beyond Closed Professionalism, Commercialism, and Amateurism

Korean studies research as integrated humanities must be conducted based on ~~the~~ a high level of specialization, which is the only way out of the current limitations. No proper Korean studies research can be carried out unless specialized academic performances ~~are~~ is accumulated and rigorous training is undertaken. This must be recognized as a basic prerequisite. Nonetheless, Korean studies as an integrated humanities field should not be confined to a small number of specialists ~~in the field~~. Korean studies as such, in addition to maintaining academism, must be communicated to at least intellectuals in general, which requires extraordinary consideration and effort in writing. In other words, articles should be written not in a way that is comprehensible to only a small number of specialized groups, though it may be practically much easier, but in a language that can be understood by intellectuals in general. Furthermore, it is necessary for researchers to make additional efforts so that not only ~~intellectuals in general~~ academics, but also ordinary readers interested in Korean studies may understand their writings. Research presented in well-digested, refined, and readable language, coupled with in-depth analysis of research topics ~~and~~ laid out across a broad intellectual horizon, while offering critical understanding and elevated insight into human lives and realities ~~— this~~, should be made a model of Korean studies research as an integrated field of inquiry in the humanities.

Korean studies research ~~as an~~ integrated humanities field, on the other hand, should neither pander to cheap commercialism nor ~~follow~~ devolve into amateurism. Such Korean studies, pandering to the interests of the masses by conceding to demands from publishers and cultural organizations, would eventually alienate themselves, deviating from ~~their~~ its intrinsic role and task. The crisis of humanities can be overcome when the intrinsic truthfulness and intellectual intuition of the humanities are restored, not by popularizing the humanities or presenting them attractively in commercial perspectives. ~~A~~ The commercialization and popularization of humanities,

pandering to the tastes of the masses, in the long run, would ~~trim-erode~~ or ~~altogether~~ remove ~~the~~ serious perceptiveness and creativity ~~that gives the field its power~~, ~~the life of science~~ [~~this doesn't make sense to me~~], and eventually devastate or destroy the foundations of ~~the~~ humanities themselves. This is ~~very-quite socially~~ dangerous ~~soeially~~. Korean studies as ~~and~~ integrated ~~humanities-field~~ must keep this in mind. Korean studies research must always guard against falling into not only ~~a~~ closed professionalism but also being swayed by or subordinated to the power of the market, capital, and journalism.

Conclusion

While looking into the history of Korean studies, I discussed above why Korean studies research as ~~an~~ integrated humanities ~~field~~ is needed, what hurdles there are to be overcome, what studies and mindset are needed, their tasks, and what they should guard against.

As a matter of fact, no one can research Korean studies as ~~an~~ integrated humanities ~~field~~ merely because one finds it necessary or wants to do it. It is impossible unless one studies and prepares a great deal and feels the necessity to actively cope with the ~~issue-question as to of~~ why one ~~should-do-it it should be done~~; nothing meaningful can be achieved if it is only done under compulsion.