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.

2 Decentering the Middle Kingdom and Realigning the East

We hope we do not become like that.
— *Cheguk sinmun* on China, July 5, 1900

An 1895 school textbook, *An Elementary Reader for Citizens, (Kungmin sohak tokpon)*, opened a chapter on China with a seemingly innocuous geographical statement. "China, like our nation," it stated, "is one country in the Asian continent."[1] At the time of its publication, though, such a statement resonated with meanings that extended beyond its geographical significance. In its first seven words, this single utterance captured the shift in China's position at the end of the nineteenth century: China was now little more than the equal of its former tributary nation, Korea. This brief phrase reflected what was to grow into a far-reaching endeavor, sponsored for the first time by dynastic institutions but carried out most widely in the period's media, to reexamine Korea's historical relationship with China — what can be called the decentering of the Middle Kingdom.

This decentering was more than a political readjustment. The impulse in nationalist thought to articulate a unique identity for the nation led to a reappraisal of centuries of Sino-Korean cultural interaction in ways that reflected Korea's growing participation in the modern ideologies of the capitalist world system. Integral to the production of national knowledge in these years, the process of decentering rested on a number of assumptions about the relationship between national culture and sovereignty. For Korea to protect its independence, many writers felt that a break with the transnational culturalism of the East Asian past was necessary, one that would be marked by a rejection of those previously shared symbols and practices as alien. Only the recovery and sustenance of a pure culture, they assumed, could rescue