

## Keynote Speech

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Keynote Speech  
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**Tradition and Innovation in  
Korean Studies**

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## Introduction

Korean studies has a long tradition and has seen repeated innovation. Today, a decade or so after the start of the twenty-first century, I would like to look back on the tradition of Korean studies and examine the process and direction of this innovation. We will take as the goal of this innovation the development of Korean studies in Korea into a Korean studies of the world, and attempt to arrive at a way to make this a reality.

Tradition and innovation are not mutually exclusive; they are complementary. Innovation may be a rejection of tradition, but it must be based on tradition. Among the many threads of tradition, we must reject tradition that once boasted authority but has since faded, and we must find alternatives within tradition that has not been damaged but is still fresh, realizing its potential value, in order to achieve innovation. For Korean studies in Korea to develop into a Korean studies of the world, there must be new innovation based on tradition.

A Korean studies of the world is a field of study that (a) is open to the world, (b) engages and interacts with the world, and (c) contributes to the world. The number of nations and scholars engaged in Korean studies is increasing, leading to (a), but there is still the need for an increase in participation and diversification in the contents of the research. (b) is realized through comparative studies between Korean studies and national studies or other academic fields in other nations, and domestic and international cooperation here is desirable. In terms of (c), Korean studies must contribute to the diagnosis and treatment of the concerns of humanity or the crisis of world history, so we must use our fine traditions as a stepping stone to the creation of a theory that will revolutionize academics throughout the world.

Of these three, everyone is interested in (a), so there is no need

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to belabor this point here. Little progress has been made in the task of achieving (b) and moving on to (c), and this task does not get nearly enough recognition, so we must make an effort to discuss it. I have already made a number of attempts at this, including *The Path of Korean Studies* (Jisik Saneopsa, 1993), *The Mission of the Humanities* (Seoul National University Press, 1997), *Korean Studies in the Age of Globalization and Localization* (10 volumes; Keimyung University Press, 2005-09), and *A Theory of Learning* (Jisik Saneopsa, 2012), but they are long-winded and yet still insufficient. I will distill the essence of these attempts here, renewing the discussion with a clearer awareness of the issues.

## The Origins of and Changes in National Studies

The Korean studies of today has its origins in national studies (*gukhak* 國學). The Korean term originally referred to educational institutions founded by the state (*guk* meaning “nation” and *hak* meaning “school”); the concept of “national studies” actually came from “national history” (*guksa* 國史). As early as the Silla period, in 545, it was said: “National history records the virtues and evils of the ruler and his vassals, presenting their praise and criticism to all generations, so if we do not compile it, what will future generations read?” (*Historical Records of the Three Kingdoms*, “6<sup>th</sup> year of King Jinheung”) Only by narrating history and passing it down to future generations is it possible to be a civilized nation.

It was customary to refer to Korea as the “eastern nation,” just as it was customary to refer to China as the “western nation.” Sometimes the name of the nation was simply “the East,” and the term “East of the (Yellow) Sea” was also used. *Ruling the Eastern Nation* (*Dongguk tonggam* 東國通鑑), *The Augmented Survey of the Geography of the Eastern Nation* (*Dongguk yeoji seungnam* 東國輿地勝覽), *The Anthology of Eastern Writings* (*Dongmunseon* 東文選), *Discourse on the Poetry of the Eastern People* (*Dongin sihwa* 東人詩話), *Unraveling the History of the Nation East of the Sea* (*Haedong yeoksa* 海東釋史), and *Songs From East of the Sea* (*Haedong gayo* 海東歌謠) are some examples. Studies on the nation, the eastern nation, or east of the sea are “national studies” in Korea. These national studies have a long history and have achieved much. Many outstanding books were written during the

fifteenth century as part of state projects, and during the eighteenth century by private scholars. We must continually strive to carry on this tradition and put it to good use.

During the Korean Empire period (1897-1910), the term “native studies” (*bongukhak* 本國學) was used, and it was said that there had to be a balanced focus on both “native studies” and “foreign studies.” There was a major change in the perception of East Asian cultural heritage, which was now considered “foreign studies.” With the loss of the nation during the Japanese colonial period, “nation” was replaced by the regional name Korea and the term “Korean studies” (*Joseonhak* 朝鮮學) was used. “Korean studies” was referred to as “national studies” after liberation from Japanese rule, and the term may be used retroactively.

During the period when it was called Korean studies, national studies grew along with the national culture movement, and its goal was to escape from the universalism of East Asian culture and find the spiritual foundation for the establishment of an independent nationalism. It attempted to find new uses for the long-established learning of the medieval era in order to achieve internally the type of academics demanded by the modern era. Choe Namseon, Sin Chaeho, Mun Ilpyeong, An Hwak, An Jaehong, and other pioneers all did their best despite the adverse conditions under colonial rule.

Choe Namseon worked from within the nation, while Sin Chaeho worked from exile, taking the opposing attitudes of adaptation and resistance in their studies, but their basic ideas shared a commonality. Choe Namseon said that the unique spirit of the nation had to inherit the heritage that was achieved during the time of Dangun with the establishment of a grand civilization that revered light, known as “*bak*” 밝 (不咸). Sin Chaeho said that the greatest misfortune in the history of the nation was the acceptance of Buddhism and Confucianism and the subsequent loss of the progressive spirit of earlier times, and he advocated a new adoption of the unique Korean sense of independence (*nangga sasang* 郎家思想) as the spirit of the struggle for national liberation.

Mun Ilpyeong carried out research in many fields, presenting his general theory in *The Significance of Korean Studies* (*Joseonhak ui uiui*). He said that Korean studies “in the broad sense includes everything that may be considered an academic subject of the study of Korea, including religion, philosophy, art, folklore, and legends, but in the narrow sense it should be

used to designate things like pure Korean literature, as well as the study of the language and history of Korea.” He also said that, “from an impartial perspective, it is proper to interpret Korean studies in the narrow sense rather than the broad sense,” adding that the narrow sense must be chosen “particularly when Korean studies conflicts with Confucian and Buddhist studies.” He said that the study of national culture as distinguished from East Asian culture was national studies.

Let us call the national studies of Choe Namseon, Sin Chaeho, and Mun Ilpyeong “National Studies 1.” There was also a “National Studies 2,” which pioneered a different path. An Hwak said that we should not lament the introduction of foreign culture and claim that it damaged national culture. Opposing the tendency to defend native culture from an exclusivist point of view, he led the way in establishing the view that East Asian culture could be used for the development of national culture and was thus valuable. He wrote *The History of Korean Literature* (*Joseon munhaksa*) as a means of evaluating the idea that Confucianism and Buddhism promoted the development of national culture after they were adopted and made national culture that much richer. He warned against merely reproaching past generations for having gotten things wrong, thus falling into nihilism, saying that it was also critical that efforts be made to explore our own unique strong points. In *The History of Korean Culture* (*Joseon munmyeongsu*), he argued that strife between political factions, which had been denounced as the root cause of the fall of the nation, had a positive significance as a type of contest between differing policies.

In his “The Problem of Korea” (*Joseonhak ui munje*), An Jaehong made clear the goal of National Studies 2. He called for the “establishment of a new, refined self in modern times ... a new third self that is both of the world and of Korea, as our culture and our thought are both of Korea and of the world.” He urged studies that would “originate from the noble and solemn needs of reality to establish in the future a radically new society.” To put this in simpler terms, he was saying that we must conduct studies that are both Korean and global, and both global and Korean. He was saying that we must remedy the mistake of dividing things Korean and things global, and that we must establish a third line that brings the two together, taking it as a guideline for spiritual awakening and the renovation of society.

## The Conversion to Korean Studies and the Division of Philosophies

The Japanese colonial rulers attempted to stop the national studies of Koreans from raising their national consciousness and inspiring a national liberation movement. They dominated the field of Korean studies, attempting to prevent a situation that would threaten colonial rule. They put forth the assertion that researchers should not spout hollow words and be carried away by national feelings, but instead engage in positivistic research that dealt with facts themselves. Materials that were suspicious or subject to controversy were excluded, leaving only the bare minimum to study, and scholars took as their actual task the exposing and examining of the backward and weak aspects of Korea. They argued that Korea had had a shameful history marked by stagnancy and heteronomy, so not only was independence an impossibility, it was only right that Korea should continue to be ruled by Japan. This approach clearly showed the character of regional studies under cultural imperialism.

Japanese scholars founded the “Green Hill Society” (青丘學會) in 1930 and published the *Green Hill Journal* (青丘學報) in an endeavor to focus their efforts on colonial regional studies. The faculty of Keijō Imperial University took the lead, producing a large amount of research that was rather elaborate in its own way. The study of history, which purported to be an example in its criticism of historical materials, acted as a mouthpiece for colonial rule and boasted exceptional authority, but it did little more than help foster unreasonable prejudices. In other fields, there were the occasional efforts that showed some progress in examining materials, and these materials acted as stimuli. The results were most remarkable when they engaged in politically-neutral discussions of fields that had not been explored up to that point. Ogura Shinpei’s research on *hyangga* and Akiba Takashi’s research on shamanism are examples worth remembering.

Korean scholars founded the “Jindan Society” (震壇學會) and engaged in their own research activities. Both “Green Hill” and “Jindan” were other names for Korea. The two societies are similar in that they used these bynames rather than the name of the nation. In the founding issues of the *Jindan Society Bulletin* (震壇學報), the society stated that it would “carry out the duty and mission of developing and advancing Korean culture,”



clearly distinguishing it from the research of the Japanese, but in terms of their approach it is difficult to recognize any difference. The society was led by scholars like Yi Byeongdo, Kim Sanggi, Yi Sangbaek, and Yi Seon-geun, who had returned from studying in Japan, along with graduates of Keijō Imperial University, and these scholars took their cues from the positivistic research they had studied in both places.

The leaders of the Jindan Society were scholars of history, and they set an example by establishing national history as an independent field of study. Then the fields of national literature and national linguistics also established their own territory and methodology. National literature and national linguistics led the way in research with such elaborate works as Jo Yunje's *A General History of Korean Poetry* (*Joseon sigasa gang*), Yang Judong's *A Study of Old Songs* (*Goga yeongu*), and Choe Hyeonbae's *Our Grammar* (*Urimalbon*). Baek Namun's *A History of Korean Society and Economy* (*Joseon sahoe gyeongjesa*), which was classified as an economic history and thus as outside of the mainstream of national history, is also a significant achievement. Song Seokha and Go Yuseop pioneered important research in folklore and art history, respectively. We will call this new field of study, distinguished from the national studies we examined above by the two characteristics of its use of positivistic methodology and its division into different academic fields, "Korean studies." National studies is the final result of the learning of the transitional period from the medieval era to the modern era, achieved internally, while Korean studies is a modern field of study that has emerged through external influence. This differentiation in terminology makes it clear that national studies is the field of Koreans alone, while Korean studies is a field of study in which Koreans and scholars from many other nations work together.

The move from national studies to Korean studies cannot necessarily be called progress. The counterargument that national studies has a precious tradition and so must act as a guideline by which to correct that which is wrong with Korean studies is also valid. The question of whether to reject national studies or to carry on its tradition has become an issue, and a divergence in approaches has made it necessary to divide Korean Studies into Korean Studies 1, Korean Studies 2, and Korean Studies 3.

Yi Byeongdo, a leader of Korean Studies 1, claimed that only those facts recognized as being positivistically valid should be studied, distancing

national studies from nationalism. In his primary work, which he first titled *A General Survey of Korean History* (*Joseonsa daegwan*) and later retitled *A General Survey of National History* (*Guksa daegwan*), he undermined the exaggerated judgments of National Studies 1 regarding early history and sought to lead the way toward more dispassionate studies. The establishment of the Four Chinese Commandaries (in the second century BCE) was a clear fact, so he took this as a standard by which to divide eras and examined both Old Joseon and Buyeo in a chapter entitled “Eastern Society after the Establishment of the Chinese Commandaries.” His description of the colonial period was quite cursory. Along with Yi Byeongdo, the three authors of the seven volumes of *A History of Korea* (*Hanguksa*)—Kim Jaewon, Yi Sangbaek, and Yi Seon-geun—took as their duty the examination of facts regarding politics or institutions. In accordance with these precedents, the academic trend of performing positivistic research that was faithful to materials and facts and avoided the intrusion of realistic problems or controversy over ideology was widely established and exercised a dominating influence.

Research that directly confronted Korean Studies 1 was carried out by the political left, and will be called Korean Studies 2. Korean Studies 2 claimed to carry out scientific research that was based on Marxism, and it strongly criticized National Studies 1 with even more hostility than did Korean Studies 1.

Jeon Seokdam, a leader of Korean Studies 2, wrote *A Corrected History of Korea* (*Joseonsa gyojeong*) and declared that he had surpassed the precedent set by Baek Namun and established a more advanced view of history, and he noted that Korea was unique in that it did not have a period of slavery and that feudal society began in the Three Kingdoms period. He devoted a lot of space to his examination of the colonial period, and he said that the March 1<sup>st</sup> and June 10<sup>th</sup> movements failed because they did not develop into socialist movements. The research of the left, which took such controversies as essential matters of interest, became established in North Korea after the division of the nation, and there expanded into a wide variety of fields.

Son Jintae introduced a unified way of understanding history, what he called a “new nationalistic view of history,” that went beyond the clash of Korean Studies 1 and Korean Studies 2 and attempted to establish Korean Studies 3. National studies may have been criticized by Korean

Studies 2 and undermined by Korean Studies 1, but it was inherited by Korean Studies 3. It was National Studies 1 that was the target of criticism or undermining, while National Studies 2 remained unscathed. Son Jintae adopted the line followed by An Jaehong and undertook the task of realizing through Korean Studies 3 the goals set forth by National Studies 2. In *An Introduction to the History of the Nation of Korea (Joseon minjokhak gaeron)*, he said that history had to move from histories of the state to histories of the nation (that is, its people) and from political history to cultural history, and he proclaimed the unification of upper- and lower-class culture to be the task of the development of national history. In his discussion of society he examined the class structure and took issue with the status of women. In his many other works, he delved into folklore as well as history, attempting to gain a unified perspective.

The Korean literature scholar Jo Yunje had a close relationship with Son Jintae, and he narrated the history of literature based on the view of national history that they had established. Jo Yunje's *History of Korean Literature (Gungmunhaksa)* understands the history of literature according to developments in the national spirit, revealing the process by which the crisis of division in the national spirit was overcome through unity and seeking principles for national liberation and overcoming division. He said that a literature that expressed the inclination to break free from dependency on China and achieved internal solidarity possessed an important value as a national literature. Shortly after the founding of the Joseon dynasty, the Hangeul writing system was created, leading to the emergence of a national language literature; during the developmental years of the dynasty, the spirit of national studies was elevated as a result of the experiences of the Japanese invasion of 1592; and during the period of self-reflection that followed, Practical Learning rose to prominence and expressed a new zeitgeist. Jo Yunje said that literary history showed that this process of development was a significant achievement in the development of the history of the nation.

Korean Studies 3, led by Son Jintae and Jo Yunje, saw the participation of Yi Inyeong and Kim Seongchil, but ended up as a minority field of study. These four scholars were all professors at Seoul National University, so it seemed that they would be able to turn the tide, but misfortune struck with the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950. Son Jintae and Yi

Inyeong were kidnapped and brought to the north, while Kim Seongchil died. Jo Yunje was forced to leave Seoul National University. The historical studies of Korean Studies 3, which pursued a central line between right and left, disappeared in the south and could not emerge in the north, so its development was halted. As the division between north and south grew more entrenched after the war, scholarship grew polarized as well. Korean Studies 1 dominated the south while Korean Studies 2 dominated the north, and for a very long time no refutation of either was possible.

In the north, a variety of research institutes affiliated with the Academy of Science and the Academy of Social Sciences were established as permanent bodies, and an environment was created where exceptional scholars who had come from the south, including Hong Gimun, Yi Geukro, Go Jeong-ok, Kim Seokhyeong, and Do Yuho, could devote themselves to their studies, achieving results that surpassed those of a south still embroiled in chaos. The Academy of Social Sciences established the Classics Research Institute, which devoted itself early on to the translation, organization, and publishing of classical literature. The north achieved remarkable results in linguistic research and was also ahead in terms of the compilation of dictionaries. The publishing of *A History of Korean Philosophy* (*Joseon cheolhaksa*) and the completion of the massive *History of Korea* have groundbreaking significance.

Progress, however, was not smooth. There was the hidden internal problem of research that began with a certain measure of open controversy but then ended up simply explaining obvious facts. The imbalance that resulted when scholars ignored the first principle of Marxist scholarship (that research be conducted based on scientific materialism) and devoted their energies to the second principle (judging political partisanship) was more pronounced here than in other socialist nations. The demand that these teachings be accepted without question, since the teachings of the superior leader were the only guide for judging value, became even more unwavering with the introduction of the Juche idea, so diversity and flexibility could no longer be expected in academia. When the Juche idea moved from strengthening the national identity to revering Dangun as the founder of the nation, a truce was reached with National Studies 1, which had formerly been denounced as unscientific.

For a long time after the war, the south remained in chaos and

institutions were inadequate, making it difficult to conduct scholarship, and a control mechanism was in place that prevented development along any path other than Korean Studies 1, which was said to be in agreement with the national policy of anti-communism. There was no controversy over fundamentals, and projects which made existing research more diverse, richer, and more refined were highly regarded. Scholars conducted research independently with no systematic ties between them, and notable achievements were made through pioneering work in Confucian history by Hyeon Sang-yun, in Buddhist history by Kim Donghwa, in science history by Hong Iseop, in medical history by Kim Dujong, in economic history by Choe Hojin, in archaeology by Kim Jaewon, in art history by Kim Wonryong, in music history by Yi Hyegu, in folklore by Choe Sangsu, in drama history by Yi Duhyeon, in the study of attire by Seok Juseon, and in dietary studies by Hwang Hyeseong. Examples of advances in research could be seen in the methodological experiments of Yi Sungryeong in Korean linguistics, the expansion of materials by Kim Donguk in Korean literature, and the organization of theories by Yi Gibaek in Korean history.

At the same time, though, there was also a careful move to part ways with Korean Studies 1 and receive the mantle of Korean Studies 3. Kim Cheoljun followed the precedent set by Son Jintae and attempted to achieve a history of culture, but he did not broaden the scope of the discussion, instead opting for more meticulous and detailed research. Yi Useong went beyond Korean Studies 3 to engage in research in the tradition of National Studies 2 that crossed disciplinary boundaries, significantly influencing the younger generation with his calls to carry on the tradition of Practical Learning. Cho Dong-il has examined the entirety of Korean literary history along with the history of society and thought, and he aims to expand his research into East Asian literature and world literature, and into a theory of the humanities and a general theory of learning, in the tradition of the study of the material force (*gihak* 氣學).

## Inheriting Tradition to Achieve Innovation in Scholarship

Departmental studies, which divide up fields of research, were a product of modern Europe. The system established in Korea on this precedent is

characterized by extreme specialization. This specialization has now gone so far as to become a severe detriment, and reflection on the issue is required. We must make an effort to achieve dialogue and communication between different fields of departmental studies, and we must find a way to move from departmental studies to integrated studies. We must recognize this demand from abroad to approach Korean studies holistically rather than focus on individual fields of study within Korean studies, and we must be able to provide a general theory of Korean studies.

In order to respond to the interest in Korea generated in other countries, the Seoul National University East Asian Culture Research Center undertook the task of introducing Korean studies in all fields of departmental learning, beginning with the English-language journal *Korean Studies Today* (1970) and following this with the Korean-language version (*Hangukhak*, 1972). With no general theory, the journal separately examined religion, philosophy, the Korean language, classical literature, modern literature, archaeology and art, classical music, drama, folklore, history, economics, sociology, and science. The National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Korea undertook what could be called a follow-up with *An Introduction to Korean Studies* (*Hangukhak immun*, 1983). Once again, there was no general theory, and the book was divided into sections such as history and culture; thought; politics and law; economics, society, and technology; language and literature; and art.

Far more numerous, though, are the reports produced by academic conferences attended by both Korean and foreign scholars. *The Direction of Korean Culture Research* (*Minjok munhwa ui banghyang*, 1980), published by Yeungnam University's Institute of Korean Culture, is one early example. It was divided into history, Korean language, and Korean music, and it had a general theory discussion of Korean studies. The three individual sections were each authored by one Korean scholar and one Korean-American scholar, and the general theory discussion, "The Tasks and Direction of Korean Culture Research," was written by Cho Dong-il. There were also many international conferences on Korean studies held in various locations. The papers presented at these conferences were collected and published as books such as *The Globalization of Korean Studies* (*Hangukhak ui segyehwa*, 1991) by the Academy of Korean Studies and *Fifty Years After Liberation: Korean Studies in the World* (*Haebang osimnyeon: Segye sok ui Hangukhak*,

1995) by Inha University's Center for Korean Studies.

There had long been a desire to write a dictionary of Korean studies. There were a few attempts that proved inadequate in quality and quantity, but then the Academy of Korean Studies published the 27-volume *Encyclopedia of Korean Culture* (*Hanguk minjok munhwa daebaekgwaja sajeon*, 1992), an essential reference for Korean Studies both in Korea and abroad. It is significant in that it did not rely on existing encyclopedias but was created independently, and the writers' names were printed after each entry, but it is not without its flaws. The introduction contains the "Comparative Table of National Culture" by Cho Dong-il, but it is little more than rationalization after the fact and fails to properly reconcile general theory and individual items. There are not a few examples of imbalances in the system and lack of content, and new results achieved in research need to be added, so the work requires modification and supplementation.

Yi Useong and others felt that self-examination was more important than external propagation, and so they undertook the task of examining the whole of Korean studies, publishing *An Introduction to Korean Studies Research* (*Hangukhak yeongu immun*, 1981). It is a fairly systematic work, and Yi Useong and Jeong Chang-yeol traced the evolution of the perception of Korean studies and examined changes in academic trends in "Reflection on and Prospects for Korean Studies." As areas of Korean studies, they listed the Korean language, archaeology, history, folklore, cultural anthropology, philosophy, political science, economics, sociology, and law. In the main body of the text they also included areas such as art, music, science and technology, religion, drama, and film.

It is unlikely that such repeated attempts will accumulate to the point that Korean studies will be able to transcend departmental studies and become integrated studies. Merely gathering together specialists in departmental studies and having them work together will not produce a shared result. Progress is slow because scholars have been unable to either jointly undertake integrated projects or work on them individually while discussing the projects with other scholars. In order to break through this impasse we need a fundamental rethinking of our approach. We must recognize that the idea that learning must necessarily be departmentalized is a modern concept if we are to do away with it and find a solution. The first thing we must do is rediscover the tradition of integrated studies and build



on that to achieve innovation.

Traditional learning took as its strength integration rather than departmentalization, producing results that provided an overview of various fields of study. Good examples of vast works that dealt with all fields of study yet were produced by single authors are Yi Sugwang's *Categorical Discussions of Yi Sugwang* (*Jibong yuseol* 芝峰類說), Yi Ik's *Miscellaneous Discussions of Yi Ik* (*Seonggo saseol* 星湖僊說), and Yi Gyugyeong's *Discursive Manuscripts of Yi Gyugyeong* (*Ojuyeon munjang jeonsango* 五洲衍文長箋散稿). *Discursive Manuscripts of Yi Gyugyeong* is some sixty volumes in length and consists of all knowledge up until the beginning of the nineteenth century that the author deemed essential, narrated from his point of view and commented in "dialectic" fashion.

The above works dealt with China and Korea together, within the larger framework of East Asian civilization, to offer multifaceted investigations of diverse areas of Korean culture. Along with the viewpoint of integrated studies that brought all knowledge together, the method of examining Korean culture in relation to East Asian civilization is significant enough to be reevaluated and adopted today. We should not think of an East Asian studies indistinct from Korean studies as some undifferentiated, backward heritage, but rather take it as a foothold for new progress; only then can Korean studies avoid being limited to only itself and move toward both interacting with and contributing to the rest of the world.

Yet all of these efforts merely listed individual fields of study without any general theory. They simply provided a variety of examples of integrated studies at the stage before departmental studies, engaging in no theoretical discussion, so it was impossible for them to understand the principles of integration. We must uncover the principles of integrated studies, separately putting forth a general theory of learning and broadening our application of tradition. If Korean studies is to grow into a field that will contribute to the world and bring happiness to humanity, we must go beyond the scope of Korea or even East Asia and reach a place of revolution in a general theory of world learning.

Now, inheriting the heritage of the principles of integrated studies has become the most important task in the process of innovation through tradition. Let us first look at Jeong Dojeon, from the fourteenth century. Jeong Dojeon said that in Confucianism one could achieve learning



where the mind and the body, humanity and the material are always on the same wavelength even as they “exhaustively realize their own natures” (各盡其性). The field of study that brought together and properly understood the characteristics of mind, body, humanity, and the material was Confucianism.

What Jeong Dojeon was referring to when he wrote “their own natures” were the “nature of heaven” (天性) and the “nature of the material” (物性). If we say that everyone possesses the same nature of heaven but different natures of the material, we can establish a plausible argument. But problems arose when the nature of heaven was associated with “principle” (*yi* 理) and the nature of the material was associated with “material force” (*gi* 氣), leading to the philosophy of the dualism of principle and material force, which said that principle was noble and material force was base. It was further argued that unification through principle was noble and division through material force was base, and this led to a long period when the ethics concerned with the former were considered greater and the physical study of the latter was considered lesser.

The next change in the development of this philosophy came with the emergence of counterarguments to this idea. We can clearly see the reasons for and aspects of this change in the task undertaken by Hong Daeyong in the eighteenth century. His argument is as follows. Principle and material force are not two but one, so the hierarchical arrangement of noble and base, unification and division, and high and low is unreasonable. Principle is simply the principle behind material force, so if material force is valuable than so is principle, and if material force can be unified than so can principle. He brought together these theses to counter the theory of the dualism of principle and material force with the theory of the monism of material force. This monist theory was applicable not only to principle and material force, but also to nature and emotions, poetry and song, noble and base, civilized and uncivilized, and heaven and earth, and it was used widely in actual research on these separate fields.

The “nature” (*seong* 性) mentioned above in “nature and emotions” (*jeong* 情) refers to the foundation of the heart and mind, while “emotions” are the action of the heart and mind. Hong Daeyong asserted that these two were not in a relationship of good and evil, but simply of a thing and its functions. “Poetry” (*si* 詩) refers to poetry written in classical Chinese, while

“song” (*ga* 歌) refers to Korean-language songs. Hong Daeyong said that these had equal significance. “Noble” and “base” are social positions. He said that these two must be divided not by status but by ability. “Civilized” (*hwa* 華) and “uncivilized” (*yi* 夷) referred to the center and the periphery of the civilization sphere. He claimed that these two were relative, and anyone could consider themselves the center. And he said of heaven and earth that they were not different in that one was high and one was low, or that one was round and one was square, but that they moved in harmony with each other.

In the nineteenth century, Choe Han-gi wrote a series of works related to the principles of a theory of integrated studies: *Comprehending the Significance of the Epistemology of the Material Force* (*Gicheuk cheui* 氣測體義), *Human Governance* (*Injeong* 入政), and *The Study of Material Force* (*Gihak* 氣學). He referred to the monist theory of material force as “the study of material force,” and he used it to clarify his general theory of learning and to give his study of individual fields more depth. He argued that scholarship needed to be undertaken with the knowledge that what he called “the moving and changing material force” (運化之氣) was an aspect of existence and the basis for all understanding. The moving and changing material force within the human heart and mind and the moving and changing material force in all of creation were basically the same, so it was necessary to prove its validity through several stages of interaction and to broaden our understanding in order to achieve proper scholarship.

He applied to all creation the “study of the material force” that he had established through the cultivation of the moving and changing material force in his own mind, examining diverse methodologies for studying such fields of learning as politics, economics, state ceremony, law and punishment, astronomy and meteorology, and tool engineering. This does not mean that he went beyond relativism or pragmatism. His theories may or may not be used for the study of “one village and one nation,” so it was proper to engage in study that would earn the admiration of “all people under heaven for ten thousand generations.” He is saying that we must accept this as a lesson that we must go beyond nationalism to engage in universalist scholarship.

## Korean Studies that Contributes to the World

Korean studies lags far behind Chinese studies or Japanese studies. We are constantly seeing examples of Korean history being reduced in importance or distorted by China and Japan. That does not mean that we should respond to this, making self-defense the duty of Korean studies. The proper answer is to engage in universal studies that transcend the competition of national studies. I have argued in several books that we need to inherit together the common heritage of East Asian civilization, finding mutually beneficial ways to work together to achieve innovation in world scholarship. After I boiled down this argument in *A Theory of East Asian Civilization* (Jisik Saneopsa, 2010), a Japanese translation was soon published and a Chinese translation was completed as well.

The entirety of humanity is now experiencing serious conflicts because of the competition in science, technology, economy, and politics that occurred throughout the modern era. If we are to awaken people to the fact that humanity must transcend conflict to live together with a single, commonly-shared ideal, we must see the emergence of truly universal and truly global scholarship. Working toward this goal is the calling of a Korean studies that contributes to the world. Korean studies must transcend Korean studies, and it must not be Korean studies. Yet to simply proclaim that we must engage in truly universal and global scholarship would be irresponsible. I will illustrate how I have attempted to achieve this goal in my own work.

In *The History of Philosophy and the History of Literature: Two or One?* (Jisik Saneopsa, 2000), I examined on a global scale the process by which the history of philosophy and the history of literature were at times united and at times divided. I argued that the crisis of today, when philosophy and literature are at their farthest apart, can only be overcome if the two become one again, and that we need to go beyond reason and move toward insight. In *A Comparative Study of the Social Histories of the Novel* (Jisik Saneopsa, 2001), I achieved the world's first general theory of the sociology of novels, a theory that covered works from such diverse regions as East Asia, Europe, India, Southeast Asia, the Arab world, and Africa. Through the rise and fall of the novel, I proved the principle that advanced becomes backward and backward becomes advanced.

All of this is based on the basic theory of becoming and overcoming (*saenggeunghnon* 生克論), which comes from the tradition of the study of material force. Taking as its source the words of the sixteenth century philosopher Seo Gyeongdeok, “One cannot but become two, and two can easily become and overcome, so becoming is overcoming and overcoming is becoming,” the theory of becoming and overcoming, which was further developed in the theories of learning of Hong Daeyong and Choe Hange, offers to all fields of learning the logic that mutual becoming is mutual overcoming and vice versa, allowing for the rise of creative studies today. I gave concrete form to part of this possibility, making progress in achieving innovation in scholarship.

Along with the idea that becoming is overcoming and overcoming is becoming, the idea that advanced is backward and backward is advanced is a basic proposition that makes up the theory of becoming and overcoming. Through these two propositions, the theory of becoming and overcoming offers a counterargument to dialectics. The switching of advanced and backward is not a hope, but a fact based on the reality of history. During the transitions from the ancient era to the medieval era, and from the medieval era to the modern era, backward did become advanced and advanced did become backward. It is only proper to assume that the same thing can happen again. Let us not be blinded by the claims that history has come to an end. This is what all players say when it is time for them to leave the pitch and time for their substitutes to replace them. The development of history does not end. The change by which advanced becomes backward again continues. It is only natural that the transition into the next era will be pioneered in the places that were considered backward in the modern era, and that it will happen by means whose value is not recognized by the standards of the modern era.

I have only just begun the process of carrying on the tradition of the theory of becoming and overcoming. Even my central project of applying this theory to and proving it through the history of literature has many imperfections. I have only been able to explore the possibilities for discussion in areas beyond literary history. I hope that many of my fellow scholars will achieve more progress in a variety of aspects. The theory of becoming and overcoming is a common asset handed down to us by our ancestors. We must rid ourselves of the modern practice of excessively insisting on

intellectual property rights, thus monopolizing our scholarly achievements, and we must work toward building up commonly-held achievements.

