

**Interview**



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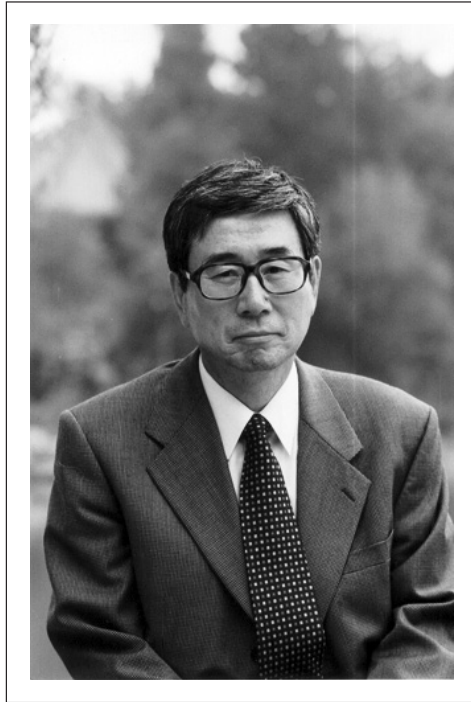
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# INTERVIEW WITH CHO DONG-IL



CHO DONG-IL  
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This interview took place in the No. 2 Humanities Department Conference Room on the third floor of the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Korea, from 1:50 to 3:40 p.m. on November 5, 2012. The discussion of Dr. Cho's scholarship focuses on his major writings and is organized thematically according to distinct trends in his scholarship. The primary goal was to inquire into Dr. Cho's scholarship and its significance through a general overview of his work, and an effort was made to avoid detailed discussion on particular areas. The interview was conducted in Korean and is organized as a series of questions by Kim Heon-seon and answers by Cho Dong-il. Dr. Cho, who is 73 this year, was clearer and sharper than ever, although his manner of speaking has grown gentler and he seemed to have arrived at a place where his scholarship has fully ripened.

## Interview with Cho Dong-il

Kim Heon-seon  
Kyonggi University

### Personal Life and Growing up

KIM HEON-SEON. Where were you born? What meaning does that place have for you, and how is it related to your scholarship? What was your childhood like?

CHO DONG-IL. My hometown is Jusil, in Irwol-myeon, Yeongyang-gun, North Gyeongsang Province. My mother gave birth to me at her parents' house, so my place of birth is Yecheon, but after I was born we immediately went back to Jusil. Jusil is a mountain village nestled deep between two peaks, one 800 meters high and the other 1,200 meters high. The traditional culture of that village, which has been preserved to this day with no new residents moving into the village, is the foundation for my scholarship. And yet I was urged to leave this small mountain village and go out into the wider world, and I have been exploring ever since.

KIM. You spent your formative years in a place different from where you spent your early childhood years, right? What was life like there? What were you most concerned with at that age of tender sensibilities? What made you happy as a student?

CHO. In 1945, when the country was liberated from Japanese rule and the year I turned six, we moved to the town of Yeongyang. In the following year I entered elementary school. I have been proud all my life of the fact that I was part of the first class of elementary school students after liberation. In third grade, when I was nine, I transferred to a school in Daegu, and then I attended Gyeongbuk Middle School and Gyeongbuk High School. In 1958, I entered Seoul National University and began living in Seoul. As a middle school student I had preferred mathematics and the natural sciences. My love for mathematics came from my father, who was a mathematics teacher, and I went on expeditions to gather specimens as a member of the

biology club. In high school, though, my interests changed, and I found joy in drawing and creative writing. I hoped to get into an arts college, but at my parents' insistence I decided to major in literature instead.

KIM. What form did your artistic activities take, and what sort of art did you learn?

CHO. I drew until late afternoon in art club, and I also took trips for the purpose of drawing, immersing myself into creative activities that expressed my thoughts. I held an exhibition of my work with two friends, and the exhibition was very well received. I also wrote poetry. In my last year of high school when I switched from art to literature club, that I was able to devote myself to literary writing and even edited the school magazine.

KIM. During your years at university, Korea was going through a very tumultuous time in its history. Having lived through the era yourself, what did you come to understand about life, and how did that experience guide you in your later scholarship?

CHO. I was proud of the fact that I was excessively curious and always sought to broaden my horizons, absorbing any knowledge of the outside world that I came across. I routinely read whatever I could get my hands on. In my third year at university, I played a major part in the April Revolution of 1960. I participated in preparations before the demonstration, and on the day of the demonstration I stood at the front of the crowd and witnessed with my own eyes the horrible sight of police firing indiscriminately at students in front of the Blue House. When the revolution succeeded beyond what we could have ever hoped for, we realized that a greater awareness of the role we played was vital, and that we had to lead the way in creating a new history.

KIM. What was your major in the French Literature Department, and how did that help you in your scholarship?

CHO. I chose my major because I felt that French literature was the ideal way to learn literary composition and to study the outside world. Even now I still think I did the right thing. I was proud that, unlike the previous

generation, who had experienced the outside world through the Japanese language, I was able to experience the culture of Europe directly through French, English, and even German. Later, when I understood Korea and Koreans better and set for myself the goal of determining the course of a new history, I changed my major to Korean literature. I moved from literary composition to literary criticism, and from criticism to research.

## Innovation and Issues in Oral Literature

KIM. After reading your graduation thesis, *A Study of the Origins of Mask Dances*, submitted to the Korean Language and Literature Department at Seoul National University in 1966, I felt that it was a remarkable study in which you poured your entire soul. Mask dances are, in a way, the foundation of your scholarship. The subject is so far removed from French literature; what should we make of this? This study of mask dances is remarkable for both its theoretical sophistication and its innovation, and it is still regarded as a work of unsurpassed significance. I would like to know more about how your thoughts have changed on this academic subject.

CHO. After ceasing my study of French literature, from symbolism to surrealism, I delved into the stacks daily at the Seoul National University library, reading whatever I could find, no matter what the language or field of study. It was there that I discovered mask dances, and when I saw a mask dance performance I was filled with an overpowering sense of awe and admiration that my subsequent course of life underwent tremendous change that could be described as a religious conversion. Our mask dances are an art form that are as different from surrealist French poetry as night is from day, and I firmly believed that they possessed the power to prevent ruin where the sun set and the light to revive humanity where the sun rose. It was in an effort to reveal the validity and significance of this belief that I wrote my senior thesis and master's thesis.

Both my senior thesis for the French Literature Department, *The Ontological Adventures of Modern Poetry*, and my senior thesis for the Korean Language and Literature Department, *A Study on the Origins of Mask Dances*, are now in the library at Keimyung University. They would come

out to one hundred and two hundred book pages, respectively, and they are both the products of my faith during each period and evidence of my conversion. *The Ontological Adventures of Modern Poetry* attempts a general overview of European poetry, offering a summary of symbolist and surrealist poetry and even providing an introduction of Western European poetry, including Rilke. *A Study on the Origins of Mask Dances* was a long-winded dissertation lacking substance, under influences by the research of preceding generation of scholars, but I was able to correct these flaws to some extent and find a starting point for my research in my master's thesis, *Comic Conflict in Mask Dances*. I transcended the perspective that saw mask dances simply as folklore, and sought to uncover their artistic principles, beginning the task of developing a universal theory—a task that I accomplished with greater sophistication in *The History and Principles of Mask Dances*.

KIM. When you started teaching at Keimyung University, your academic journey took a new turn in terms of the areas you explored. Your *Research on Narrative Folk Songs* and *A Theory of Korean Novels* represented cutting-edge research and marked sharp departure from the existing research trends in the field. Can such unprecedented subjects and achievements of scholarship performed alone ever have true significance? Are the academic achievements of this period in your life simply monologues in the history of Korean studies? Or were they the product of dialogue? What relationship do they have with previous research?

CHO. I did carry out my own research and did not necessarily follow the scholarly trends of Korean literature at the time. In my field research, conducted in the region around my hometown, I began another research project parallel to my inquiries into mask dances and formulated a general theory of oral literature. Emphasis in my subsequent research career shifted from oral literature to classical literature as a whole, from classical literature to Korean literature in general, and then from Korean literature to world literature via East Asian literature. Again, I moved away from the study of literature to a theory of literature's relationship with philosophy and eventually reached a general theory of learning. Other scholars are generally surprised by this, but they have not shown an active interest in my work, so I have found my motivation in internal conversations and dialogues with



those scholars who preceded me, but whom I have never met in person. I have also been encouraged by the very positive responses to my books from readers.

In *Research on Narrative Folk Songs* I turned my efforts to oral literature field work in the region around my hometown, laying the foundation for ensuing research, and in *A Theory of Korean Novels* I moved on to the whole of classical literature, attempting to establish a theory of the relationship between literature and philosophy. I believe that these two books are significant in that they are a crystallization of my change from imported scholarship to a scholarship of my own. *A Theory of Korean Novels* is a very difficult book, and it took seventeen years to sell ten thousand copies.

KIM. *Research on Narrative Folk Songs*, as a book that represents a change in the direction of oral literature research, is most unique in terms of its methodology and theory. What was your fundamental intention when you began planning this book?

CHO. I once wrote, “I left my hometown to study, but then I learned that studying is nothing other than the long and winding road back home.” The process of enlightenment by which I began to renovate literary theory through what my hometown taught me is crystallized in *Research on Narrative Folk Songs*. It proved that, along with mask dances, folk songs also contained an alternative to symbolism and surrealism.

KIM. Perhaps the most conspicuous shortcoming in *Research on Narrative Folk Songs* is a lack of inquiry into the narrative folk songs of Korea as a whole and a comparison with other narrative folk songs around the world. Would you please share your thoughts on how to achieve this task systematically.

CHO. It is only proper that the research of narrative folk songs be taken further, and that Korean narrative folk songs be compared with various examples from around the world. I had planned to repeat the field work at regular intervals, to expand the scope of the research to the entire country, and to compare these folk songs with examples from other countries, but various other projects prevented me from doing so. I hope that someone else

will take up this task and work toward its completion.

KIM. From an academic standpoint, *The Meaning and Function of Character Legends* is a book that exhibits both skill in fieldwork and theoretical depth. The idea that we must see legends featuring human characters in structural, historical, and social terms is a valuable guideline for academics today. The oral literature research of today misses the forest for the trees. The scholarship possesses no innovation and is focused on banal personal experiences. Do you think it is possible that there will be comprehensive achievements in oral literature research in the future?

CHO. My oral literature fieldwork in the area around my hometown dealt with tales as well as folk songs, and so I wrote this book. Having found the best materials so close by, I strove once again to arrive at the best theory. I reaffirmed my belief that the study of materials must be the study of theory, and Korean studies must be world studies. I developed a methodology that I called “field-related structural analysis” and strove to establish a general theory that structure is history and society. This is a very important point, so I want to mention it specifically. There are many who have come after me who devote themselves to oral literature fieldwork, but they have become so invested in their own fields that they have no interest in general theory, and I worry that they might thus lose their drive and their direction.

## Innovation and Issues in Korean Studies

KIM. *A Theory of Korean Novels* is remarkable for its theoretical originality and innovation. It is theoretically compatible with Choe Han-gi’s idea of “the logic of the material force” (氣之條理). In this book you present a lively theoretical discussion of the research in Korean literature conducted by both your predecessors and your contemporaries. It is considered a systematic criticism of positivism, views of national history, new criticism, and social research, and a work that clearly lays out the structuralist research methodology centered on the idea of the material force as a branch of principle, breathing new intellectual life into the field. The five papers that make up the book all follow the same theoretical current and complement

each other. How did you come up with the idea for this book, and what is the secret to a methodology that achieves the same level of theory in writings that are at once different and the same?

CHO. In order to conduct a dialogue with Western theories and produce results that would surpass them, I realized that I had to creatively interpret the traditions of philosophy, offering a new explanation of the reality of literature, and *A Theory of Korean Novels* is the crystallization of that realization. I set for myself, without stating so, the goal of transcending the limitations of György Lukács' *Theory of the Novel*, and I attempted to achieve a general theory of the novel with a focus on early examples of Korean classical novels.

KIM. *Essays on the History of Korean Literary Thought* feels like a preview of *A History of Korean Literature*. This history of literary thought is an inquiry into the individual literary figures of Korean literary history, but the method by which eras are divided and the basis of this division have a clear foundation in literary history. The theoretical discussions in this book resemble those found in works of modern criticism, but where did you come up with the basis for the division of eras, and where did you get the idea for this theory?

CHO. In order to move from imported scholarship to a scholarship of my own, I needed to make a bold decision. I decided to undertake in *Essays on the History of Korean Literary Thought* the two tasks of unearthing the roots of literary thought in order to redefine literary thought and shedding light on the development of literary thought. I used the results of the first task to establish my theories, and the results of the second task as a guideline for understanding literary history.

KIM. *Literary Research Methodologies* focuses on the research of literature, but it also contains revolutionary ideas about the whole of academics. Reasoning is very important in carrying out literary research. Yet it is rare now to find investigations of and arguments concerning this sort of academic logic. How should this book be used to return to genuine literary research?

CHO. I wrote *Literary Research Methodologies* in order to create a space for creative discussion of the basic questions raised in literary research, and so that the book could actually be used in education. I attempted to show that it was well within the realm of possibility to develop a general theory without relying on specific materials.

KIM. *A History of Korean Literature* is truly an important achievement. In terms of the discussion of the division of eras, the era of medieval literature shines the brightest, and what I remember most clearly is the essential section where you showed through a theory of literary history the transition between the early medieval period and the late medieval period. Not all the theories of literary history are completely compatible with each other, but as of yet there has not been another example of the structure of medieval literary history being presented so distinctly. The critical interrelationships between literary works, literary branches, literary thought, and literature creators; the distinction between short-form and long-form didactic poems, which previous scholars had been completely unable to explain; and the dual structure of lyrical and didactic poetry all corresponded in both fact and theory. These were things that the scholarship of Cho Yunje had not been able to deal with, that no theories had attained before, and that were so lucidly explained through theories of world literary history as well. Where did you come up with the idea for this book, and what do you remember about that time?

CHO. I devoted myself to the writing of *A History of Korean Literature* in the hope of achieving the long held dream of fostering a systematic and multifaceted understanding of literature and explaining the development of literary history both in Korea and in the world as a whole. I turned my attention from modern literature to medieval literature and sought to properly reveal the relationship between the ancient era, the medieval era, and the modern era, and to establish a general theory that connects the literary history of Korea, East Asia, and the world.

KIM. What relationship do *Literary Research Methodologies* and *A History of Korean Literature* have with each other?

CHO. These two books are probably the ones I am most attached to. In *Literary Research Methodologies* I used only my own words, and in *A History of Korean Literature* I collected the words of others. To use a Buddhist metaphor, *Literary Research Methodologies* would be a book of the meditative sects, while *A History of Korean Literature* would be a book of the textual sects. In order to pursue academics, one must be at once astute and open-minded, foolhardy and tenacious, and I think these two books showed the extremes of that spectrum.

### **Achievements and Issues in World Literary History**

KIM. You have made the grand transition from Korean literature to world literature. There were points along the way where you dealt with issues stemming from specific branches of literature, where you dealt with civilization spheres as a whole, and where you narrated the history of world literature. You have taken on tasks that would be more than enough for a single lifetime. When compared with specialists who are hemmed into their own narrow fields, your works, as they introduce us to a wider world, are remarkably valuable. But I wonder whether your works will not have a more dramatic effect on those who are less influenced by the narrow fields where research is limited to small things and are thus able to think freely and live without prejudice. There are quite a few areas that cannot simply be called comparative literature. Why did you need to explore these areas as well?

CHO. The expansion of my research from the history of Korean literature to the history of East Asian and world literature was naturally required, and I prepared long to undertake this task. I needed to engage in broader inquiries that went beyond the scope of standard comparative literature.

KIM. *Catharsis, Rasa, Sinmyeongpuri* is one of your major works. I believe that the basis for your discussion of dramatic theory can be found in your mask dance research. How does this dramatic theory contribute to the understanding of human culture? What is the relationship between the history of religion and drama?

CHO. This book is a manifestation of the natural process of the expansion of my research on mask dances. In order to correct the Euro-centric misconception that drama had to be cathartic in order to be proper drama, I had to conduct a comparative study that included Indian drama as well, redefining a general theory of drama. Catharsis offers conflict and *rasa* offers harmony, but in *sinmyeongpuri* conflict is harmony and harmony is conflict.

KIM. Your book entitled *Aspects and Changes in East Asian Oral Narrative Poems* requires special mention as a work that deals with the heritage of humanity known as narrative poems. This book connects the history of politics with the history of narrative poems; would you elaborate on the claim that political victory and defeat are related to the richness or poorness of narrative poems?

CHO. In order to correct the misconception that the narrative poems of Homer and the tragedies of ancient Greece were the beginning and best examples of world literature, and to foster a proper understanding of the history of world literature, I strove to present a genuine discussion of narrative poems. It was also important for me to correct the falsehood that a rich heritage of narrative poems was proof of political dominance. I arrived at the point where I showed that the oral narrative poems handed down and developed by people around the world who had been persecuted were a foundation for the history of world literature. The process involved starting with the oral narrative poems of Jeju Island and expanding out in concentric circles to world narrative poems. I also proved that the division of eras that I gained as intrinsic evidence from the oral narrative poems of Jeju Island was applicable to world narrative poems on a broader scale.

KIM. *A Comparative Study of the Social Histories of the Novel* and *A Theory of Korean Novels* are inseparable works. They both present theories that deal with world novels as a whole, and they also deal closely with the relationship between novels and the history of society. What is the key point you wanted to make in these books?

CHO. In my second work dealing with novels, although the intensity of the discussion was somewhat lessened, I feel that I made significant progress in terms of the scope of my subject and the theories I presented. I would like

to believe that this second attempt, in which I gave an overview of the social history of novels through my theory of becoming and overcoming, which transcended the theory of yin and yang, was the most advanced version of my theories. The first attempt focused on early Korean novels and used the ontological theory of yin and yang. I saw it as a confrontation with Lukács alone. In my second attempt, *A Comparative Study of the Social Histories of the Novel*, I broadened the scope of my research and set out to have a discussion with not only Lukács but also the theories of novels of Mikhail Bakhtin, Lucien Goldmann, Ian Watt, and Peter Zima, and I attempted to overcome these theories through a study of the novels of East Asia, various places in the Third World, and Europe. Through the historical philosophy of the theory of becoming and overcoming, I sought to summarize the social history of the novels of the world.

KIM. *The History of Philosophy and the History of Literature: Two or One?* discusses the relationship between the history of literature and the history of philosophy according to era. What key theory does this work present?

CHO. I attempted to crystallize the theory of the relationship between literature and philosophy, to understand on a global scale the history of thought where the two converge, and gain insight into the development of the humanities. I approached the subject not simply from the theoretical perspective of division and integration, but from the perspective of the theory of becoming and overcoming, inquiring into the intimate relationship that literature and philosophy have with each other and the fact that literary expression and philosophical logic are one.

KIM. There are three books that can be called a new understanding of medieval literature. What are the characteristics and significance of medieval literature discussed in *One and Many East Asian Literatures*, *Common Written Language Literature and Ethnic Language Literature*, and *Similarities and Differences in Civilization Spheres*?

CHO. I allowed myself to fully engage in a multifaceted examination of medieval literature, which is the key to a general understanding of the history of Korean, East Asian, and world literature. I showed that

civilization spheres came about during the medieval period and the parallel development of common written language literature and national language literature occurred everywhere, establishing a foundation for the narration of world literary history, and I sought to prove that humanity was one. I think it is rather odd that this was the first time in the world that such an obvious argument was made.

### **Transitioning to the Humanities, Korean Studies, Civilization Theory, and a Theory of Learning**

KIM. In this area you had a plan for fields of learning that are seemingly contradictory. You once said that dealing with the comprehensive field known as the theory of learning was the third act of life. It is noteworthy that, while you set out general theories based on the characteristics of the humanities, you also focused on the field of Korean studies. *The Mission of the Humanities*, the ten volumes of *Korean Studies in the Age of Globalization and Localization*, *A Theory of East Asian Civilization*, and *A Theory of Learning* are your major works in this areas. What was your intention in writing these books?

CHO. There was naturally a demand for both an expansion of my research through the history of Korean, East Asian, and world literature and an expansion of my research from literary research to the humanities and then a general theory of learning, so I carried out these tasks together. I was able to expand my research in these two directions, and each direction has a deep relationship with the other. Recently, I have been more interested in the latter process, and I decided to bring it to a close with *A Theory of Learning*.

KIM. *Korean Studies in the Age of Globalization and Localization* is an extensive series that shows your reflection on your scholarship. How do you believe Korean studies can contribute to global academics in the future? Does the field of Korean studies have a new meaning?

CHO. What is learning, and how must we go about it? I set about presenting the results of my inquiries into these questions in two different projects. In *Korean Studies in the Age of Globalization and Localization*, I talked



at length about a variety of ideas, and in *A Theory of Learning* I used my words sparingly to present just the core of my ideas. Korean studies must be Korean studies and not be Korean studies at the same time. Korean studies must aim to become a global field for it to have true significance. I started by setting out this theory of mine and then sought to conclude my long research by finding a general theory of learning that would renew global studies.

KIM. The learning that has been achieved by humanity has made a massive contribution to human culture. I believe that the creativity of humanity, including academics at present, has been depleted and reached its peak. What is the true mission of the humanities?

CHO. In expanding my research from literary research to the humanities and then a general theory of learning, I was continuously made aware of the importance of an awakening in the humanities. The humanities must undertake the mission of leading academics along the right path toward a hopeful future.

KIM. *A Theory of Learning* is an unprecedented book. What is the purpose of your discussion here? I realize that the intention is to bring together various fields of learning, but do you believe that readers will find the contents of the book convincing?

CHO. As a result of my inquiries over many years, I have produced far too many works that have grown excessively complex, and I wrote this book in condensed form to present those discursive and difficult ideas in a style that would be easy to understand. I would hope that people would read this book first and then read the original works on which it is based, depending on where their interests lie.

## Theories and Evaluation of the Scholarship of Cho Dong-il

KIM. We have been inspired and learned much from your many works.

Interestingly enough, looking back on your works now it is clear that you have been on a grand journey from a scholarship of “the logic of the material force” to the more dynamic historical philosophy of the theory of becoming and overcoming. The scholarship of the logic of the material force combines conformity with structuralism, and the scholarship of the theory of becoming and overcoming is the result of a dialogue between dialectics and the theory of yin and yang. What is the theory of becoming and overcoming, and what significance does it have as a theory of your works?

CHO. The basic course of my academic inquiries began with the appropriation of structuralism, added to that the inheritance of the theory of yin and yang, and then added to that the use of the theory of becoming and overcoming. The theory of becoming and overcoming is a development of the theory of yin and yang that reveals the principles of creation and change. I have striven to transcend dialectic through a historical philosophy established through the theory of becoming and overcoming, thus expanding my research from the history of novels to the history of literature and history in general.

KIM. The theory of becoming and overcoming, as a theory alone, could be called meaningless. But it is necessary to reveal the historical development and principles of specific subjects, and it has the advantage of being widely usable when determining the relationship between different fields of learning. It is highly usable as a theory, but there are also aspects of it that are difficult to attain. A theory must be concise, innovative, and original, but while the theory of becoming and overcoming may be very clear, it has many limitations in its application. A theory must be able to infer, predict, and arrive at a conclusion. Is the theory of becoming and overcoming applicable to the social and natural sciences as well?

CHO. I have not yet been able to complete the task of moving from literary research to humanities research and a general theory of learning through the theory of becoming and overcoming, so the utility of the theory appears to be limited. I hope that the younger generation will take it upon themselves to clearly show that the theory of becoming and overcoming is a principle of the general theory of learning, and that it is the foundation of all existence and all things. I merely tested the possibilities of the theory of becoming and

overcoming. I cannot own the intellectual property rights of the theory; it is a path that is open to everyone.

KIM. Creation and extinction are characteristics of all living things. And the things created by living things are not free from this premise, either. While the theory of becoming and overcoming talks about becoming and overcoming, it doesn't seem to offer any fundamental insights on creation and extinction. The philosophy of the Flower Garland Sect of Buddhism, which talks about the eternal relationship between creation and extinction, or the philosophy of material force, which attempts to offer a comprehensive explanation of the becoming and overcoming of the material force, offered life insight and caused us to rethink our attitudes. I think that the theory of becoming and overcoming never became anything more than a theory, and it did not offer any concrete insights. What are your thoughts on this?

CHO. The insights to be gained from the theory of becoming and overcoming should be considered practical principles. I intended to achieve this and made some attempt at it, but I was unsuccessful. I can only hope that the younger generation will take up the mantle.

KIM. The globalization of your scholarship is a phenomenon that deserves attention. Translations of your books, including *Histoire de la littérature coréenne* (Fayard, 2002), with Daniel Bouchez as well as *Higashi Ajia bungakushi hikakuron* (Hakuteisha, 2010) and *Higashi Ajia bunmeiron* (Houyū shobō, 2011) translated by Toyofuku Kenji, are direct evidence of this globalization. What is the significance of this globalization of your scholarship, and do you think that a true globalization is possible?

CHO. There are two books that have been published in English—*Korean Literature in Cultural Context and Comparative Perspective* (Jipmoondang, Seoul, 1997), *Interrelated Issues in Korean, East Asian and World Literature* (Seoul: Jipmoondang, 2006)—but these are only brief treatises. The abridged English translation of *A History of Korean Literature* was submitted to a publisher years ago, but I am frustrated that it has not been published yet. Translation of *A Theory of East Asian Civilization* has been completed in Chinese and recently begun in Vietnamese. I sincerely hope that more

of my books will be translated into foreign languages. What I have achieved must be debated on the international stage for my efforts for world literature to be rewarded.

## Words of Advice for Younger Scholars

KIM. Just as everything has a beginning, so does everything have an end. What should your scholarship be to the scholars of the next generation, and do you have any requests to make of the scholars who will carry forward the torch of learning?

CHO. I still have many things to do, but as I recognize my limitations and leave the stage, I would like to express my expectations for the next generation of scholars using a baseball metaphor. I hope that they will answer the two questions of how it was that Cho Dong-il hit a single and how it was that Cho Dong-il *only* managed to hit a single, and that we see the emergence of a string of power hitters who can hit doubles or more.

KIM. If I can ask a personal question: what significance does the age of early fifties have in the life of a scholar?

CHO. In the early fifties, a scholar is at the crossroads where his or her ability to engage in academics declines and the insight gained from his or her academic experiences has increased. It is the time when a scholar should move from writing papers to writing books. Scholars should focus on inquiries into particularly important subjects, striving to produce systematic works. For as long as a scholar can lead the way into new areas of learning, he or she should try to do so.

Translated by Charles La Shure  
Hankuk University of Foreign Studies

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