Korea Journal, vol. 61, no. 4 (winter 2021): 271–305.
doi: 10.25024/kj.2021.61.4.271

Korean Female Education, Social Status, and Early Transitions, 1898 to 1910

Leighanne YUH

Abstract

Rather than treat Korean women's education as a monolithic subject, this article examines the first schools for females established by the aristocratic yangban beginning in 1898 that reflected an effort to formalize elite female education and provide an alternative to the Christian missionary schools. Korean-founded schools adjusted their curriculum to include new subjects such as foreign languages, history, geography, and math while also offering erudite Confucian-based subjects vis-à-vis morals education, calligraphy, and literary Sinitic. These classical subjects were too advanced for the missionary schools to offer. The combination of these subjects was appropriate for women of elite households since they would marry government officials, diplomats, and scholars (also of yangban extraction), would need to be familiar with aristocratic etiquette and mores in a changing context, and would have to raise their children for their elite station in life. This changed after 1905 as Korean sovereignty became increasingly threatened and the mobilization of the female population, regardless of social class, became an urgent matter. Thus, all Korean women were called upon to perform their patriotic duties as wise mothers and good wives to contribute to the strengthening of the country.

Keywords: Korean women's education, yangban women, status, Sunseong, late-nineteenth-century education

---

I would like to thank my research assistant Junghyun Lee for his impeccable assistance and Professor Sonja Kim for her feedback on an earlier draft of this paper.

Leighanne YUH is Associate Professor in the Department of Korean History at Korea University. E-mail: leighanneyuh@gmail.com, lyuh@korea.ac.kr.

Introduction

When Westerners first arrived in Korea, they bemoaned the *inferior and wretched* position of Korean women, which only confirmed their suspicions of a backwards and barbaric *Hermit Nation*. Isabella Bird Bishop (1831–1904), one of the first Westerners (an Englishwoman) to write about Korea and introduce its culture to a Western audience, described Korean commoner women as being without manners or loveliness and sentenced to a life of drudgery. According to Bishop, even the women of the upper classes have "as low a status in civilized Korea as in any of the barbarous countries in the world" (Bishop [1898] 2011, 342). American missionary depictions confirmed Bishop's accounts of a harsh and bleak existence for Korean women.[1] To improve this seemingly hopeless situation for Korean women, the American Methodist missionary Mary F. Scranton established Ewha School (Ewha hakdang), the very first school for Korean girls, in May 1886. Missionaries, intellectuals, and historians then and now describe the establishment of Ewha as a milestone in bringing Korean women out of their homes and providing them with the education that had been denied them. "In an Oriental country, such as the Korea of that day, a girls' school was a contradiction of all inherited ideas and the very conditions for its existence were lacking" (H. Underwood 1926, 18). Consequently, historiography on gender and Korean education tends to focus on Christian missionary education, its prominent role in the modernization of Korea and the construction of modern Korean womanhood (Choi 2009), and its emancipation of Korean women.[2]

Generally, women's education is used as a marker of modernity in the

1. Lillias Horton Underwood described 19th-century Korean women: "Sorrow, hopelessness, hard labor, sickness, lovelessness, ignorance, often, too often, shame, have dulled their eyes, and hardened and scarred their faces…their appearance only calls forth compassion" (1904, 11).
2. "Some feminist scholars on Korea consider the first mission school for girls, Ewha hakdang, to be the incubator for gender equality and emancipation and assert that Christianity was a central mover in facilitating the early feminist movements in Korea" (Chai 1997, 177; K. Cho 1998, 30; Kwon 1998, 381–405).

narratives of social development. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, these narratives posited the so-called *civilized* and *enlightened* countries encouraging the education of women as opposed to the uncivilized countries that kept their women ignorant and illiterate. Influenced by this view, 19th-century Korean intellectuals criticized the Confucian patriarchal order for its enslavement of women. Thus, women's education becomes a harbinger of modernity for its liberation of women from the inner quarters, its challenge to the traditional patriarchal system, and its embrace of gender equality. Just the fact that women left the home to attend school and receive an education (of any kind) seems to demonstrate the emancipation of women.

Theories on gender and women often have a totalizing effect that treat women as a monolithic group and overlook important differences. However, recent research treats the notion of *woman* as fractured and contested since there is no singular woman experience and women have widely different motives and interests (Dill and Zambrana 2009, 1–21; Grewal and Kaplan 1994; McCann and Kim 2013; Mohanty 1988; Rich 2009). This article expands upon this research to demonstrate that female education in Korea was not a one-size-fits-all enterprise, and that modern female education established by Koreans was of a different ilk from the schools established by American missionaries.[3] The first mission schools for girls recruited students from poor socio-economic backgrounds and provided a basic education centered on the Bible and evangelization for the purpose of supporting the church and earning a living. In contrast, members of

3. Recent scholarship on Korean gender history has also moved away from totalizing women's histories to a focus on the diversity of backgrounds and experiences. Some examples include works on Buddhist nuns (E. Cho, 2011), female entertainers (Middleditch, 2019, 30–46; Sease 2016), Catholic martyrs (Torrey 2017, 421–441; 2020, 151), and concubines (J. Kim 2017, 91–110). Nonetheless, while the scholarship on early modern women's education heavily focuses on missionary education, there is a paucity of scholarship (particularly in English) on the schools targeting women established by Koreans.

the royal family and aristocratic yangban[4] were responsible for the first Korean-established schools. These elite schools often required basic literacy and some even administered placement exams for student admission. By shifting the historiographical focus to other forms of female education it is possible to analyze across diverse social status groups the various reasons women chose to educate themselves and how their different educational experiences prepared them for specific social roles. Thus, we find that some Korean women promoted a selective curriculum that contributed to their own gender construction and corresponding roles and behavior befitting an elite Korean woman. In other words, yangban women required different educational content altogether from commoner and lower-status women that was necessary for the preservation of their elite status, maintenance of the family lineage, and befitting their social roles.

The status of yangban women during the Joseon dynasty (1392–1910) was essential to not only the social standing of the individual and their lineage, but also affected social interactions, social mobility, marriage options, and even one's speech and clothing. Protecting the elite status of yangban women was a fundamental reason behind the establishment of the first Korean schools geared toward these women at the end of the 19th century. To better understand the significance of the Korean-established schools targeting women it is necessary to analyze how social status was determined in Joseon Korea. Status was not defined simply by birth, occupation, or the amount of property a family owned, but by a combination of factors, all of which were necessary to be considered a yangban aristocrat. One's birth determined an individual's status category: yangban aristocrat, secondary status group, commoner, or low-born. Among the aristocracy, one's lineage determined social status since even within the same lineage social status differences existed. Furthermore, individual status was predicated upon the status of both the father and mother, thus resulting

4. The Joseon dynasty was a highly stratified society with the yangban aristocrats occupying the highest social status. Yangban status was defined by several factors including birth, lineage, marriage, education and passage of the civil service examination, and wealth. This system was eliminated with the 1894–1896 Gabo Reforms but the relevance of status continued into the colonial period.

in strict intermarriage customs among the aristocratic yangban in order to maintain elite social status.

Another essential feature to yangban status for women was connected to education and behavioral norms. Most yangban women were educated, albeit informally at home, to cultivate themselves in social norms and etiquette.[5] Therefore, for a yangban woman to properly manage the home it was necessary for her to achieve a certain level of learning. As this was a private matter and varied from family to family, this informal education took on different forms, from learning "women's skills" (*yeogong* 女工) to reading the Confucian Classics. However, among all the knowledge and skills that could be acquired, virtuous behavior and a moral mindset always took precedence over literacy. Some women were literate in Classical Chinese and scholarly in their own right, but more importantly they embodied their informal training and knowledge through their behavior, social roles, and mindset: these were virtuous women who cared for their parents-in-law, treated their husbands with respect, and taught their children the cardinal Confucian principles. Essentially, they were the custodians of their elite households, honorable family traditions, and eminent lineages. They played a critical social role by managing the domicile since in Joseon Korea the family was the cornerstone of society and stabilizing the family meant contributing to the security of the country. This role would become even more important after Korea's increasing loss of sovereignty beginning in 1905.

This paper draws from these ideas—that elite women defined themselves based on birth, social status, and a set of behavior and roles prescribed by established norms—to argue that yangban were active in establishing their own schools for females in the 1890s to maintain

5. Throughout this article, I use the term "informal education" as opposed to "private" or "domestic" education since private education is often associated with private school education and yangban women did not attend school, while domestic education is usually associated with home economics, but yangban women learned more than just cooking and housekeeping. Informal education here denotes a natural and spontaneous education outside of a structured curriculum and formal school setting, and includes a domestic, moral, behavioral, and sometimes scholarly training.

status distinctions since yangban women and lower-status women played very different social roles and had varied educational goals in mind. The American missionary Lillias Underwood noted that most missionary schools' female students were from poor families and that, "it was almost impossible to get any girls into our schools except the friendless and sick, little homeless waifs and orphans whom no one else care for or wanted" (1904, 304, 328–329). The absence of yangban women in the mission schools indicated that aristocratic Korean women needed their own educational counterpart to provide them with an updated education that was suitable for elite women. By imposing prerequisites through entrance exams or charging tuition, yangban women could deter uneducated lower status women and create a separate space—culturally, intellectually, and physically—for their own group members. This study contributes to a better understanding of how yangban women maintained status distinctions through the perpetuation of their specific social roles as guardians of the family who did not work for a living outside the home, which was very different from students of missionary schools who were often of a lower social class or from backgrounds (poor and/or remarried widows, women of impoverished yangban families, gisaeng, shamans, etc.) that required gainful employment to support themselves. After 1905, this would change as the priority became protecting Korean sovereignty, so all females were called upon to educate themselves for strengthening the country. While the primary social role for yangban women as wives and mothers persisted, the educational goal shifted from perpetuating their status to protecting national independence.

Nineteenth-Century Women's Education in the United States and Japan

Recent scholarship on 19th-century women's education in America reveals that while female education sought to broaden the woman's sphere, that sphere remained separate, with an eye to educating women in their proper roles as wives and mothers. "Widening receptivity to women in education, it seems, was not always accompanied by growing opportunities in women's

work" (Rury 1991, 3). In fact, despite their attempts to penetrate the public sphere, women's schools, voluntary associations, and clubs generally focused on providing an education in child-rearing and household management (Moseley 2007, 5). As a mass educational system became established in the latter half of the 19th century, middle-class girls received an academic education (reading, writing, arithmetic), whereas working-class girls usually received vocational or industrial training. On the other hand, upper-class American women were groomed for a genteel life and learned piano, embroidery, French; if they were academically ambitious they took on "ancient, European, and American history; arithmetic, geometry, and algebra; and sciences, geography, current events, history of art, and drawing" (Moseley 2007, 8). Throughout the latter half of the 19th century, increasing numbers of white middle- to upper-class young women attended high schools while "teenage girls from working-class and immigrant backgrounds were largely excluded from school" (Rury 1991, 57). Despite this increase in females receiving secondary education and higher graduation rates, most did not work after graduation and "did not see the high school as a form of vocational education" (Rury 1991, 75). Instead, most believed the purpose of women's education was to prepare them for raising families and for homemaking, which was the only "appropriate" vocation for most American women (Rury 1991, 146). Thus, American education was not only gendered but varied according to one's class and required different sorts of training to prepare for distinct roles and responsibilities.[6] In other words, women of middle- and upper-class backgrounds who did not need to work, or only worked for a few years before marriage, attended high school and sometimes university. Women of the working class who needed to work and contribute to the family income received vocational or industrial training to prepare them for industrial and manufacturing jobs.

Likewise, in Tokugawa Japan (1603–1867), access to education for women increased over time but despite the expansion of female education,

6. In the antebellum United States, female education was reserved for elites and, "(b)y 1870, only 11,000 women were enrolled in post-secondary institutions in the US, and this number represented only seven-tenths of one percent (0.7%) of all American women aged 18 to 21" (Tocco 2008, 50).

"affluent women had greater educational opportunities," particularly samurai women in central urban areas who were almost all literate and well educated. In contrast, women in rural areas rarely received an education. "As in America, the women educated in these institutions [of higher education] constituted an educated elite and represented just a fraction of the women age-appropriate to such education" (Tocco 2008, 40–46, 53). Later in Meiji Japan (1868–1912), although the Education Ordinance of 1872 stipulated for the establishment of official education for girls, the Meiji government made only a series of half-hearted attempts, while some of the first private schools for girls catered to the Japanese nobility. It was not until 20 years later, in the 1890s, that the government made a serious effort to expand female education (Mehl 2001, 580). Thus, in both the United States and Japan, not only was education segregated by gender but also by social status and socioeconomic class. For example, educational goals of female education to create good wives and wise mothers (*ryōsai kenbo*) were aimed at upper-middle-class students (Patessio 2013, 558) and to provide preparation for their responsibilities in the home rather than to work outside the home. This did not mean that all Japanese intellectuals and educators believed women should be confined to the home, and in fact many commoner women were expected to work outside the home before marriage. However, Japanese educators believed normal women did not work outside the home and only those women who could not get married "because they possess an amazing talent (*hijō no tensai*), a physical malformation, or a loathsome disease" should work as a "last resort."[7] Thus, many educated Japanese women hailed from former samurai backgrounds—such as Aoyama Chise (1857–1947) and her daughter Yamakawa Kikue (1890–1980) (Tsurumi 2000, 4)—but were expected to conform to the good wife, wise mother normative ideology rather than pursue a career or political life. The Japanese educator and pioneer in female education Tsuda Umeko (1864–1929) was one of the first Japanese girls to receive an American education, attending Georgetown Collegiate School and later graduating from Bryn Mawr College. After returning to Japan, she co-founded the Joshi Eigaku Juku 女子英学塾

7. The teacher Nishida Keishi is quoted saying this in *Joshi shosei hyakkun* (Patessio 2013, 561).

(Women's Institute for English Studies) in 1900. However, Tsuda believed the purpose of education was to form "wives of broad intellectual culture, friends and confidants of their husbands…(where) homes become centers of influence" (Rose 1992, 86), and encouraged women to focus on their roles at home as wives and mothers.

Similarly, in Korea, from the outset there were different forms of female education that appealed to distinct social classes and this allowed women of elite status to maintain their social status and power. Due to the importance of women's status, how status was determined, and the role of education in the maintenance of status, there was no monolithic or comprehensive form of education suitable to all women. Yangban families generally avoided Western missionary schools with their predominantly lower-status student body and unrefined curriculum. Thus, the formal establishment of elite female education in late 19th-century Korea had less to do with modernization or the emancipation of women, and more to do with social status and inequalities of power. It was not until after 1905, when social status restrictions receded and roles for women as patriotic subjects and wise mothers and good wives were extended, that educators called upon all Korean females to contribute to the strengthening of the nation and preservation of Korean sovereignty by educating themselves and their children.

Gender, Status, and Informal Female Education in Late Joseon Korea

At the beginning of the Joseon dynasty (1392–1910), women were criticized for being inappropriate and immodest,[8] which led to a social engineering and circumscription of female activities, including their education and freedom of movement. By the middle of the dynasty, a woman's status had become critical to the preservation of status, reputation, and marital

8. For example, whereas it was customary for women to visit their natal home during the Goryeo dynasty (918–1392) and to have freedom of movement, this practice was staunchly discouraged from the beginning of the Joseon dynasty (*Taejo sillok*, 21st day of the 9th lunar month, 1392).

options of not only the individual but of one's offspring and lineage. A key component to elite status revolved around education using Confucian-based texts for instruction in virtuous behavior, ancestral rites, and proper management of the household. However, education of yangban females was informal and occurred in the confines of the home since formal female education did not exist.

The Confucian emphasis on morality, regulation of the family, and patriarchy led to a separation of the sexes and restrictions on women visiting Buddhist temples and their confinement to the domicile of the husband's family. Therefore, not only were the comings and goings of yangban women monitored and controlled, but whom women could interact with was also strictly limited.[9] By the time American missionaries arrived in Korea at the end of the 19th century, the restriction of yangban women's activity and their limited interaction with lower-status women had become accepted custom.

Another result of the implementation of Confucian ideology for women was the ossification of social status. A royal edict of 1413 led to the ranking of wives with the primary wife and her children possessing the highest status, and the secondary wife and her offspring having lower status. Only yangban women were eligible to qualify as the primary wife.[10] The status and government position of the husband also affected the status of women. Women married to former government officials or those who had passed or were about to sit for the civil service examination were accorded the highest status.[11]

9. The movement of women was further restricted during the reign of the third Joseon king Taejong (r. 1400–1418) by an edict prohibiting women's visitation of Buddhist temples (*Taejong sillok*, 8th day of the 12th lunar month, 1404).
10. Since most secondary wives were not yangban but of lower-class origin, maintenance of a hierarchy between the primary wife and the secondary wife was relatively straightforward. If the secondary wife (or wives) was from a lower class, then the secondary wife had to obey the primary wife, while the primary wife had the duty to take care of the secondary wife and her children (S. Lee 2003, 21–58).
11. In the family genealogy, women were differentiated into one of three classes based on her appellation. *-ssi* 씨 was for yangban women, *-joi* 조이 was for ordinary or lower-class women, and *-seong* 성 was for secondary-status women (Kyung-ran Kim 2003, 191–219).

Thus, during the Joseon dynasty, yangban men's ability to bring in secondary wives and concubines led to a ranking system for wives, with primary wives receiving higher status and the status of children defined by the status of both parents, especially since secondary wives and concubines usually were of lower social status. Remarriage for widows was taboo, therefore concubines and remarried widows suffered social stigmatization. Since yangban women were expected to conform to a strict set of norms based on Confucian moral principles, daughters of yangban families received training for their future roles as wives and mothers. Elite yangban women's roles as daughters, mothers, and wives focused on their responsibilities in child-rearing, management of the household, and caring for one's parents-in-law. It was believed that the prosperity of the family hinged upon the mother's ability to raise their sons to successfully pass the civil service exam and to raise their daughters to marry into another yangban family to preserve their elite status and power.

For yangban houses, it was important to educate their daughters as proof of the family's level of refinement and sophistication, especially to the yangban house their daughter was marrying into. After marriage, the daughters-in-law continued their education in the in-laws' home, which also served to enhance the patriarchal order of the yangban houses.[12] To implement this kind of informal education in the home, various didactic texts for the instruction of women were published beginning in the fifteenth century. Queen Insu 仁粹大妃 (1437–1504) authored *Instructions for the Inner Quarters* (*Naehun* 內訓) in 1475 to instruct women in proper Confucian virtues and conduct.[13] Recent scholars have shown that 70 percent of the content of *Instructions for the Inner Quarters* was derived from

12. See Han Hee-Sook (2008, 6–8). Even though women were educated because they were daughters of a yangban house and represented the elite status of their family, education was neither a requirement for becoming a yangban woman nor a means to acquire elite status. Nevertheless, female yangban actively participated in writing, in either the Korean alphabet or in Classical Chinese, and produced literature, journals, epistles, and even petitions. See also G. Kim (2005, 5–50).

13. Insu was the crown princess-wife of Prince Dowon (Dowongun; later called Deokjong) and is renowned for her knowledge of both Confucianism and Buddhism, even translating Buddhist scriptures with her father-in-law King Sejo (r. 1455–1468).

another Confucian text, the *Lesser Learning* (*Sohak* 小學). Other content was taken from the *Four Books* and *Five Classics* (*saseo ogyeong* 四書五經). This subject matter contained teachings on the behavior and morality required of members of the elite class. What most scholars neglect to point out is that the text was mainly written for female members of royalty or yangban scholar families.[14] This informal education for women also emphasized the application of knowledge to skills and virtuous behavior—a woman's attitude towards her in-laws, her modest behavior and politeness to her husband, her treatment of household servants, the education of her children, etc. It was far less important for her to be literate or well-read, although these were admirable traits to be kept confidential among immediate family members only.

There are many examples of educated yangban women that demonstrate that it was proper for an elite household during the Joseon dynasty to educate their daughters.[15] This included instruction in the fundamentals of Confucian learning such as the *Lesser Learning* or Zhu Xi's *Family Rites*. There are numerous historical cases of fathers from yangban households who taught their daughters, mothers and grandmothers who taught their children and their daughters-in-law, and women who were self-taught or learned alongside their brothers.[16] Other instances of informally educated women chronicle mothers teaching their children and grandchildren in the home a variety of subjects, including Confucian

14. See Peter H. Lee, et al., eds. (1997, 49). This text was originally written in Classical Chinese, then later published in the Korean alphabet (*hangeul*), and even used as a textbook at Ewha.
15. It is important to note here that while there are several examples indicating that women of elite households often received an informal education in the home, this was not a fact that was publicized but was usually concealed from the public and only made known after the woman's death.
16. For instance, the renowned 17th-century Confucian scholar Yi Hyeon-il (1627–1704) wrote about his mother Madame Andong Jang-ssi (1598–1680). Yi Hyeon-il, "Seonbi jeungjeongbuin Jang-ssi haengsilgi (Acts of my Deceased Mother, Mrs. Jang, granted the title of Jeongbuin)," Galamjip (Collections of Galam Yi Hyeon-il), gwon 27, 330–333.

primers, poetry, astronomy, and Confucian rites.[17] Madame Baecheon Jo-ssi (1723–1789) was the mother of the famous scholar Hwang Deok-gil (1750–1827), who was also educated and taught her sons, daughters-in-law, and granddaughters, while concealing this from the household servants. She used the *Lesser Learning* and Zhu Xi's *Family Rites*, as well as selected specific Confucian proverbs and lessons to teach feminine virtue.[18] Although these women were a minority, they nonetheless demonstrate that elite households often informally educated their daughters at home and these women were far from ignorant or uneducated.

The Changing Landscape of Female Education in Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth-Century Korea

The First Girls' Schools: Christian Missionary Schools

The first Protestant Christian missionary, Dr. Horace Newton Allen (1858–1932), arrived in Korea in 1884. After ingratiating himself with the Korean king Gojong (r. 1863–1907), Allen was followed by other missionaries—Horace Grant Underwood (1859–1916), Henry Gerhard Appenzeller (1858–1902), and William Benton Scranton (1856–1922) and his mother Mary Fletcher Scranton (1832–1909) in 1884. Mary Scranton was the first female missionary in Korea and opened the first school for girls, the Ewha School, in 1886. The same year Ewha was established, the first female medical missionary Annie J. Ellers (1860–1938) arrived in Korea and established

17. The 18th-century high official in the office of court advisors (Hongmungwan 弘文館), Yi Deok-su (1673–1744), described how his son identified that his grandmother was very clever and encouraged her learning and had her memorize books such as the *Lesser Learning* (*Sohak*) and poems of the Tang Dynasty. Yi San-bae, "Seonbi haengnok" (Acts of my Deceased Grandmother), *Seodangsajae* (Private Collections of Seodang Yi Deok-su), *gwon* 12, 559–565. Yi Deok-su's son was Yi San-bae (1703–1732) and his mother was Madame Cheongsong Sim-ssi (1649–1727).
18. Hwang Deok-gil, "Seonbi buin Baecheon Jo-ssi gajang" (Record of my House, on my Deceased Mother of the Baecheon Jo Clan), *Haryeojip* (Collections of Haryeo Hwang Deok-gil), gwon 17, 548–551.

Chungshin Girls' School the following year, in 1887 (Oak 2012, 51). The last mission school for girls in Seoul was Baewha Girls' School, established by Josephine Eaton Peel Campbell (1853–1920) in 1898.[19] Existing scholarship on American female missionaries and their schools in Korea describes them as laying the groundwork for Korean modern womanhood, "liberating" Korean women from oppression and servitude, and contributing to the overall Korean modernization process (Choi 2009, 2–3; Y. Lee 2000, 79). However, these studies of missionary schools for females overlook the class backgrounds of the first Korean students, the curriculum, and educational objectives which prepared graduates for distinct roles in an evolving Korean society. Although schools like Ewha prepared their students to become model housewives, American missionaries thought of education as the most expedient means to teach about the Bible and to train "Bible women" to assist with evangelical work. Missionaries referred to this as "women's work for women" with the ultimate intention of spreading the Christian gospel and firmly establishing the Christian church in Korea by teaching Korean women religious texts, English, and basic literacy so they could then operate Bible classes, translate for missionaries, and care for the sick. Several former students became teachers upon graduation from the missionary schools. As most Bible women were impoverished women or widows with no means of supporting themselves, missionary education provided them with practical training and a means to earn a livelihood. This was a very different kind of education and purpose from aristocratic women who had no intention of (or need for) working outside the home and whose purpose in education was to marry, perform their proper roles as wife and mother, and preserve the status of the family lineage.

As female missionaries settled in Korea they found that yangban women were cloistered at home and did not go out in public except under extraordinary circumstances. While most Western women viewed this as captivity or enslavement, in truth, yangban women did not perceive their seclusion as oppression but rather as a protection and a privilege. "The higher a woman's status, the more she sequestered herself" (Kendall and

19. Christian missionaries established other schools for girls in different cities. See Appendix.

Peterson 1983, 5). Exposure outside the home was considered potentially dangerous and hazardous to female virtue. When yangban women did venture beyond the safety of the home, they demonstrated modesty and propriety as becoming a respectable woman by covering their head and face with a loose veil and rode in closed sedan chairs. In contrast, women of lower status could come and go since they worked outside or near the house, in the markets, or as domestic laborers. "Freedom of movement and absence of the veil were the marks of slave women or women in outcaste professions" (Kendall and Peterson 1983, 5). Thus, yangban women could justify that they were cherished and sheltered from the degradations of the public space and held in high esteem since female status was crucial to the maintenance of the status of the family. As one Korean woman remarked, "We think that your (Western) husbands don't care for you very much" (Bird 1898, 342).

Consequently, the earliest converts to Christianity were primarily Korean women of lower status groups. With a small number of Korean female Christian converts, American missionaries initially had no choice but to rely on uneducated and impoverished women as "Bible women" to assist with their ministry. The first interactions between American missionaries and Korean women tended to be with the poor, uneducated, and downtrodden. Historically, the unfavorable circumstances of these women throughout the Joseon dynasty did not grant them access to education, nor did they need an education beyond training in domestic chores. The lack of knowledge and opportunities—and in many cases food and shelter—of these Korean women made them ideal and willing candidates for the mission schools offering a rudimentary education in reading and writing the Korean alphabet (*hangeul*) and the Bible, as well as room and board. However, this also meant that yangban women would avoid the mission schools and their lowborn students. Not only was it customary for yangban women to refuse to fraternize with lower-status women, but their needs and skill sets for learning were entirely different. What defined an elite Korean woman as yangban—her behavior, attitude, speech, clothing, education—was an accumulation of knowledge put into practice over her lifetime and could not be learned at any mission school or attached to a wage.

While Mary Scranton received royal permission to open the Ewha

School, King Gojong denied Scranton's request to recruit among yangban women.[20] "The auspicious beginning of the schools was somewhat undercut when Scranton was informed…that she would have to forego her plan to recruit girls from the upper classes because of the tradition of seclusion… Facing this reality, Scranton turned her attention to orphans and poor children" (Choi 2009, 90). For this reason, the students of the inaugural class at Ewha were "children from impoverished families, daughters of widows, or the children of Koreans who worked for American missionaries" (Choi 2009, 91). According to Mary Scranton, the first permanent student enrolled because of poverty and the second student was an orphan she had found outside the gate (Scranton 1896, 3–4). The students at the other mission schools established in Seoul came from similar backgrounds. Mrs. Campbell started Baewha (Baehwa) School (Baehwa hakdang) by recruiting orphans. Ms. Ellers of Chungshin (Jeongsin) Girls' School also started education with orphans she brought from the missionary hospital, the Jejungwon. The number of students increased gradually—Ewha School had 3 students in the beginning, but for the fall semester of 1899, the number had increased to 47. In the 1890s, it is recorded that a daughter of Bak Yeong-hyo studied at Ehwa School, which shows a small number of yangban daughters studied together with students from lower, impoverished backgrounds.[21]

Nonetheless, female Christian converts associated with the church and missionary schools generally came from impoverished yangban families or were widows with little means to support themselves. For example, Kim Sadie (1865–?) became a widow at a young age and remarried in 1888. After converting to Christianity in 1895, she studied the Bible and traveled around the country to convert other socially stigmatized women: widows, kisaeng, shamans, and orphans.[22] Another woman named Yi Gyeongsuk was born into a poor yangban family, married young and was also widowed at an early

20. This author has been unable to find any further records or court discussion on the matter as to why the Korean king denied Scranton's request.

21. After ten years, daughters of upper-class Presbyterian believers entered Chungshin Girls' School, resolving difficulties in recruitment (Y. Kim 1962, 118–119).

22. Kim continued her support of lower-status women by organizing the Ladies Aid Society in Pyongyang in 1903 and the Widows Relief Association in 1916.

age. She was later introduced to Mary Scranton and became her personal secretary since she was literate and had received an informal education at home. Yi would go on to become the first Korean teacher at Ewha School. Mary Scranton's adopted Korean daughter, Emily Hwang (여메례황) was a teacher at Jinmyeong School (see below) in Pyongyang from 1907 to 1911. Yet another example is Hahr Nansa (Kim Nansa, or Nancy), a secondary wife, who worked with Mary Scranton at Sangdong Church and taught "English and the Bible to attendees, who were largely widows, concubines, entertainers, and a few palace women" (Choi 2009, 93). These early female converts originated from difficult socio-economic circumstances and found comfort and acceptance in the Christian community. They were also a group of women who needed to support themselves and thus were the most receptive to acquiring the practical skills that would enable them to find employment in the church or missionary schools.

In addition to the lower status of missionary school students, female missionary teachers were often unmarried, prioritizing God's work over raising a family. "In 1901, for example, women comprised 56.5 percent of the mission force in Korea. Among the women missionaries, 52 percent had not married" (Choi 2009, 17). These unmarried women who led the Christian mission in Korea frowned upon early marriage and inspired other Korean female converts to remain single.[23] For aristocratic yangban women, this contradicted their raison d'être to be good wives and wise mothers. Indeed, one *must* marry in order to be a wife and mother. On the contrary, a woman who was not marriageable (e.g. widows) would find a missionary education that provided training for future employment appealing.

Initially, the mission schools failed to attract elite female students since yangban women were informally educated at home, did not fraternize with women of lower status groups, and viewed education as preparation for their roles as wives and mothers. Yangban women did not need to work to support themselves and thus did not require the practical training missionary schools offered to their students to produce Bible women

23. Examples of Korean converts who never married include Kim Hwallan and Kim Maria (Choi 2009, 17).

or future schoolteachers. As a result, the students who attended the first mission schools for girls in Seoul—Ewha, Baewha, and Chungshin—were mostly drawn from lower status groups and were poor and uneducated. The mission schools mostly offered Bible lessons, basic literacy, and some English; given the existing learning hierarchy, this curriculum would have been unappealing and impractical for yangban girls who would have been more interested in continuing their informal education based on more advanced Confucian texts and cultivating etiquette and decorum befitting an elite household.

The First Korean Schools for Girls and Women

The establishment of female education by Western missionaries launched public debate over the status of women and gender relations in Joseon society. In the 1880s the Joseon government began sending officials abroad to Japan, China, and the United States to observe those countries' modernizing efforts. The officials were particularly impressed by the educational system and the emphasis placed on women's education. "In their view, educated mothers would raise accomplished and learned men who would strengthen the moral and intellectual fiber of the nation" (Yoo 2014, 41). By the 1890s, intellectuals began advocating for gender equality in education and social equality in order to promote national strength. Yu Gil-jun argued in his book *Observations from my Travels in the West* (*Seoyu gyeonmun*) that advanced civilizations valued women by educating them and treating them well (Yu [1895] 1995, 350). Seo Jae-pil also advocated equal education for males and females.

> There should be no distinction between the sexes when teaching the children of our people. It is proper to establish one school for girls whenever one school for boys is established. However, the government does not educate girls, which means that half of our national population is abandoned in the state [of ignorance] and left uneducated. We are determined to fight men for [the rights of] women at the same time.[24]

24. *Dongnip sinmun* (The Independent), September 13, 1896.

Despite political turbulence from the 1880s and the legal abolition of status distinctions via the Gabo Reforms (1894–1896), "social life went on as usual (and) upper-class women minded their social connections and cultivated their networks" (Haboush 2009, 220).[25] In 1898, a hundred women of elite background formed the Promotion Society (Chanyanghoe) in Bukchon, a neighborhood populated by yangban, and petitioned Emperor Gojong for the establishment of a school for girls. Historians often point to the distribution of the "Circular for the Establishment of a Girls' School" (*Yeohakgyo seolsi tongmun*) as, "the beginning of the women's rights movement in Korea" (Choi 2009, 38).

> Is there any difference between men and women in their bodies and senses? How could women, like idiots, just sit and be fed by what men earned? How could women staying in the deep inner chambers just be restrained for life by others? ... It is time for us to eradicate old customs and to strive for enlightenment and progress. For this, we need to establish girls' schools and to send out daughters so that they can become a group of talented women like in other countries. (Choi 2009, 38–39)

Although the government would not provide support for the establishment of a girls' school due to a lack of funds, the Promotion Society pooled their

25. Other scholars have discussed how despite the abolition of status distinctions, awareness of and sensitivity to social status continued beyond the Gabo Reforms and at least up to the colonial period. See Ji (1996) and D. Kim (2015).

resources and established Sunseong Girls' School.[26] The Promotion Society boasted a membership of approximately 400 people, including foreigners, men, and women of the yangban class. These women were educated in Chinese literary culture and worked with reform Confucians such as Namgung Eok, Bak Eun-sik, Jang Ji-yeon, Yi Jong-il, Jang Hyo-geun, Jeong Gyo, and Yu Yeong-seok.

Unlike Ewha students, the Promotion Society members and Sunseong students were decidedly aristocratic. "The members of the Chanyanghoe (Promotion Society) wear silk coats and they favor the rich by giving out membership cards to them."[27] *Dongnip sinmun* (The Independent) criticized the organization for catering to the elite and not granting membership cards "to members who are poor unless they pay the fees beforehand." An examination of the leadership of the Promotion Society shows that the president of the organization, Yangseongdang Yi-ssi, was a member of the Korean royal household and the vice-president and headmaster, Yanghyeondang Kim-ssi, was of yangban extraction and possessed enough personal funds to contribute to the school when their request for public

26. *Ilseongnok*, 26th day of 8th lunar month, 2nd year of Gwangmu (1898). According to official records, Emperor Gojong and the Ministry of Education were supportive of opening an official school for girls but the budget was submitted for approval to the Ministry of Finance. The Ministry of Education requested from the Ministry of Finance the funds necessary for the establishment of a girl's school (4,000 won), and according to the *Jeguk sinmun* (Imperial Gazette), this was for expenses for the period November to December (*Jeguk sinmun*, November 2, 1898). However, the funds were not granted so another petition was submitted to the government the following year. After the establishment of the school, the petition was changed from a request to establish a school to a request for financial support of the existing school and the supply of textbooks (*Lesser Learning*), but with the increase in enrolled students the school encountered financial troubles (*Jeguk sinmun*, January 20, 1900; January 25, 1900). Although the vice-minister of education, Min Sang-ho, invited female students, testing and rewarding them with sheets of paper, and a brush and ink stick set to each student (*Jeguk sinmun*, January 25, 1900), the Ministry of Finance never approved the request for funds to establish an official girl's school.

27. *Dongnip sinmun* (The Independent), December 10, 1898.

funding was denied.[28] Rather than provide a space equally open to all women, the Promotion Society members and Sunseong students made a concerted effort to keep membership exclusive to the elites. Their dress (silk coats) and economic wealth were visible signs of their higher social status and served as a deterrent to outsiders. Furthermore, the *Daehan maeil sinbo* (Korea Daily News) and *Dongnip sinmun* reported that Sunseong was "the first time for a women's school to be established in this country" despite the fact that American missionaries had already founded and were running schools for girls (*Daehan maeil sinbo*, September 14, 1898; *Dongnip sinmun*, September 15, 1898). This noteworthy omission (or snub) reflects the dismissal (or disdain) for the basic mission school education while celebrating the founding of Korea's first real educational institute for Korean females.

The textbooks Sunseong adopted reveal the school's elitist proclivities: the Thousand-Character Classic (*Cheonjamun*), *Initial Learning for Children* (*Dongmong seonseup*), *Lesser Learning*, and the Chinese translation of Robert Mackenzie's The 19th Century: A History, *Taeseosinsa*,[29] all Classical Confucian textbooks (save for the last) and revealing continuity with late Joseon elite female education. In addition, the fact that the school offered instruction in Classical Chinese—the écriture of the elite—affirms Sunseong provided an aristocratic education distinct and separate from the mission schools. Essentially, Sunseong offered a systematized elite female education in a formal setting. Again, familiarity with these texts would have been an advantage to Sunseong students (yangban females) whereas women of other status groups who were unfamiliar with these texts would have found the lessons daunting, if not incomprehensible.

---

28. The *Jeguk sinmun* reported that Yanghyeondang Kim-ssi was teaching needy children at her own expense, which led to her financial trouble (*Jeguk sinmun*, February 27, 1900). This persisted for at least three years, until her death in 1903. This same episode was cited in the obituary of Yanghyeondang Kim-ssi in remembrance of her contribution to women's education (*Hwangseong sinmun* [Capital Gazette], March 19, 1903; *Jeguk sinmun*, March 20, 1903). However, without government funding and Kim's presence, the school did not long outlast her death (Park 1984, 69–73).
29. *Dongnip sinmun*, March 1, 1899.

This type of education also allowed yangban females to remain physically segregated from lower-status women. Although yangban women could venture out of the inner quarters by the end of the 19th century, this did not mean that all women were traveling to the same public destinations or that a social leveling had occurred. Rather than comingle with female entertainers (*gisaeng*) or manual laborers, yangban women would have preferred to remain separate and receive a distinct education with their peers, preserving their collective identity as elites.[30]

Moreover, a formal education that continued the promotion of Confucian ideals through prescribed Confucian norms allowed yangban women to maintain their higher status, feminine virtue, and elite privileges. For example, the Promotion Society authors of the petition for a girls' school describe themselves as "women of stature" who had been "given instruction…(and) equipped with household regulations and manners through private teachings" (Haboush 2009, 162). They identified themselves as learned and virtuous women who could contribute to the prosperity of their families and their country through their roles as wives and mothers. These women had no intention of receiving vocational training or a practical education to earn a wage or launch a career. Thus, in response to the establishment of Christian mission schools, Korean elites formed their own educational counterparts that incorporated certain elements of the western-style curriculum while retaining their distinctive elitist edge.

Korean Private Schools After 1905

Sunseong's closure in 1903 (citing a lack of financial support) did not sound the death knell for Korean-initiated female education. Following Japan's defeat of Russia in the Russo-Japanese War in 1905, Japan moved quickly to impose a protectorate treaty on Korea, divesting Korea of its diplomatic

30. Yoo explains that amongst the early Christian converts in Korea, "many came from the commoner or cheonmin (base) class. The occupations of female converts included weavers, needle workers, court ladies, day workers, attendants, and kimchi peddlers" (Yoo 2014, 36). Many yangban women would have found fraternization with these working women in the Christian churches and mission schools undesirable.

powers. As Korean sovereignty became increasingly threatened, Korean individuals rallied to preserve Korean independence, often turning to educational endeavors to inform their fellow compatriots of the urgent situation and to prompt action.[31] This included the mobilization of the female population, regardless of social status. All Korean women were called upon to perform their patriotic duties as wise mothers and good wives by raising children who would fulfill their civic obligations and possess a strong spirit of love for their country, and to contribute to the strengthening of the country through hard work and being a productive member of society. Subsequently, 1906 was a boom year for the establishment of private Korean schools for girls. Jinmyeong Girls' School, Myeongsin Girls' School, Hanseong Girls' Academy, and Yanggyu School were all established in this year and by notable individuals of the upper class. In April 1906, the Royal Concubine Eom (Sunheon Hwangguibi Eom-ssi, 1854–1911) ordered her brother Eom Ju-won (1855–1938) to establish Jinmyeong Girls' School and her nephew Eom Ju-ik (1872–1931) to open Myeongsin Girls' School at his residence. In May of the same year, former officials and members of the Independence Club founded the Yanggyu School for girls,[32] and two months later in July the former magistrate of Gaeseong, Choe Seok-jo, opened Hanseong Girls' Academy.[33] Meanwhile, the Women's Educational Society formed a new association and in August 1908 established the Yangwon Girls' School.[34]

While post-1905 Korean private schools for females continued to exhibit an elitist hue, they also reflected the changing historical context. First, there was a widening of the student pool to include non-yangban females and the diversification of the curriculum reveals the variety in the student body. Second, there was increasingly a more comprehensive objective of the

31. In previous research I have discussed how education after 1905 shifted to a focus on the national subject as a homogeneous member of larger society and one who fulfills their patriotic duty by protecting Korean sovereignty. See Yuh (2019).
32. *Daehan maeil sinbo*, May 9, 1906.
33. *Mansebo*, July 13, 1906. Due to a lack of sources, no more information is available on the students and curriculum.
34. *Daehan maeil sinbo*, June 27, 1908; *Hwangseong sinmun*, August 13, 1908.

schools, which was to advance the strength of Korea and to preserve Korean sovereignty. Third, the Korean schools focused on a more well-defined role of the wise mother/good wife as the responsibility of all Korean females in order to raise patriotic citizens. These changes demonstrated a shift in gender roles that emphasized the importance of contributions by women *writ large* to the prosperity of the nation and the enlightenment of society, and a more general acceptance of the value of education for all females, regardless of social status.

Myeongsin Girls' School was established by order of Royal Concubine Eom on the grounds of her residence and the residence of her nephew Eom Ju-ik. Myeongsin opened with 20 students on May 23, 1906, with the purpose of educating female literati (*sajok yeoja*), single or married, aged 11 to 25 years.[35] However, the school also made an effort to accommodate non-aristocratic females by providing dormitory facilities for *needy* students. The school hired three Japanese instructors and one Korean instructor and the Royal Concubine herself interviewed candidates (mistresses of ministers and other female students) for admission at Gyeongun Palace. Students with prior knowledge of Classical Chinese could advance to the Ordinary Course (*bongwa gwajeong*) after finishing one year of the preparatory course (*yegwa gwajeong*). Twenty students made up the inaugural class. Myeongsin was tailored to elite women but since by 1906 the role for these women became more public the traditional curriculum was modified to include instruction in writing composition, the Japanese language, arithmetic, knitting and sewing, cooking, and physical education. In addition to the ordinary curriculum, the school also taught students manners and etiquette for occasions when they were invited to the Court for official banquets and so they could hold conversations with domestic and foreign ladies.[36]

The Hanseong Girls' Academy was founded with the support of mistresses of ministers and hired an experienced female Japanese instructor,

35. An advertisement for recruitment of students appeared in the *Hwangseong sinmun*, May 16, 1906. Royal Concubine Eom also established Jinmyeong Girls' School with the intention of providing for female orphans, but the school changed to an ordinary school in 1907 (*Daehan maeil sinbo*, August 21–22, 1907).

36. *Daehan maeil sinbo*, July 21, 1906.

Suzuki Tokiko who was a female upper primary school teacher from Japan. The purpose of the school was "to encourage female education in order to support the advance of the Daehan Empire."[37] Due to a lack of sources, it is not known who the students were but the school offered courses on morals, reading, calligraphy, arithmetic, basic geography, basic physics, nursing, child-rearing, home economics, and household bookkeeping.[38] There is once again an expansion of the curriculum to include new subject matter with a focus on the training of wise mothers and good wives, but Hanseong also emphasized a higher purpose, which was to educate women who could contribute to the strengthening of the country. Thus, there is an expansion of the role of wise mothers and good wives from the protection of the status of the family lineage to the preservation of national sovereignty.

The founders and administration of the Yanggyu School also hailed from illustrious backgrounds, including Jin Hak-ju (dates unknown), a former official, and the Headmaster Gwon Jung-hyeon (1854–1934), who was the minister of agriculture, commerce, and industry. After the establishment of the school, the Women's Educational Society (Yeoja gyoyukhoe) was organized to provide support for the school.[39] According to the *Daehan maeil sinbo*, the school's principal Ji Seok-yeong planned to use excerpts from *Instructions for the Inner Quarters* in order to teach students

37. *Mansebo*, July 13, 1906.

38. *Hwangseong sinmun*, July 9, 1906.

39. The Yanggyu School was established in May 1906, by Jin Hak-ju (dates unknown), Jin Hak-sin (1883–?), Jeong Gyo (1856–1925; a magistrate before the Gabo Reforms), Yi Sun-ha (1857–?; Yi passed the regular primary state examination [jinsa] in 1885, passed the civil service examination [mungwa] in 1891, studied at law school around the Gabo Reforms, and served as a magistrate after the Gabo Reforms), Go Hui-jun (dates unknown), and Yi Yeong-gyu, in the house of Jin Hak-ju. Jin Hak-ju was a former official and Jin Hak-sin served as vice instructor in the Language School (Eohakgyo) in 1901 after he graduated from that school. Jeong Gyo and Go Hui-jun were members of the Independence Club, and Yi Sun-ha was a leading class bureaucrat in the government who had served as a member of the Privy Council and later as governor of Pyeongan-do province. Jin Hak-sin (1883–?) graduated from the Official Foreign Language School (Gwallip oegugeo hakgyo) in 1900, majoring in German. He was later appointed a translator in the Ministry of the Royal Household (Chamnigwan). He was also a teacher in the Official Foreign Language School. This above information is from Guksa pyeonchan wiwonhoe (1971).

morals and self-cultivation (修身) and virtuous behavior (德行).[40] Once more, it was the cultivation of moral behavior and a right-mindedness that superseded the mere acquisition of knowledge or literacy. However, funding for the Yanggyu School was lacking, and there were also internal conflicts within the Women's Educational Society. Thus, Sin Sukdang organized the Jinmyeong Wives Society (Jinmyeong buinhoe) and took over the school's finances. Sin Sukdang was the wife of a former official, and the headmaster of Gwangdong School, which she also established. With this takeover, Yanggyu School was re-organized with an ordinary program of three years and advanced program of three years. Students included daughters from elite clans and commoners[41] ages six to eighteen.[42] Enrollment at the school later increased to one hundred girls ages seven to fourteen.[43] The courses offered at this school included morals, Korean, Classical Chinese, topography, math, science, sewing, calligraphy, history, Japanese, and English. A 1906 speech at the Women's Educational Society is addressed to "three hundred noble ladies"[44] and encourages women to support female schooling to educate and raise wise mothers and good wives who will go on to raise children who will become "great pillars of our country."[45] The speech goes on to differentiate Ewha, which "gathered orphan girls in our country"[46] from Korean schools that accept "smart and young women" based on recommendations to "create a society of civilized ladies." Yanggyu and the Women's Educational Society targeted "noble ladies" for students and the expansion of the curriculum to include new subjects and foreign languages reflects the changing circumstances and needs of elite women as they took on an increasingly public role. As wise mothers and good wives their primary responsibility was to raise patriotic children who would

40. *Daehan maeil sinbo*, August 5, 1906.
41. *Daehan maeil sinbo*, May 9, 1906; *Hwangseong sinmun*, May 21, 1906. See also Kyunghui Kim (1985, 221).
42. *Daehan maeil sinbo*, June 5, 1906. See also Kyunghui Kim (1985, 221).
43. *Hwangseong sinmun*, February 11, 1908. See also Kyunghui Kim (1985, 221).
44. *Mansebo*, August 1, 1906.
45. *Mansebo*, August 3, 1906.
46. *Mansebo*, August 2, 1906.

not simply preserve the family's status but also contribute to the country's advancement towards civilization.[47]

Finally, the Yangwon Girls' School was established in August 1908 by the Preservation Society for the Women's General Academy (Yeoja bohakwon yujihoe).[48] With 40 students aged 7 to 13, the school later expanded to include a night school and a special course for women aged 15 to 30. Some of the subjects offered at the school included English, Japanese, arithmetic, Korean, and Classical Chinese, but it is worth noting that Yangwon offered a diverse course array: the night school focused on teaching mathematics, a six-month sericulture course opened in May 1910, and a Classical Chinese training school opened in August 1910. The diverse student body, variety of subjects, and flexibility in options for attendance in terms of time of day and duration meant that Yangwon could accommodate female students from varying backgrounds and ages. This also demonstrates the determination of educators to provide Korean females with some form of education regardless of social status or personal circumstances.

At the outset, schools for females established by Koreans featured an elitist orientation by institutionalizing what was previously informal education for yangban females taught in the home. After 1905, the incorporation of new subjects such as geography, arithmetic, hygiene, child-rearing, and foreign languages gave it a modern bent and intended to prepare women for their changing roles as wives and mothers of diplomats and government officials who operated in a different geopolitical context. The need to interface with foreigners in both formal and informal settings where women accompanied their husbands meant that Korean women had to be familiar with the language, etiquette, and behavior of the diplomatic community. The post-1905 schools also reflect the different historical context wherein Korean sovereignty was in jeopardy and mobilization of all Korean subjects was necessary to preserve Korea's independence. Educators established schools for females throughout the country, expanded the student pool to include females of varying backgrounds, and instituted

47. *Mansebo*, August 2, 1906.

48. *Hwangseong sinmun*, August 13, 1908. See also Kyunghui Kim (1985, 224–225).

diverse course offerings. The result was that regardless of one's role in society—if you were a stay at home mother or if you worked for a living—the new schools could provide some form of education to suit one's needs and social role. Moreover, the schools in the Japanese protectorate period (1905–1910) highlight the need for all Korean women to become educated to raise competent and patriotic children, and to contribute to the strength and prosperity of the nation.

Conclusion

Scholars often credit the establishment of women's education in Korea at the end of the 19th century with the physical emancipation of women, who were thus liberated from the confines of the inner quarters, and for social emancipation since women were no longer considered *inferior and worthless*. The first missionary school, Ewha School, was remarkable "not only for emancipating Korean women whose human rights and dignities were trampled on by males who conformed to Confucian norms and values, but also for giving females a valuable chance to recognize sexual equality and human freedom through modern education" (J. Lee 2002, 95–96). Ewha's opening day has been described as, a "day when the door to education was officially opened to the Joseon women who were previously confined to a life of servitude and ignorance" (Ewha yeoksagwan 2005, 24).

While existing scholarship characterizes the creation of all girls' and women's schools as a major milestone in Korea's modernization and the development of women's rights, this article has demonstrated the need to make distinctions among the schools and to examine the social backgrounds of those involved in the female educational movement in late 19th-century Korea. There is no doubt that initially the missionary schools filled an educational void for women of lower status groups by providing basic schooling for the first time in history. However, elite yangban women traditionally received an informal education at home that went beyond basic literacy in the Korean alphabet and manual chores. In fact, there is strong evidence to show that elite families of the highest status (those with

high positions in the central government or yangban Confucian literati) trained their daughters in the Confucian classics, and that some were even well-versed in Classical Chinese and quite scholarly. Thus, elite women would have found an elementary education offered by the mission schools banal and facile. Moreover, the largely lower-status student body attending the mission schools would have served as a deterrent for yangban female students since it was not customary for members of different social statuses to intermingle.

To conclude, the first schools established by the yangban beginning in 1898 reflect an effort by the elite class to provide their daughters with an alternative to the new education introduced from the West (e.g., the missionary schools) that incorporated new and modern features but also allowed the elite to continue their more erudite and virtuous form of learning (vis-à-vis morals education, calligraphy, and Classical Chinese) to prepare them for their social roles as wives and mothers. This also allowed Korean elite females to maintain their aristocratic status through the conventional criteria of birth, marriage, and education. The new Korean schools for women did not prepare them for economic independence or to launch their own careers as some graduates of the mission schools did, but instead reproduced the elite yangban matriarch who was responsible for raising future bureaucrats and preserving the status of the lineage. The combination of these subjects was appropriate for a daughter of an elite household since they would marry government officials, diplomats, and scholars (also of yangban extraction), would need to be familiar with aristocratic etiquette and mores, and would have to raise their children for their elite station in life. These aspects were in fact what distinguished the elite from the lower status groups, and thus it was in their interest to preserve their status through the transmission of aristocratic culture and learning and the solidification of their group identity through education.

Eventually, as Japan whittled away at Korea's sovereignty, the need to educate all Korean subjects and mobilize them to preserve independence caused a shift in gender roles. After 1905 it became imperative for yangban women to contribute to the strengthening of the state through their own education and through their roles as wise mothers and good wives, and

not to focus merely on the preservation of their aristocratic status. Korean schools like Yanggyu School and Hanseong Girls' Academy adjusted their curriculum to include modern subjects such as foreign languages, arithmetic, geography, and hygiene, while also offering Confucian-based subjects. However, post-1905 Korean schools began to accommodate students from diverse backgrounds by offering a variety of educational programs from practical skills such as sewing and sericulture, to academic subjects such as Classical Chinese and writing composition. Unlike Sunseong, the first private Korean school that targeted aristocratic yangban females, and the missionary schools that taught the Bible and prepared its students to be economically self-sufficient, the post-1905 private Korean schools demonstrate a decisive shift to reflect an expansion of the women's sphere and a substantiation of women's roles as wives and mothers who no longer focused on maintaining the family's status but contributed to the preservation of Korean sovereignty.

REFERENCES

Primary Sources

Daehan maeil sinbo (Korea Daily News)
Dongnip sinmun (The Independent)
Galamjip (Collections of Galam Yi Hyeon-il)
Haryeojip (Collections of Haryeo Hwang Deok-gil)
Hwangseong sinmun (Capital Gazette)
Ilseongnok (Diary of Daily Reflection)
Jeguk sinmun (Imperial Gazette)
Mansebo (Independence News)
Seodangsajae (Private Collections of Seodang Yi Deok-su)
Taejong sillok (Veritable Records of King Taejong)

Secondary Sources

Bishop, Isabella Bird. [1898] 2011. *Korea and Her Neighbours—A Narrative of Travel, with an Account of the Recent Vicissitudes and Present Position of the Country*. Worcestershire: Read Books Ltd.

Chai, Alice. 1997. "Integrative Feminist Politics in the Republic of Korea." In *Feminist Nationalism*, edited by Lois West, 177. London: Routledge.

Cho, Eun-su. 2011. *Korean Buddhist Nuns and Laywomen: Hidden Histories, Enduring Vitality*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Cho, Kyung Won. 1998. "Gaehwagi yeoseong gyoyungnon-ui yangsang bunseok" (The Trends and Characteristics of Views of Women's Education During from 1876 to 1910). *Gyoyuk gwajeong yeongu* (Journal of Curriculum Studies) 28: 23–42.

Choe, Gyeongsuk. 1998. "Gaehwagi-ui yeoseong gyoyungnon" (Educational View on Women in Enlightenment Age). *Busan oedae nonchong* (Theses Collection of Busan University of Foreign Studies) 18.2: 31–54.

Choi, Hyaeweol. 2009. *Gender and Mission Encounters in Korea: New Women, Old Ways*. Oakland, Berkeley: University of California Press.

Collins, Patricia Hill, and Sirma Bilge. 2016. *Intersectionality*. Cambridge: Polity.

Crenshaw, Kimberle. 1990. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color." *Stanford Law Review* 43.6: 1241–1299.

Dill, Bonnie Thornton, and Ruth E. Zambrana. 2009. *Emerging Intersections: Race, Class, and Gender in Theory, Policy, and Practice.* New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Enoch, Jessica. 2008. "A Woman's Place is in the School: Rhetorics of Gendered Space in Nineteenth-Century America." *College English* 70.3: 275–295.

Ewha yeoksagwan (Ewha Archives). 2005. *EWHA Old and New: 110 Years of History (1886–1996)*. Seoul: Ewha Woman's University Press.

Grewal, Inderpal, and Caren Kaplan. 1994. *Scattered Hegemonies: Postmodernity and Transnational Feminist Practices*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Guksa pyeonchan wiwonhoe (National Institute of Korean History), ed. 1971. *Daehan jeguk gwanwon iryeokseo* (Resume of Daehan Empire Bureaucrats). Seoul: Tamgudang.

Haboush, Jahyun Kim, ed. 2009. *Epistolary Korea: Letters in the Communicative Space of the Chosŏn, 1392–1910*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Han, Hee-Sook. 2008. "Joseon hugi yangban yeoseong-ui saenghwal-gwa yeoseong rideosip—17-segi haengjang-eul jungsim-euro" (The Life of Yangban Women and Feminine Leadership in the Late Joseon Era—Focusing on 17th-Century

Haengjang). *Yeoseong-gwa yeoksa* (Women and History) 9: 1–48.
Hancock, Ange-Marie. 2016. Intersectionality: *An Intellectual History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Jeon, Songyeol, ed. 2007. *Sachin—Joseon seonbi eomoni-reul geurida* (Joseon Literati's Yearning for Mother). Seoul: Seohae munjip.
Ji, Seungjong. 1996. "Gabo gaehyeok ihu yangban sinbun-ui donghyang (1894–1910)" (Yangban Status Tendencies after the Gabo Reforms [1894–1910]). *Gyeongnam munhwa yeongu* (Gyeongnam Cultural Studies) 18: 257–282
Kelley, Mary. 2017. *Private Woman, Public Stage: Literary Domesticity in Nineteenth-century America*. Chapel Hill, NC: UNC Press.
Kendall, Laurel, and Mark Peterson. 1983. "Traditional Korean Women—A Reconsideration." In *Korean Women: View from the Inner Room*, edited by Laurel Kendall, et al., 5–22. New Haven, CT: East Rock Press.
Kim, Doo-Heon. 2015. "Gabo gaehyeok-gugwon pital sigi gisuljik jungin sahoe-ui seoja-e daehan chabyeol wanhwa yangsang—Yi Hui-won (1857–1924)-ui sarye" (A Study of the Mitigation Aspects of Distinction on the Illegitimate Descendants in the Jungin Society during the Period of the Gabo Reforms and Erosion of National Sovereignty—A Case Study of Yi Hui-won [1857–1924]). *Seoulhak yeongu* (Journal of Seoul Studies) 59: 37–64.
Kim, Gyung Mi. 2005. "18-segi yangban yeoseong-ui geulsseugi-ui cheungwi-wa geu uimi" (The Characteristic Aspects of Noble Women's Writing in the 18th Century and Its Significance). *Hanguk gojeon yeoseong munhak yeongu* (Korean Classical Woman Literature Studies) 11: 5–50.
Kim, Jisoo M. 2017. "From Jealousy to Violence: Marriage, Family, and Confucian Patriarchy in Fifteenth-Century Korea." *Acta Koreana* 20.1: 91–110.
Kim, Kyunghui. 1985. "Hanguk geundae yeoseong sahak-ui jeongae gwajeong-e gwanhan yeongu" (A Study of the Developmental Process of Women's Private Schools in Korea during the Modern Age). *Yeongunonmunjip* (Sungshin Journal) 21: 207–248.
Kim, Kyung-ran. 2003. "Joseon hugi hojeok daejang-ui yeoseong hoching gyujeong-gwa seonggyeok—Danseong hojeok-daejang-eul jungsim-euro" (Regulations Regarding the Female Designation Appellations in Census Registers of the Latter Half of the Joseon Dynasty, and the Nature of those Appellation Designations: Examining the Danseong Area Census Register). *Yeoksa-wa hyeonsil* (Quarterly Review of Korean History) 48: 191–219.
Kim, Soo Kyung. 2011. "Gaehwagi yeoseong susinseo-e natanan geundae-wa jeontong-ui gyocha" (A Study of Susin [Ethics] Textbook for Female Students in the Period 1896–1910). *Hanguk munhwa yeongu* (Korean Cultural Studies) 20:

99–137.

Kim, Yeongsam. 1962. *Jeongsin 75-nyeonsa* (75-Year History of Jeongsin). Seoul: Gyemun.

Kwon, Insook. 1998. "'The New Women's Movement' in 1920s Korea: Rethinking the Relationship between Imperialism and Women." *Gender and History* 10.3: 381–405.

Lee, Jeong-Kyu. 2002. "Christianity and Korean Education in the Late Chosŏn Period." *Christian Higher Education* 1.1: 85–99.

Lee, Peter H., et al., eds. 1997. *Sources of Korean Tradition: From the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Centuries*. Volume 2. New York: Columbia University Press.

Lee, Seong Im. 2003. "16-segi yangban gwallyo-ui oaejeong—Yu Huichun-ui miam ilgi-reul jungsim-euro" (Yangban Officials' Love Affairs in the 16th Century—Focusing on the Miam Diary of Yu Huichun). *Gomunseo yeongu* (Journal of Korean Historical Manuscripts) 23: 213–258.

Lee, Yoomi. 2000. *Modern Education, Textbooks and the Image of the Nation: Politics of Modernization and Nationalism in Korean Education, 1880–1910*. New York: Garland.

McCall, Leslie. 2008. "The Complexity of Intersectionality." In *Intersectionality and Beyond: Law, Power and the Politics of Location*, edited by Emily Grabham, et al., 65–92. Milton Park: Routledge-Cavendish.

McCann, Carole R., and Seung-Kyung Kim. 2013. *Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives*. New York: Routledge.

Mehl, Margaret. 2001. "Women Educators and the Confucian Tradition in Meiji Japan (1868–1912): Miwada Masako and Atomi Kakei." *Women's History Review* 10.4: 579–602.

Middleditch, Carrie. 2019. "Recoding the Chaste kisaeng in Yi Hae-jo's *Kang myŏng-hwa chŏn*." *Asian Journal of Women's Studies* 25.1: 30–46.

Mohanty, Chandra. 1988. "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses." *Feminist Review* 30.1: 61–88.

Moseley, Eva. 2007. "The Absolute Majority of the Population: Women in Twentieth-Century Cambridge." In *Cambridge in the Twentieth Century*, edited by Daphne Abeel, 1–36. Cambridge: Cambridge Historical Society.

Nash, Jennifer C. 2008. "Rethinking Intersectionality." Feminist Review 89.1: 1–15.

Oak, Sung-Deuk. 2012. "Chogi gaesingyo ganho-wa ganho gyoyuk-ui jeongcheseong—1903nyeon-e seollipdoen bogu yeogwan ganhowon yangseong hakgyo-wa edeumeonjeu-reul jungsim-euro" (Identities of Early Modern Nursing and Nursing Education in Korea: Margaret J. Edmunds and the First Nurses' Training School in Korea, 1903–1908). *Hanguk gidokgyo-wa yeoksa*

(Christianity and History in Korea) 36: 185–225.
Park, Yong Ok. 1984. *Hanguk geundae yeoseong undongsa yeongu* (A Study of Early Modern Korean Women's Movements). Seongnam: Academy of Korean Studies.
Patessio, Mara. 2013. "Women Getting a 'University' Education in Meiji Japan: Discourses, Realities, and Individual Lives." *Japan Forum* 25.4: 556–581.
Rich, Charlotte J. 2009. *Transcending the New Woman: Multiethnic Narratives in the Progressive Era*. Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press.
Rose, Barbara. 1992. *Tsuda Umeko and Women's Education in Japan*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
Rury, John L. 1991. *Education and Women's Work: Female Schooling and the Division of Labor in Urban America, 1870–1930*. SUNY Series on Women and Work. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
Scranton, Mary F. 1896. "Woman's Work in Korea." *The Korean Repository* 3.1: 2–9.
Sease, Abigail. 2016. "A Matter of Class: Sin Yun-bok's Depictions of Kisaeng as Participants of Everyday Life." *Undergraduate Research Awards 28*. https://digitalcommons.hollins.edu/researchawards/28 (accessed November 22, 2021).
Shields, Stephanie A. 2008. "Gender: An Intersectionality Perspective." *Sex Roles* 59.5-6: 301–311.
Tocco, Martha. 2008. "Made in Japan: Meiji Women's Education." In *Gendering Modern Japanese History*, edited by Barbara Molony Kathleen Uno, 39–60. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center.
Torrey, Deberniere J. 2017. "Between Heroism and Despair: Opportunities and Barriers for Women in the Early Korean Catholic Church." *Asian Journal of Women's Studies* 23.4: 421–441.
_____. 2020. "Confucian Exemplars and Catholic Saints as Models for Women in Nineteenth-Century Korea." *Religions* 11.3: 151.
Tsurumi, E. Patricia. 2000. "The State, Education, and Two Generations of Women in Meiji Japan, 1868–1912." *U.S.-Japan Women's Journal* 18: 3–26.
Underwood, Horace Horton. 1926. *Modern Education in Korea*. New York: International Press.
Underwood, Lillias Horton. 1904. *Fifteen Years among the Top-Knots: Or, Life in Korea*. New York: American Tract Society.
Yoo, Theodore Jun. 2014. *The Politics of Gender in Colonial Korea: Education, Labor, and Health, 1910–1945*. Oakland, Berkeley: University of California Press.
Yu, Gil-jun. [1895] 1995. *Seoyu gyeonmun* (Observations from My Travels in the West). Translated by Heo Gyeongjin. Seoul: Hanyang chulpan.
Yuh, Leighanne. 2019. "Loyalty to the King and Love for Country: Confucian Traditions, Western-Style Learning, and the Evolution of Early Modern Korean

Education, 1895–1910." *Sungkyun Journal of East Asian Studies* 19.2: 189–212.
Yuval-Davis, Nira. 2006. "Intersectionality and Feminist Politics." *European Journal of Women's Studies* 13.3: 193–209.

Appendix: Major Christian Schools for Girls

Foundation Year	Name	Denomination	Location
1886	Ewha Girls' School 이화여학교	Methodist	Seoul
1887	Chungshin Girls' School 정신여학교	Presbyterian	Seoul
1894	Jeongui Girls' School 정의여학교	Methodist	Pyongyang
1895	Ilsin Girls' School 일신여학교	Presbyterian (Australian)	Dongnae (Busan)
1898	Baewha Girls' School 배화여학교	Methodist	Seoul
1902	Sinmyeong Girls' School 신명여학교	Presbyterian	Daegu
1903	Soongeui Girls' School 숭의여학교	Presbyterian	Pyongyang
1903	Lucy Girls' School/ Wonsan Girls' School 루씨여학교/원산여학교	Methodist	Wonsan
1903	Jeongmyeong Girls' School 정명여학교	Presbyterian	Mokpo
1904	Hosudon Girls' School 호수돈여학교	Methodist	Gaeseong
1904	Jinseong Girls' School 진성여학교	Presbyterian	Wonsan
1906	Boseong Girls' School 보성여학교	Presbyterian	Seoncheon
1907	Supia Girls' School 수피아여학교	Presbyterian	Gwangju
1907	Kijeon Girls' School 기전여학교	Presbyterian	Jeonju

Received: 2020.08.04. Revised: 2020.12.31. Accepted: 2021.03.08.