Special Feature

Continued Journey: Women's Travel *Kasa* in Early Twentieth Century Korea

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Introduction

Korea's transition to modernity is often described in terms of the breadth and depth of change and how quickly "modern" it became. The transition was more complicated than an implied opposition between new and old would suggest, of course, and changes that took place in the "old" tradition have received less attention than things Western, imported, and thus brand new, both by people who lived through those changes and by those who study the era a century later. My interest in *kasa*,[1] a traditional genre, started during my research on Baek Sinae (1908–1939), particularly her writings on her travel to Siberia and Qingdao in the 1920s and 1930s. With Baek's unusual background, I found myself hesitating to call her a New Woman—a category often defined by education in a modern school system—because she had little formal education.[2] Yet she did not follow the traditional path of marriage and motherhood either. Baek wrote fiction, essays, and travelogues in the modern literary language and form, enjoyed a bourgeois lifestyle provided by her father's wealth, and traveled internationally. During the course of research on Baek and New Women writers, I encountered works by Jo Aeyeong (1911–2000), a contemporary of Baek Sinae who inherited and continued the women's *kasa* writing tradition into the modern era.[3] Jo adds to the complexity of modern womanhood on her own because she bore crucial New Woman hallmarks with her education at Baehwa Women's High School and Ewha Womans University, but she chose to write in the "traditional" form. Reading Baek's and Jo's writings side by side and against each other provides an interesting window into how class, role of education, and location of one's upbringing affected women's lives and their

1 This paper follows the Revised Romanization system. Exceptions are "kasa," "Seoul," and last names "Kim," "Kang," and "Kwon" which follow the conventional Romanized form. My sincere gratitude goes to two anonymous reviewers who provided valuable comments on this paper.

2 Baek Sinae was registered in schools but quit within days or weeks each time. Health was her reason for quitting, and Yi Junggi suspects her actual attendance at school would be lower than records indicate. Instead, Baek had a tutor at home who, according to her own recollection, taught her elementary Chinese Classics (Yi 2014, 40–46).

3 See Bruce and Ju-chan Fulton's translation of Jo's *kasa* "Song of Resentment" and an excerpt of "Song of a Newlywed" in "Three Early Modern *Kasa*" in Fulton 2017, 307–14. Another of Jo's work, "A *Kasa* of the April 1960 Revolution," translated by Dawn D. Kim and Bruce Fulton, can be found in Jo 2017, 615–24.

writing in the early 20th century.[4]

My interest in women's travelogue is related to a bigger project on questioning and broadening the concept of domesticity in early 20th century Korea and possibly obfuscating conceptual boundaries to make them more porous. I find that scholars including myself often use our contemporary lens in examining what pertains to homelife and women's life, namely, cooking, raising children, fashion, and the caring and nurturing of family members. Acts we deem as proto feminist—subversion and resistance against patriarchy—are also often based on how we imagine what the repression may have been like for women. As scholars of 18th and 19th century Korean literature and history have shown, however, women's work and what pertains to the "domestic" were not the same.[5] In my previous work on the prescriptive discourse on modern womanhood, I noted raising children as an example that was not automatically deemed a woman's task: raising children was also an academic and scientific subject in writings by male authors (Lee 2015, 58–81). The difference lay in packaging the same kind of knowledge in two different ways: as a "masculine" subject of scholarship discussed among male elites and as "feminine," practical, simplified, and "watered-down" knowledge suitable for prescriptive manuals and instructions targeted at women. Women's roles in raising a child were important, but that importance emerged within a particular frame of knowledge production. In other words, categorizing what belongs to the domestic realm and the process of assigning gender, in this case women, to corresponding tasks and subjects needs a more careful approach, one that avoids preconceived ideas of domesticity projected backward from our 21st century frames.

Travelogues become an interesting lens for reflecting on domesticity both despite and because travel happens when a person leaves home. The presumptive mold of a "cult of domesticity" that places men outside and women inside the home no longer applies for travelers, whether men or women. It also places women among strangers and in situations where she cannot always rely on men.

4 Issues regarding "modern" and "traditional" have been explored from different angles by scholars including Yu Jeong-sun (2019), Park Ae-Kyung (2008), Kim Jeong Hwa (2007), and Paik Sun-chul (2017). Yu attempts to read travel *kasa* and travelogues written in prose (essay) style together under the lens of "modern" (*geundae*). Park (2008, 162–65) notes the emergence of long "report" style travel *kasa,* as opposed to travelogues centered around travelers' reflections.

5 See Jeong 2021 for details on *yangban* men's engagement with household chores in domestic space during the Joseon dynasty.

During their travels, then, women have much more freedom to try what men do, in a context where men don't do what men usually do (work).[6] While I keep sight of the potential of travelogues as a locus for reconceptualizing domesticity—what it meant to be at home for women in the early 20th century—this paper will offer a closer look at women's travel *kasa* published in the 20th century to examine expected gender roles for women, women's views of themselves, and how they negotiated two domains, domestic and the outside world, in these works. Jo Aeyeong's "A Travel to Diamond Mountains" (1930) will be used as a centerpiece to discuss how this supposedly "traditional" genre tells a story of "not at home" amidst the quick rise of modern literary genres in early 20th century Korea and its significance in the literary and cultural history of this transitional era.

Kasa, Women's *Kasa*, Women's Travel *Kasa*: Sense of Community

Kasa is a narrative in verse, one that covers various topics and purposes including didactic, confessional, and fictional. It was written by both men and women, elite and non-elite authors. In pre-20th century Korean literary tradition, where orality and performability were strong, the genre served prosaic impulses to tell a long story. The genre is defined by its form—4 syllables form a syntactic and rhythmic unit with variations of 2, 3, or 5 syllables, and 4 units form a next level of syntactic unit, often marked with a line break. Textbooks on literary history often identifies "Sangchungok" (Song of Spring) by Jeong Geugin (1401–1481) as the earliest *kasa* work, but the genre probably predates creation of *hangeul* and existed as orally transmitted vernacular stories.[7] Women's *kasa*, called *gyubang kasa* (women's chamber *kasa*) or *naebang kasa* (inner chamber *kasa*), started to emerge around the 18th century, most distinctively in the North Gyeongsang (also known as Yeongnam) region.[8] Where some subsets of *gyubang kasa* were

6 Despite this permeability between genders while traveling, scholarship on Korean women's travelogues often argues for a binary perspective: women's travelogues as introspective and men's as extrospective. See Woo 2004.

7 For more information on *kasa* and translated samples, see Lee 2009, McCann 2000, 58–74, and Lee 2017.

8 *Dongyu gamheungrok*, a 1920s travel *kasa* written by Sim Bokjin (n.d.), a *yangban* man, shows mixed

composed by individual anonymous authors in a memoir-like voice recollecting years of hardships fulfilling duties as a daughter-in-law and motherhood,[9] travel *kasa* by women were often written communally. All women's *kasa* was expected to be shared: read aloud in a group of kin who lived under the same roof or nearby, copied and often modified by other women, and circulated among members of their natal and married clans and among other women in the village.[10] It thus makes sense that women's *kasa* exhibits a strong sense of community (Baek 2017, 81–92).

Travel was one of the major themes of *kasa* narratives both by male and female authors from its earliest days.[11] In women's *kasa*, *hwajeon-ga*, or records of women's outings in the spring viewing flowers, makes up a major subcategory. In addition to this annual spring outing, the arrival of modern transportation helped facilitate travel for many, including women. Among those collected by Kwon Yeongcheol are travel *kasa* from group travels among older women in Yeongnam region. Often members are women from the same village or belonging to a kin group, and their bond becomes stronger through travel,

prose and *kasa* narrations and gives some clue to how *kasa* form was conceptualized. Yu Jeong-sun (2012) views the prose part as informative and the *kasa* part as descriptive and emotive, and by including both forms, this publication shows the hybridity of orality (performance) and literacy (reading material). While this makes an interesting and rare case for how characteristics of prose and verse, narrative and poetry, and orality and literacy overlap in the *kasa* genre, it begs an explanation for how women *kasa* writers conceptualized *kasa* when they did not see prose as an alternative or supplementary form to their work.

9 Kwon Yeongcheol (1970), for example, divides women's *kasa* into ten categories that include "teaching daughters with moral lesson" (*gyenyeogyohunryu*), "lament over one's situation" (*sinbyeontansikryu*), "longing for parents" (*sachinyeonmoryu*), "confessions of thoughts and emotions" (*sasangsohoeryu*), "enjoying nature and season" (*pungryu soyeongryu*), "celebrations and wishes for longevity" (*chukwonsongsuryu*), "praising famous sights" (*seungjichanmiryu*), "itineraries and record of travel" (*nojeonggihaengryu*), "beliefs and encouraging wholesome deeds" (*sinanggwonseonryu*), and "propagating enlightenment" (*gaehwagyemongryu*).

10 *Kasa* takes verse form for performance but is prosaic in its length and content. It served as a major story-telling genre for women in Yeongnam region where many women's *kasa* were produced well into the 20th century.

11 There were women's travelogues in prose rather than in *kasa* form, and while it is unclear what could have been a deciding factor in the choice of genre, considerations probably included regional difference, nature of travel, and individual author's level of literacy and knowledge. In other words, individual *kasa* must be considered case by case. Travel *kasa* by women from Yeongnam region, for instance, were communally and anonymously created, whereas a vernacular (*hangeul*) prose travelogue by a woman tended to be single authored. An example of the latter is "Seoyurok" (1915) by Lady Kim of Gangneung (1862–1942) after her trip to Seoul in 1913 with her husband and daughter. Written in vernacular prose form, it exists as a manuscript (*pilsabon*) bound with irrelevant texts under the title "Gyeongseong yurok." See Kim 2017 for more information on this travelogue.

in part through writing and sharing *kasa* the way one might share photographs from a trip. Such travelogues in *kasa* by women writers were written and circulated well into the late-twentieth century.[12] Not only did women often travel together but writing and producing a *kasa* after a trip seemed to be a part of the itinerary and routine. That routine was also embedded in tradition: as was the case with *hwajeon-ga*, most travel *kasa* by women are anonymous, feature fellow travelers within the content, and thus further accentuate their solidarity and collective nature. Travel *kasa* written by men in the early 20th century, by contrast, bore names of the author, and by the later colonial period men stopped composing them.

Kasa is still being composed among women, and an effort to keep the tradition has been supported by local governments in the form of annual writing competitions and performance of *kasa* works. Although most of the participants in these efforts are older women, the longevity of the genre among women can be explained by its communal nature. Even with *kasa* lamenting one's own challenges in life, the work is recited out loud and shared among relatives and close friends. Women's travel *kasa* written in the 1970s include words like "bus" (*ppeos*) (Kwon 1979, 544) and "walking cane" (*sudaekki*) (Kwon 1979, 548), reflecting the changed world, but for the women who were involved in recording their travel experience, the entire process from planning a trip, going on one, recording the travel in *kasa* form, sharing it orally after the trip, to writing it down as a keepsake was a familiar tradition handed down through generations of *hwajeon-ga* writers including their mothers, aunts, and grandmothers. The literary tradition of *kasa* lasted longer among women, in other words, because for them it was a communal cultural experience.

This sense of community also figured in the writings by New Women authors I discussed in my previous work. One of the first published works by a woman writer, which appeared in *Taegeuk hakbo*, used an epistolary form addressed to "Sisters at Home" (Goguk ui jehyeongjemae ege).[13] Heo Jeongsuk (1902–1991), a socialist woman activist, visited America with her lawyer-politician father Heo Heon (1885–1951) in 1926 and stayed for 18 months. Within a month of her return in December 1927, she contributed a short piece

12 See women's travel *kasa* from the 1960s–70s in Kwon 1979, 540–57.
13 See Lee 2015, 58–81.

on her impression of the foreign land through the periodical *Byeolgeongon*.[14] Na Hyeseok (1896–1948) serialized her travelogues twice after her twenty-month journey around the globe from 1927 to 1929, both in *Donga ilbo* and in the monthly magazine *Samcheolli*.[15] Each of these examples vary in length, and authors come from different ideological backgrounds. But they are also strikingly similar in expressing the heightened sense of nationalism and the self-imposed notion of service to the Korean people. Although these travelogues were published for the general public without specifying a gender group, they often discuss the status of women in a given society and were clearly directed to women. As shown by the title of Heo's 1927 article, "A Country of Women Who are Dolls that Can Shed Tears: A Record of Impressions from the U.S.," her gaze naturally lands on women's issues in the U.S. Na (1932) states that one of four inquiries she intended to explore during her travel was women's status in Europe and in America. In this context, nationalism and focus on public service in these "modern" travelogues finds sympathetic overtones in the communal spirit found in women's *kasa*, particularly their recognition of sisterhood among Korean women, whether conceived locally or more broadly. This is not to call nationalism, sisterhood, and localized community spirit identical, but to see their shared resonance as mutually reinforcing and influential. It makes sense, therefore, that notions of community in modern-style travelogues, which are heavily influenced by nationalist issues and debates of the colonial period, differ somewhat from those observed in travel *kasa* limited to fellow villagers or clanswomen. It likewise makes sense that as modern travel gave such women opportunities for wider exposure to country and people, their ideas of connection, family, and community expanded as well. This rich interplay between experience, travel, community, and ideas helps account not only for community commitment as a broad common denominator in women's travel *kasa*, but also for the different scales of community, from village to nation, that they imagined. It also helps reconcile what may seem like conflicting impulses in *kasa* by Jo Aeyeong, discussed later in this paper, with its traditionalist adherence to form but nationalist sensibilities more typical of New Women. Her case supports a more general insight: that the boundary between traditional

14 See also Kim 2013 for Heo's travel to the U.S.
15 For travelogues in the colonial period (1910–1945), see Hong 2014. For Christian women and their international travels, see Choi 2020.

and modern women may have been more porous than commonly thought. For women writers, a sense of self, a sense of community, and a sense of nation were much more fluid than for their male counterparts, who stopped writing in traditional forms such as *kasa* and delved into the question of modern individual (*gaein*) through their writings.

Jo Aeyeong and Baek Sinae: Confounding Boundaries

The term New Women (*sin yeoseong*) usually refers to Korean women who were educated in the Western school system and actively accepted modern trappings into their everyday life. Their schooling brought them to cities such as Seoul or Pyeongyang if they were not already a city dweller, and some sought education overseas. The term could be a positive affirmation or neutral description but also vaguely pejorative as a critique of materialism: there was both embrace and deep distrust of the burgeoning new capitalist economy, and women who dressed in Western clothing and flaunted its amenities became frequent targets for condemnation. As my earlier work has shown (Lee 2015), discourse surrounding New Women was created in part as a prescription for discontented Korean male elites who were anxious about rapidly changing society but needed to vent their frustration in a way that did not attack modernity or Westernization themselves, whose riches and power they viewed as means to overcome the colonial situation. The difficulty in pinpointing who and what New Women were is proof that the situation was much more complex than any simple category can capture. There were housewives who were educated in schools, but whose duties within a household and family as a wife, mother, and daughter-in-law were not very "new." There were city-dwelling "old" women without schooling who nonetheless had access to modern amenities and exposure to "new" perspectives, for example through protestant missionaries and churches and their ripple effects, which would have enabled them to lead lifestyles similar to "modern" housewives. Cha Marisa (1879–1955), a renowned educator and founder of Deokseong women's school, is one of many widows who pursued education for themselves and turned into "new" women.[16] Choe Songseoldang (1855–1939) served as nanny for Prince Yi Eun (also known as King Yeongchin, 1897–1970) after being widowed (or separated from her husband), and while she was never educated in modern subjects, she left hundreds of poems in *hansi*, *kasa*, and *sijo* and established schools in 1931 in her hometown of Gimcheon. In the 1920s, Kang Hyangnan (1900–?), a *gisaeng,* turned herself into a New Woman by studying in Baehwa and later engaged herself in Geunuhoe, a leading women's political group. Against such a complex backdrop, the idea of modern housewife at the early 20th century was not straightforward: it was an amalgamation of Victorian, Confucian, and Japanese "good wife wise mother" where the real lives of ordinary people cut across and challenged the simple binary implicit in "new" opposed to "old."

The cases of Baek Sinae and Jo Aeyeong embody this complexity.[17] They were born only 3 years apart, and both were from North Gyeongsang province. Baek was born in Yeongcheon, and besides several travels domestically and abroad, she spent most of her short 31 years of life near her natal home in what is now the outskirts of Daegu. Jo was born in Jusil Village, Yeongyang and was a descendent of the Hanyang Jo clan, one of the major local *yangban* clans in the Andong area. Daegu was one of the biggest cities in North Gyeongsang province with thriving modern commerce whereas Jusil Village was a small clan-based town. Viewed more broadly, North Gyeongsang is a conservative area especially when it comes to expectations for women's roles in a traditional family, and people in Jo's town would have moved through Daegu frequently for education, business, and other modern amenities. It seems these two women also had similar outward interests and from early on engaged in political activism: Baek worked with various socialist associations, and Jo was a student activist who led a protest against Japanese policy at Baehwa Women's High School and was suspended for it. Family background may be the most salient difference between the two. Baek was the daughter of a *nouveau riche* father who owned an orchard and ran a commercial milling business in Daegu, whereas Jo's family was staunchly traditional *yangban*. Like all her siblings,

16 Kim Yanghyeondang (n.d.), a member of Chanyanghoe who called for establishing a public school for girls in 1898, is an earlier example of a widow who was enlightened about the need for women's education in the modern world.

17 There is no evidence Baek and Jo knew about each other. Jo was not a published author until the 1970s and lived in Seoul from the time she left Jusil Village for school in her teens. The stark difference in their family background would not have allowed their paths to cross easily.

however, Jo received a modern education and turned herself into a modern elite in postcolonial South Korea.

Despite the lack of formal schooling, Baek Sinae (2015, 615; 618; 621) was a self-designated "Dostoevsky wannabe"[18] and wrote essays, fictional works, travelogues, and poems in modern form. Her debut as a writer was a surprise even to herself when her short piece won a literary award at *Chosun ilbo* in 1929, and she had no close ties to writers in Seoul throughout her writing career. In other words, her modern-style writing was self-taught without guidance from or connection to male writers or from a formal education. Jo Aeyeong, by contrast, had substantial formal education and even had a plan and desire to study in Japan, which failed when she was married off by her older brother. She then had to quit Ewha, which did not allow married students to continue.[19] Jo's *kasa* were finally published in 1971 as a celebration of her sixtieth birthday.[20] *Eunchon naebang gasajip* contains three *kasa* works from Jo's mother's collection and sixteen written by Jo herself ranging from her teenage years to the 1960s. This publication later in life, in *kasa* form, seems to hark back to traditions from Joseon when women often waited until *hwangap*, after fulfilling their duties as daughter-in-law, wife, and mother, to write their memoirs or lessons for daughters. But the binary ("traditional = old" and "modern = new") starts to run aground when one reads her *kasa* closely. As we shall see, not all is traditional in her *kasa* in terms of its form, subject matter, and voice.

"Diamond Mountains" by Jo Aeyeong

Jo Aeyeong's "Geumgangsan gihaeng-ga" ("A Travel to Diamond Mountains," hereafter "Diamond Mountains") records her class trip while she attended Baehwa Women's High School. This travelogue is dated 1930 when Jo was nineteen years of age and was published in her school newsletter. She sent this publication to her family in Jusil Village, and Jo Jihun (1920–1968),[21]

18 For biographical information see Baek 2015, 542–43; 670–77; Yi 2014; Lee 2023.

19 For biographical information for Jo, see Jo 1971, 255–78; 314–16; Paik 2016, 80–91.

20 In 1958, Jo published a collection of *sijo* poems with support from her nephew Jo Jihun (1920–1968), who was one of the most famous poets of his time.

21 Jo Jihun was the son of Jo Aeyeong's uncle, who was head of the clan. Her works were probably sent to Jo Jihun's father initially when they were written and then handed down to him later as a family keepsake.

her nephew and famous poet, revived it when her collection of *kasa*, *Eunchon naebang gasajip* was planned (Jo 1971, 15–16). Jo appears as a "modern" author in her *kasa*, as I will elaborate later, but the sense of tradition is also evident in this collection. Her mother, Lady Yi of Jinseong (same clan as Yi Toegye, 1502–1571), apparently had a collection of writings and books that included *kasa* works which were often written on scrap paper (wrappers for medicine, as Jo recollects) or on pieces of paper glued and stored rolled up (*durumari* or "rolls" was thus a nickname for women's *kasa*). Jo regrets that her mother's entire collection disappeared in a housefire. But she transcribed and recreated three of her *kasa* from memory—*hwajeon-ga* ("A Song from Flower Viewing"), *jiknyeo-ga* ("Song of Weaver Woman"), and *aeryeon-ga* ("Song of Sorrow")—based on hearing these recited repeatedly among a coterie of women (Jo 1971, 14–15). Growing up immersed in this tradition, Jo wrote a *kasa* that showed her maturity and intelligence at the age of fifteen titled "Sanchon hyang-ga" (A Song of Mountain Village), and with this work she convinced her father to allow her to leave home to study in Seoul. *Eunchon naebang gasajip* has four *kasa* written in her teens including "Diamond Mountains." Jo states that these four were kept by her nephew Jo Jihun and were sent back to her to be included in the collection. She also mentions that "Diamond Mountains" was published in the school magazine at Baehwa, which was consequently shut down because of anti-Japanese sentiment in Jo's work (Jo 1971, 16).

Jo's *kasa*, among the best known in academic circles that discuss "modern" women's *kasa*, are often held as examples of a continuing or living tradition.[22] In the following analysis, however, I question the utility and validity of such a division between tradition and modern. At the time of Jo's writing in the early 20th century (from the 1920s until the 1930s), *kasa* was still very much a vibrant genre: both men and women were writing them, and newspapers and periodicals published *kasa* works on different themes including religion, travel, and current socio-political matters.[23] Eventually *kasa* did lose diversity and vibrancy, leaving only pockets of women writers (most notably from the Yeongnam region) as the sole practitioners in the latter half of the twentieth century. By the 1970s, these *kasa* works were taught in the school curriculum,

22 See Kim 2007; Paik 2011, 2016 for discussion of Jo Aeyeong's *kasa*.

23 See online database by Lim Key-Zung [Im Gijung] for examples from the 19th and 20th centuries.

where traditional literary forms of rhymed verse such as *sijo* and *kasa* came to be seen as archaic modes of writing in general despite efforts by poets of *hyeondae sijo* (modern *sijo*) and *kasa* to turn it into a modern literary genre.[24] Against this backdrop, I view Jo's *kasa* from the 1930s as valuable sites for exploring characteristics of modern and premodern literature in hybrid form. In other words, Jo's travel *kasa* "Diamond Mountains" is illuminating as an evolving literary form that straddled modern and premodern boundaries and thus embodied a moment of adaptation, flourishing and decline within the complicated rise of modern literature in Korea.[25]

Turning to a closer focus on "Diamond Mountains," two things immediately stand out in terms of form. First, while there is no set length for a typical travel *kasa*, this work is substantial in length with 135 lines (each line has 4 segments, 16 syllables) printed on eleven pages. When read aloud at a usual *kasa* recitation speed, it will take close to twenty minutes. Second is the strict adherence to 4 syllable per segment form. As a comparison, *kasa* as a genre shows some flexibility in this aspect with 2, 3, 4, or 5 syllables per segment, but here, as in all Jo's other *kasa*, including those she recreated from memory from her childhood, she keeps strictly to 4 syllables in every segment. What is the implication of this self-imposed rule? First and foremost, pursuing uniformity requires careful crafting and editing as well as knowledge and experience with the genre.[26] Second, this rigid form in *kasa* first arose at a time of historical

24 See footnote no. 46 for further discussion on *sijo* and *kasa* traditions and their transition into the modern era. For institutional context, Hanguk sijo siin hyeophoe (Society of *Sijo* Writers of Korea) was founded in 1964 with Yi Byeonggi (1891–1968) as the inaugural Chair, and their journal *Sijo mihak* (*Aesthetics of Sijo*) started in 2012 and solicits original work of *sijo* from new and existing poets of *sijo* (accessed September 2, 2023, http://www.hankuksijo.com/default/company/info02.php?sub=02). In comparison, "modernized *kasa*" by male authors does not seem to exist. Naebang gasa jeonseung bojeon-hoe (Society for Preservation and Transmission of Women's *Kasa*) was founded in 1997, which holds an annual recitation festival (*gyeongchang daehoe*) and collected works of *kasa* (accessed September 2, 2023, http://www.naebanggasa.com/coding/sub2/sub3.asp). The journal *Oneul ui gasa munhak* (*Kasa Today*) started in 2014 with support of the Kasa Museum (Gasa munhak-gwan, est. 2011) in Damyang-gun in Jeolla nam-do. The journals include scholarly articles on *kasa*, introductory pieces on existing works by both male and female authors from Joseon to 20th century, and new and original work of *kasa* in small numbers.

25 Along with Jo Aeyeong (sobriquet Eunchon), Go Dan (1922–2009, sob. Sogodang), Yi Dong (1892–1982), and Yi Hwi (1931– , sob. Sojeong) are well-known women's *kasa* authors. For more discussion on historical awareness and patriotic sentiments in women's *kasa*, see Jeong 2018.

26 On Jo's efforts to keep this rule by reducing and merging syllables, placing spaces strategically, or adding suffixes, see Paik 2011, 345–48.

change when manuscript culture was turning into print culture at the end of 19th and beginning of the 20th century.[27] In other words, While *naebang kasa* writers in Yeongnam region kept fluid form longer, Jo Aeyeong, a woman with modern education and exposure to changes brought on by print media, chose the "new" form accordingly. For her, adhering to the strictness of 4 syllables per segment strove for perfection in a more modern and polished form, and in writing down orally transmitted work in this form, Jo has brought the *kasa*—what was seen as less refined women's communal work circulated mainly through oral recitations—fully into the print era where *kasa*, along with other print material, was now intended to be read.[28]

The finality of a published work becomes incompatible with the openness found in many women's *kasa*. In the case of traditional women's *kasa*, even after they were written down, there was usually a built-in assumption that a given *kasa* will be circulated by oral recitation, with copies sometimes made and circulated by members of the community. Endings with a deferential remark concerning lack of literary talent or poor memory (Kwon 1979, 524; 539; 547; 550; 583) and inviting corrections (Kwon 1979, 530; 547; 550) are so common that the collective editorial process should be understood as elemental to the nature of women's *kasa*; a *gyubang kasa* is never a finished work. This openness was even more prominent in travel *kasa* by women with its requests to listeners/

27 Paik Sun-chul discusses the same rigid form in Choe Songseoldang's *kasa* and sees its emergence as a symptom of the modern era, on par with those published in new media like newspapers and other print venues during the Enlightenment Period (1876–1910). Paik (2005, 210–11) sees Jo's work as another manifestation of this trend.

28 Jo did not explain why she chose to adhere strictly to four syllables per segment, but as noted in footnote 27, Paik Sun-chul sees the proliferation of popular verse forms through print media as a general cultural background for this format.

The material and visual aspects of print (book) should be considered in this context. When printed, the size of each letter as well as layout of each page (margins, location of page number, etc.) is uniform, and in the case of poetic forms such as *kasa,* length of each line and spaces between words all become visual elements on a page in ways that have no good parallel in oral form. Such uniformity becomes even more striking when each segment has 4 letters each, as Choe's and Jo's do, compared to lines mixed with 2, 3, or 5 syllables. The visual uniformity that emerges in print contrasts sharply with earlier handwritten *kasa*, in which writing itself was not an element of form or performance and where visual form would get muddied by inconsistency of handwriting in any case. It would get muddied further given that actual content of traditional *kasa* was never settled in principle but always open to revision by the community who created it and shared the experience it describes. But once *kasa* were printed, it meant the text was intended to be read and its visual dimensions seen, as a finished form.

readers, who were often fellow travelers, to fill in the missing details or correct wrong information from the trip. See, for example, the following note that was added to "Record of Travel" (Yeohaneggi), which was composed by anonymous authors and later collected from Lady Bak (Bak *ssi buin*) in Yeongdeok-gun:

> Gyeongsul year, third month, fifth day. I, *Dogokjip*, during the visit to Hwang household in Jeongmyeong-ri, wrote this down along with a so-called *hwajeon-ga*, as a celebration for attending the trip for the first time after becoming a member. I tried not being distracted by spring breeze while recording this, and I would be grateful if you point out typos and read this with ample appreciation.[29]

Compare the above quote to the ending of Jo's *kasa* below, where the sense of community in traditional women's *kasa* is gone. Instead, we see an independent traveler with a prominent sense of belonging to a much bigger world than that represented by a group of her family or classmates:

> Now that I toured Mt. Geumgang, I wish to find a plant of eternal youth.
> Until the liberation of my country, I wish to stay young and live long.
> On the day of viewing Biro Peak, I pray with my palms together,
> and write this song of travel, which but becomes a sorrowful yearning.[30]

The image created here is of a lonesome traveler deep in contemplation about the fate of the Korean nation and people while viewing magnificent scenery. Although Jo was traveling as a group, her fellow travelers—classmates—appear minimally in "Diamond Mountains." We know that this was a school group tour and that the size of the group was about thirty girls (line 3),[31] but there is no mention of "we" or fellow travelers in the rest of the *kasa*. In other words, although the opening line follows the conventions of the genre by calling out to collective and imagined readers: "Dear My Friends, let us travel to Diamond

29 Translations are mine unless indicated otherwise. The original text is as follows: "경술 삼월 초오일 정명리 황씨댁에 머물고 있는 도곡집은 입문후 놀이에 처음 참석함을 기렴 (*sic.*) 삼아 명색 화전가와 더불어 멋자 (*sic.*) 기록하오니 봄바람에 심신 살란 (*sic.*) 되지말고 기록하였아 (*sic.*) 오니 보시는 분은 많은 이해와 오자를 지도해주시면 감사하겠습니다" (Kwon 1979, 550).

30 The original text is as follows: "금강산을 구경하고 불로초를 캐고지고 / 조국광복 될때까지 불로장생 하고지고 / 비로봉을 바라보며 합장기원 하는날에 / 이런여곡 적어노니 슬픈동경 되었어라" (Jo 1971, 108).

31 The original text is as follows: "간편하게 차린행렬 삼십여명 일행이라" (Jo 1971, 97).

Mountains,"[32] the "poetic I" or "narrator" is deep in contemplation by herself and focuses only on what she sees and the patriotic sentiment that arises as she reflects on the historical context of the scenery. One sees this lonesome mode reflected in her notes too, where she calls herself "a maiden from mountain village" (*sangol cheonyeo*) (Jo 1971, 109), who perceives herself as different from girls in her school in Seoul.[33] This self-image suggests a loner among her urban, modern, and sophisticated peers, yet Jo also proclaims a more righteous and intellectual identity steeped in pride for her *yangban* lineage. In "Diamond Mountains," she thus emerges as a solitary yet undaunted loyalist to history and tradition in Korea.

Communal to National

"Diamond Mountains" was written during the height of Japan's imperial expansion in 1930. While travelogues in general that appeared in newspapers and periodicals during the 1920s–1930s vary in the political stances of individual writers, Hong Sunae discusses travel and records from domestic travels published in the magazine *Gaebyeok* as a nationalist effort to "discover" and learn about one's own country. Especially with travelogues from visiting borders with China and Russia, the issue of Korean identity is unavoidable when data regarding territorial, ethnic, cultural, and historical past and present are collected and recorded. While not directly confrontational against the Japanese colonial regime, such travelogues provoke a yearning for the ethnic nation (Hong 2014, 171–208). Within *naebang kasa* tradition, colonial occupation weighs heavily as authors who belonged to *yangban* clans had to suffer loss of their privileged social status, surveillance and repression by the colonial regime, and financial ruin due to an exploitive colonial economic system. It is not a surprise to see nationalism, a keen sense of history, and deep concern for socio-political issues in *kasa* written by women. Indeed, as Jeong Insook's article shows, history becomes an important theme in *kasa* works in Jo Aeyeong, Ko

32 The original text is as follows: "어화우리 벗님네들 금강산을 구경가세" (Jo 1971, 97).

33 This self-isolation contrasts with Jo's *kasa* "Thinking of Friends" (Sauga), included in the same 1971 collection of Jo's *kasa* but written much later in her life. It mentions many of her friends from Baehwa by their names as if in a roll call and provides personal details for each (Jo 1971, 202–24).

Dan, and Yi Hwi, all prominent women *kasa* writers in the twentieth century.[34] Although more personal, "inner chamber" voices on married life and harsh treatment by in-laws continued as a major subcategory of women's *kasa*, the opposite "public" self populates women's *kasa* as well. In the works of the three women authors just noted, clan histories from both natal and in-law families are woven with dynastic and national histories.[35] While each author's political stance or evaluation of certain historical figures may vary, each is a conveyer and author of familial, regional, and national history (Jeong 2019, 322). If "Elegy for Seoul" (Hanyang biga) and "A *Kasa* of the April 1960 Revolution" (Haksaeng uigeo hyeokmyeongga), both written in 1960, are representative works of historical *kasa* among Jo's repertoire from later in life, we see their foundation of historical consciousness in her much earlier work "Diamond Mountains" and in her patriotic fervor sparked by dissonance between spectacular views and colonial reality.

Diamond Mountains is known for millennia for its spectacular view of jagged rock formations and crystal-clear water, and the site has accrued a rich history of important visitors. One can imagine the following scene as part of a history lesson by a tour guide or school teacher:

> As I hear the legend of the place, it is about King Sejo.
> He came to this faraway place for a cure for his chronic illness,
> But learning there is no cure, he regretted his past wrongdoings.
> This has become a lesson for the ten-thousand generations.[36]

This passage describes the visit to Bodeok Cave by King Sejo (r. 1455–1468), known for usurping the throne from his young nephew in 1455. Jo confirms the incident in history that she already knew and plainly records what she heard. At Myeonggyeong-dae (View of Clear Mirror), Jo is more emotional as she contemplates the site where the last prince of Silla from the tenth century took

34 Jeong discusses Jo's "Song of Seoul" in which she describes her family's direct involvement with historical events, Ko's epic *kasa* on the Donghak Rebellion, and Yi's works on anti-Japanese historical narrative. See Jeong 2018.

35 *Yangban* women during Joseon were expected to have historical knowledge, and biographies and fictionalized history were among the genres they were allowed to read in their leisure time.

36 The original text is as follows: "옛날전설 듣고보니 세조대왕 이야기라 / 고질병을 고치려고 여기까지 오셨으나 / 난치병에 낙심하고 적악함을 후회했음 / 천추만대 전해가며 전설되고 말았고나" (Jo 1971, 102).

refuge:

> At the time of the collapse of the thousand-year reign of Silla,
> This was the place where Prince Maui resigned to.
> .....
> Red moss seems stained with blood and tells the old tale.
> How would the sorrow of losing one's country differ from then to now.
> My fate as born in this land of stolen rivers and mountains…
> Silently I shed tears and proceeded to Manpok-dong.[37]

Demise of an ancient kingdom and the fate of the last prince who had to flee and hide in the deep mountains reminds Jo of her own fate, a thousand years later, as her country once again confronts existential turmoil. With multiple scenes like this one, "Diamond Mountains" overall has a solemn and sorrowful mood, perhaps unexpected of a school trip.[38] Instead of excitement and new discovery, Jo sees historical tragedies on the rocks and in the sounds of water[39] and spends a sleepless night praying for a resolution regarding Korean people's *han*.[40] With these scenes of her inner-scape overlapped on the landscape of rivers and mountains, "Diamond Mountains" becomes not just a record of a journey, but a site where her anti-Japanese sentiment is expressed and her ethnic Korean national identity is declared.

A related nationalism, also connected to a sense of history, is found in anonymous women's travel *kasa* created in the post-liberation period. Such works frequently verify historical information that travelers already knew or teach new history en route. Or, in the following case, nationalism emerges through a lament for what might have been:

37 The original text is as follows: "서라벌의 천년사직 무너지던 그때로다 / 낙랑공주 사랑하던 마의태자 숨어산 곳 / […] 붉은이끼 피묻은듯 옛사연을 아뢰는듯 / 나라뺏긴 설움이야 예나지금 다를소냐 / 임자없는 이강산에 태어나온 이신세로 / 무언중에 낙루하며 만폭동에 들어가니" (Jo 1971, 98–99).

38 More mundane moments included in this work include being frightened while crossing a log bridge (Jo 1971, 98), being tempted by the sight of ripe wild berries (ibid. 103), and hearing about the accidental fall of a Dongdeok school girl at Biro-bong Peak (ibid. 102–03). These appear in a line or a part of a line, in a passing manner, whereas "historical" moments stretch over several lines and emotions from them linger.

39 The original text is as follows: "간곳마다 물소리는 무슨일로 느껴우노 / 이나라에 뼈저린것 네가보아 왔거니와 / 너도울고 나도울고 구곡간장 다녹는날" (Jo 1971, 99–100).

40 The original text is as follows: "이겨레의 맺힌한을 대신풀어 축원하니 / 이내몸도 울고싶어 잠못자고 새웠노라" (Jo 1971, 103–04).

> If only born as men, we would have studied abroad
> With broad knowledge and fine character, political independence, economic independence, national prosperity of our beloved country, and unification of North and South, all would have been achieved if only we were born as men.[41]

The passage is from a short travelogue "Yeohaenggi" collected and transcribed in the 1970s by Kwon Yeongcheol. While the *kasa* overall has a light-hearted tone[42] with scenes of playing games, enjoying delicacies, and vibrant interactions among travelers, the above quote appears toward the end, as a lament on their being born women. Cultural and social customs from clan-based community lasted longer among women, who often remained in small villages with parents-in-law and took care of farming while men left for education and jobs in the cities. But this eventually disappeared, and so too did the indigenous habitat of *naebang kasa.* "Yeohaenggi" thus shows the tail end of the tradition, in which women are still writing *kasa* communally as tradition dictates. But it reflects a changed world preoccupied not with anti-Japanese sentiment, but with larger, national-scale goals for Korean people.

Returning to Jo Aeyoeng's work, nationalism and a sense of self (individuality) are two of the hallmarks of modern elites from the Enlightenment Period and throughout the Colonial Period in early 20th century Korea, and that is what we find in the lines of "Diamond Mountains."[43] Travel is an occasion to discover the inner self as well as one's place in the world, and "Diamond Mountains" shows Jo's portrait as a modern traveler and writer. In addition to the *kasa* itself, Jo offers a brief history of women's *kasa* writing in the preface of the *Eunchon naebang gasajip* under the section titled "The Reason for Revival of *Naebang Kasa*" (Hyeondae naebang gasa buheung ui iyu). In this

41 The original text is as follows: "우리만일 남자인들 외국에 유학하여 / 박식인격 가 (*sic.*) 추어서 정치자립 경제자립 / 애국중흥 남자되어 (*sic.*) 남북통일 벌서 (*sic.*) 할걸" (Kwon 1979, 550).

42 It opens with proclaiming enjoyment in life: "[O]ur life is in vain, like dew on a leaf, it will disappear./ Let us go view flowers today, tomorrow play games, and the next, visit hot springs" (Kwon 1979, 548).

43 As one anonymous reviewer for this article noted, these features are common in many Korean travelogues about tours to Diamond Mountains published during the colonial period. Such features are also where Korean travelogues differ from those written by Japanese travelers, who only responded to the scene as a spectacular destination. For more on visits by Japanese travelers to Japan's colonies, including Korea, see McDonald 2017.

section, she uses the term "munhak" and "hyeondae" several times in expressing her hope of reviving *kasa*, which to her was a proud tradition within her clan, and to have it recognized in this contemporary modern world as "*naebang kasa* munhak" or "*gyubang* munhak" (Jo 1971, 18–21). It shows Jo's ambition to serve as a leader in transforming one's family tradition into a modern institution.[44]

Final Thoughts: Women's "Home" in the New World

When thinking about women's writing, it is easy to assume that New Women would have written about the new world in a new form. Jo Aeyeong did not, and Baek Sinae used Sino-graphic phrases and quotes from *hansi* in her writings as well. These may seem like exceptional cases given that modern literary history in Korea focuses on "modern" forms comparable to Western literature. However, I am not using these somewhat exceptional cases to argue the opposite side of a binary, but rather to see their writing as complicating easy understandings of modern womanhood, the concept of modern literature, and the process of becoming "modern."

Regarding Jo Aeyeong, one may ask: Why would an educated modern woman use a traditional form for her writing? Given her formal education in Seoul, Jo surely had the capacity to write in modern "Western" forms. Part of

44 Despite Jo's wishes, there seems to be no attempt to revive *kasa* as a modern genre, and compared to *sijo*, which has a stronger following to this day as "modern (*hyeondae*) *sijo*," the decline is much more obvious. The reason for this requires further research and is somewhat beyond the scope of this article, but one observes similar decline (though on a different timeline) with epic poetry, the closest Western counterpart to *kasa*. In the latter case, and likely also the former, the genre was eventually rendered archaic by the combination of its orality, its focus on telling a long story, and its poetic form. Those elements persist individually today, but as a constellation they are now relics; the great epic poems of European literary tradition, conceived and long performed orally, now exist in written form only. The circumstances of that decline are complex and beyond surmising about here but suffice to suggest that modern sensibilities no longer support oral recitation of long stories in verse form. In the case of *kasa*, this decline of orality tracked roughly with the proliferation of print media, which pervaded society far deeper than the conscious intention of authors—note that even Jo Aeyeong, who sought *kasa*'s revival, seems to have composed her travelogue as a *written* form. Not only was the work published in her school newspaper shortly afterward, but her strictness about syllable/character count has a visual dimension that oral performance misses. By comparison to *kasa*, *sijo* as a short poetic form, and as a traditionally more elite, male-dominated genre, may have inherited better prospects for securing a place in modern literature.

the answer is that at the time of Jo's writing in the 1920s and 1930s, *kasa* was not an archaic form—at least not yet—but a genre familiar to everyone for its versatility. As Walraven (2015, 213) showed, "[b]y the eighteenth century, there was already a common perception that *kasa* could be used to express and propagate political opinions." As explained earlier, the same form was also used by women to confess their most intimate emotions about daily life. Christian (Catholic) *kasa* as well as Buddhist *kasa* were published through periodicals; and fiction including translations of tales from the West were published in *kasa* form during the colonial period.[45] In this environment, other "forms" of modern Korean literature that had just started to emerge in the 1910s may have seemed experimental and unruly for a writer like Jo Aeyeong, who was already experienced in *kasa*: compared to *kasa*, there was no rule to writing modern prose, no rhyme, no length limit, and no obvious conventions.

The subject of "Diamond Mountains" was its own sort of bridge between tradition and newness.[46] A prized travel destination for centuries, its appeal had not waned in the early 20th century, evident in the continued appearance of travelogues from visits there, including the one by Yi Gwangsu (1892–?), the quintessential elite of modernizing Korea under the Japanese colonial regime.[47] Modern transportation by train and automobile offered broader access to the famed destination, including to students such as Jo Aeyeong and her classmates. Photographs of scenery published in newspapers and journals introduced the spectacular views of the place to a wider public. Photographs by ordinary people also helped attract ordinary tourists, who no longer perceived Diamond Mountains as a rarified, mystical, and serenely historical place available only to those with privilege, but as a destination accessible to anyone who could afford train tickets, meals, and accommodation. By the 1930s, when Jo wrote "Diamond Mountains," the place had become a full part of the tourist industry, and *kasa* as a flexible form that straddled eras was the perfect vehicle.

Turning to the broader topic of domesticity, what did it mean for women

45 For a comprehensive collection of *kasa* works on various themes including those mentioned here, see the database compiled by Lim Key-Zung [Im Gijung]. For Catholic *kasa*, see Torrey 2016.

46 For travels to Diamond Mountains during the Joseon dynasty, see "Autographic Atlas of Korea" (https://aaok.info/), which includes a database of traveler's names carved on rocks and boulders in the mountains. Also see Stiller 2021.

47 Yi's travelogue "Geumgangsan yugi" was serialized in the monthly magazine *Sinsaenghwal* in March–September in 1922. A 1979 reprint is available in Yi 1979.

to travel during this time of massive relocation and migration? And how did these works conceptualize home and domesticity? Jo's travel to Diamond Mountains was part of her curriculum at Baehwa Women's High School and she was already part of the relocation and migration that reflected the sea change and turmoil that many Koreans faced in the early twentieth century. Although she spent the rest of her life in Seoul and rarely returned to Jusil Village, she had established her identity firmly as a girl from a mountain village. Jo's move was one of choice and privilege, while many other men and women of her generation moved due to forced relocation or even incarceration. "Home" in Jo's case was where her clan resided, namely Jusil Village. But as with many Korean families, her natal family members moved out of there for education and represented part of a massive rural to urban migration. Jo herself did not get a chance to visit Jusil Village for 39 years after she was married at the age of 20. In other words, "Home" for Jo was more the idea and ideal about where family order and pride resided, even after her clan members and Jo herself had left. No surprise, then, that "Diamond Mountains" shows her pride in Korea's history, her intense remorse over colonization, her burning patriotism for the nation, and her deep empathy for its people, so many of whom, like her and her natal family, had suffered under the Japanese. The sense of home and domestic is easily expanded to include the people and land of Korea in Jo's work.

As to a concept of home and domestic being tied to women and gender, since "Diamond Mountains" was written at a young age, it is natural that we do not see the kind of domestic life we would expect in the married life of a woman. However, while Jo's *kasa* written later in her life includes her experiences as a wife and mother of five children, the range of topics appearing in them is much broader than those of typical women's *kasa*, which usually dwell on hardships under mother-in-law, regrets on life as a woman, or lessons for the future generation. Jo's works include *kasa* on the April Revolution of 1960 ("Haksaeng uigeo hyeokmyeongga"), Korean history from Joseon to 1960 ("Hanyang pi-ga"), and reports from social and political debates ("Hanguk namnyeo toronhoe-ga"; "Sobicheung jido-ga"). Through these works, we can see that Jo's sense of community pertains to men and women of Korea and transcends her time. This contrasts somewhat with what we see in Na Hyeseok, whose focus while traveling around the world was largely women and problems that Korean women (and men) faced at that time. In my earlier work on Baek Sinae's travelogues and their cosmopolitanism, I noted how Baek's gender played

a practical and significant role during her travels. Jo Aeyeong's *kasa* travelogue adds yet another data point to this mix with a different concept of "home" and identity as a woman. These differences are due in part to Jo's family background and personality but also reflect *kasa* as a genre that is at once public and personal, one that was used to form public opinion, and, in the case of women's travel *kasa,* was communally created. Through Jo's fiercely patriotic comments in "A Travel to Diamond Mountains" and in observations on the state of the nation in other women's travel *kasa*, we see the presence of women—at once modern and traditional—who extended the identity of private "home" to include nation and thus spoke of their "home" as being in distress. In doing so—through resonance between home and homeland and the place of women thus implicated in both—they confirmed their place in the country and in the wider world, including the places on the road told about in *kasa*.

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Abstract

This paper uses "A Travel to Diamond Mountains" (1930) and its author Jo Aeyeong (1911–2000) to explore gender and modernity, community and individuality, and distinctions between tradition and modern in a literary genre. It starts by juxtaposing Jo and her contemporaries, especially Baek Sinae (1908–1939), to examine the complexities of a woman writer situating herself in the early twentieth century. Noting the contexts and opportunities that affected each woman's path forward, it challenges the usefulness of established stereotypes or slogans such as "New Women" and "Wise Mother Good Wife" in understanding this era. The paper then reads Jo's travelogue alongside other travelogues by women, including those communally written in *kasa* form. In doing so, it complicates the implicit contrast between tradition and modern and illuminates changes to the "traditional" form of *kasa*. Along with Jo's "Diamond Mountains," women writers and their writings featured in this paper as a whole embody a moment of adaptation, flourishing, and decline within the evolution of women's literature in Korea.

Keywords: *kasa*, Jo Aeyeong, Baek Sinae, travelogue

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