

Preface to the Korean Edition of *“The Methods and Practice in the Research of East Asian Sinitic Literature”*

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From 1985, in Hong Kong, when I first encountered works of Korean research on Sinographic material, suddenly more than thirty years have passed. When the ancients wanted to describe the fleeting passage of time, they said, “A white horse galloping by, as viewed through a crack in a fence.”(白駒過隙) In retrospect, this saying is no exaggeration at all. During these thirty or more years, I have visited Korea many times; sometimes friends ask me, “Where have you visited in Korea?” I often answer, “It would be better if you would ask me where in Korea I haven’t visited.” In this way, from the historical culture of Korea to its landscape and populace presently, I have unconsciously augmented my sensitivity as well as rational understanding and knowledge; moreover, have given form to many research insights in my writings. The essays collected together here are a portion of these contents.

I graduated from the Chinese Department and have always worked in the Chinese Department. As a Chinese scholar, sometimes I think about what kind of professional responsibility I bear towards research into Korean Studies, and what kind of contribution can I make towards it. Now that this book of mine is about to appear for Korean readers, perhaps this simple response of mine to these questions will assist the reader to sympathize and understand the “heart of the author.”

As everyone knows, before the great powers of the western countries forcibly invaded East Asia in the last part of the nineteenth century, there was a “Sinographic Sphere” that had existed for a long time in the East Asian region. In such a cultural sphere, even though different ethnicities lived different lives, their cultures were united. When I say “united,” this is not a pure concept, and even less does it ignore the differences of different peoples; using the words of the Japanese scholar Nishijima Sadao (西嶋定生), “The

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features of ethnicity were mediated by Chinese civilization and thus were endowed with commonality” (*The Ancient Chinese State and the East Asian World*, 《中国古代国家と東アジア世界》, 1983). Setting off from the viewpoint of Euro American scholars, they also could see a similar situation. For example, the French scholar Léon Vandermeersch has pointed out, “The entire Han cultural sphere is actually the domain of Chinese characters. The uniformity of the Han cultural sphere is just the uniformity of the signs of Han characters.” (*Le Nouveau Monde Sinisé*, 1986). The American scholar William Theodore de Bary, in *East Asian Civilization* (1988) sees Chinese, Japanese and Korean cultures as “representing the common civilization of East Asia, at the same time permitting, through the redundancies of these common traditions, the insistent hold of the local cultures.” According to Rhoads Murphey’s views, this “shared tradition” still persists today: “Although each part of East Asia presents different material and cultural features, they nonetheless obviously form a whole, and their commonalities exceed their individual differences; they are the largest area of common culture and common economy the world has seen until today” (*East Asia: A New History*, 4th Edition, 2007). The promotion of culture is based on education. In the Three Kingdoms period of the Korean Peninsula, no matter whether it was the “National Studies”(國學) of the Ministry of Rites, or the Gyeongdang(景堂) schools among the people, the curriculum they used was entirely from Chinese classical literature. And in the educational system of the Chosun era, no matter whether it was the university teaching “Official Learning”(官學), the Sibuhu(四部) Academy [Academy of the Four Divisions of Scholarship] or the rural schools, or no matter whether it was the academies of “Private Learning”(私學), their curriculum always consisted of the four divisions of Chinese writings (classics, histories, individual masters and collections); or perhaps the curricula came from selected Chinese classical literature which had undergone annotation and explication by Korean Confucians. They not only did not view “Chinese characters” as “foreign” writing, nor view the contents of the Chinese classical literature as “foreign” culture; at the same time, they still used Chinese characters and wrote such types of documents which belonged to their own literature, history, thought, religion, science and art, etc. For this reason, in such a cultural sphere, even if everybody used common characters to write, the flowers of the spiritual civilization which they created—their form, character and atmosphere—were actually variations on common themes as well as commonalities amidst discrepancies. To become aware of these differences, it is not necessary to wait until the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when Jeong Yak-yong(丁若鏞) uttered his representative statement, “I am from Chosun, and am pleased to write Chosun poetry”; in the fifteenth century, when Seo Geo-jeong(徐居正)

compiled *Dongmunseon* (東文選), he knew with total self-awareness, "This is the literature of the east [Korea]. It is not the literature of the Song (宋) or the Yuan (元), nor is it the literature of the Han (漢) or the Tang (唐). It is my country's literature, the literature that is suited to the historical age and practiced between sky and earth." It is not only literature that is like this. From a holistic view of culture, there is also such a perspective. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, Jo Gwi-myeong (趙龜命) said, "It has been a long time that we in the east [Korea] have been called mini-China. People just know we are similar to China, but do not know that in the midst of our resemblances to China there are also discrepancies with China." However, what is this "Chosun poetry"? What is the literature of the "east [Korea]"? What are the "discrepancies" existing in the midst of the "resemblances"? Even though many scholars have carried out sustained research on these questions, to date there is no certain answer. And to offer conclusive traits extracted from the Han cultural sphere into the culture of the Chosun peninsula, as far as I can tell, perhaps is the professional responsibility and locus for potential contribution of a Chinese scholar towards research into Korean studies.

Historically, although it could not be said that Chinese scholars minimized their interest in East Asian research including Korean studies, still there were problems in their guiding conceptions. From the time of *Shi ji* [Records of the Historian, 史記] and *Han shu* [History of the Han, 漢書], the official histories of China recorded information about areas such as the Chosun peninsula and Japan, and included a kind of "view of the world." However, the "view of the world" of those times was self-centered, which is to say, sinocentric. According to such a concept, when people viewed the image of the world, other than oneself, there was only the shadow of oneself projected upon others. When one makes use of such a concept to research East Asia, what one is in firm control of and knows of the cultures of Korea, Japan, Vietnam, or other countries, is just a kind of "local expression" of Chinese culture projected on various East Asian places. It lacks unique values and its research significance is accordingly greatly reduced. Fortunately, from the onset of the twentieth century, as Chinese scholars made efforts to break "western-centered theory," they gradually mastered their "sinocentrism." This is especially true in research dealing with the historical cultures of East Asia and the study of the relevant classical texts. In 2009, I wrote an article entitled "Zuoweifangfa de Han wenhuaquan" ["the Sinographic Sphere provides a method for itself", "作為方法的漢文化圈"]; in 2011, I published a book called "Zuoweifangfa de Han wenhuaquan" ["the Sinographic Sphere provides a method for itself", 《作為方法的漢文化圈》]; in 2013, I wrote an article entitled "Zai tan zuoweifangfa de Han wenhuaquan" [Revisiting 'the Sinographic Sphere provides a method for itself', "再談作為方法的漢文化圈"].

These collected writings expressed a common wish and purpose: to advocate and implement a kind of research credo and path, which is “to provide a method for the Sinographic Sphere.”

As far as my thoughts presently can discern, the research credo and pathway just mentioned basically consists of the following main points: first, take documents written in Chinese characters as a whole. Even though it is necessary to classify them, do not do it by country, ethnicity, or region, but instead classify according to their actual contents. For example, documents in Chinese characters that transmit Buddhist teachings include the whole of Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Vietnamese and other areas' documents, rather than grouping them as Chinese Buddhist, Korean Buddhist, Japanese Buddhist and Vietnamese Buddhist documents. No matter which country's documents are being researched, one always needs to keep the entirety of the document base in mind. Secondly, within the Sinographic Sphere, no matter whether it is cultural shifts or conceptual traveling, these activities rely upon the free circulation of texts. It is through people's reading or misreading texts that, directly or indirectly, prompts the formation of a multiplicity of cultures within a unified region of East Asian culture. Thirdly, take the inner experience and spiritual world of humans as one's goal, to establish intercommunication between the center and periphery, and place the Sinographic documents from each locality on an equal status, searching for the inner associations between them; also, emphasize the mutual influence and mutually constructing relations between people of different regions. Fourth, pay attention to the explications of cultural meanings; within similar documents, pay attention to different meanings of different regions, different levels, different genders, different eras, different linguistic zones. Through mastery of various relations of similarities and differences, one may improve one's understanding of Chinese culture, and finally do more to promote the contribution of East Asian civilization to humanity. In fact, in order to grasp firmly the special characteristics of each cultural region within East Asia, it is only from a vision of the whole of the Sinographic Sphere, as it is embodied in comparison with cultures of other countries, that allows a true knowledge and understanding. The essays collected in this book, to a certain extent, reflect the efforts of the author in these respects.

Of the research pathways discussed above, the core factor is to approach documents written in Chinese characters in a holistic way. Even if historically, each country of East Asia has supported its own continuous writing system, such as Eonmun(諺文) in Korea, Kana in Japan, or Vietnamese Chu Nom(喃) script, the perspective of intellectuals has been that the Chinese characters are the “real” writing: highly elegant, proper and grand, masculine; relative to this, one's local, “inauthentic” writing is provincial, lowly and

vulgar, feminine. In Chosun times, not a few scholars made it known that they did not understand Eonmun. For example, in the 16th century, Kim Jang-saeng(金長生) "had never learned Eon script." In the 17th century, Park Se-chae(朴世采) said of himself that he "did not understand Eon script." In the 18th century, Park Ji-won(朴趾源) even said, "All my whole life I have never learned a single word in Eon script." Therefore, whatever document was important, proper or solemn would always be executed in Chinese characters. We can say of the documents in Chinese characters that have been passed down until today that they are voluminous. In the 20th century, the western scholars W.T. Swingle and Kenneth S. Latourette calculated that in the 18th and 19th centuries the number of pages in Chinese copy books and print books exceeded the number of pages of all the books collected in all other languages in the world combined. If one were to add in all the books written with Chinese characters from Korea, Japan and Vietnam, the resulting astronomical number would be incredible. And corresponding to this is the fact that, since the end of the 19th century the power of the west has steadily encroached upon East Asia, steadily awakening the consciousness of nation-states, and after the middle of the 20th century, East Asian countries besides China have to various degrees reduced or even eliminated their use of Chinese characters in their daily lives, to the point that ordinary people no longer have the ability to read the records of their own country's history; moreover, specialists with the ability to do research tend to be growing progressively fewer. From this fact, it can be said that Chinese scholars really have a duty that cannot be ignored, actively to participate in the organization and research into the documents concerning East Asia written in Chinese characters.

No matter whether one is speaking about Chinese scholars or about scholars from other East Asian regions, it is true that they do not especially concern themselves with the documents written in Chinese characters from outside their own countries. For this reason, they can really be considered as a kind of new resource. In this new resource are incubated new problems, for which the use of previously elaborated methods will not necessarily be adequate as solutions. And through reading and research into the new material, and through refinement of new questions, we have the possibility of a new method of human sciences, which will have invaluable significance for scholarly activity in East Asia. A hundred years ago, at the time when the East Asian scholarship turned from tradition to modernity, as far as "method" was concerned, almost everyone turned to learn from the "scientific method" of Euro American cultures. Among them, Japan was the most advanced in this respect. For example, the historian of East Asia, Kuwabara Jitsuzou(桑原隲藏), at the beginning of the 20th century, said, "Our country seems still to be

unable totally to use the scientific method to research sinology; so-called scientific method is not only to be used for western scholarship: it is necessary to make use of it in the knowledge of China and Japan” (*Chunkokugakukenyuusia no ninmu* [The responsibility of sinologists]). And not only that! The entire research compass of oriental studies (*touhougaku*) is exactly like this. In that year when Hu Shi(胡適) read this article, he completely agreed with it. Chinese scholars also viewed the results of Japanese sinological research with the same orientation. Fu Sinian(傅斯年), in 1935, said, “In the past twenty years, the progress of Japanese oriental research is due to following the Paris School.” (*Lun Bo Xihejiaoshou* [On Professor Paul Pelliot]). The situation in Korea was similar. In the 1980s, Professor Im Hyeong-taek(林煥澤) stated that when he began attending university, he often heard a “disgusting” view that, “Although our country has literary works, we do not have the appropriate standards to evaluate them. Therefore, it is not incorrect that we must borrow foreign criteria.” (*Guowenxue: Zuoshenme, zenmezuozuo* 《國文學:做什么,怎么做》 [What and how to do about national literature studies]). Here, what is called “foreign” refers to Euro American. For this reason, until this very day, it is not only necessary but it is also possible for East Asian humanities scholars to expend their efforts exploring what belongs to East Asia or the Asian mode of production. And the methodology itself has different levels. “To make the Sinographic Sphere a methodology” is mentioned in order to advocate a kind of research credo: it even more resembles an attitude of orientation or an approach, rather than a concrete method. The latter is grounded in solving differences in problems, and using ways that correspond to them. Recently, as I have been editing the ‘*Yeonhaengnok’ yanjiulunji* [Collected research papers on the *Records of Travel to Beijing*, 《“燕行錄”研究論集》], in its “Preface,” I have mentioned ten aspects of research that must be taken into account. That is: first, research on documents and sources; second, historical research; third, research on intellectual history; fourth, ethnographic research; fifth, research into the history of religions; sixth, linguistic research; seventh, literary research; eighth, imagistic research; ninth, research into the history of texts; tenth, comparative research. The character of each specialized discipline is different, and their problematiques are different; the concrete methods each use are also not the same. Taking “imagistic research” for example, it should use the method of the study of images. Even if “foreigners write about China or Korea,” it is not necessarily the case that they are “disinterested,” nor is it necessarily true that “they can have a rather veracious view” (JinYufu’s [金毓黻] words, in *Liaohaicongshu* [Liaohai compilation, 《遼海叢書》], 1933). No matter whether dealing with writing or with graphic material, the “image” that is reflected by the brush is always replete with subjective selectivity and

evaluations, so in the end the “image” that is presented is always something altered and “other.” “Image” is not a practical copy; what people see is always what they want to see. For this reason, when facing the same scenario, different people will see different images. The image of China in the eyes of Koreans will also be dynamic and changing, but over a long period of time, the variations are minor and difficult to become aware of; placed in a “*longue durée*,” one can discover the significance of some “small events” in the “long history.” If one wishes to accomplish this point, it is still necessary to view the “Sinographic Sphere” as a holistic domain, and connect Korea, Japan and Vietnam, as well as the travel notes of western people concerning China; not only to have the concept of developments over time, but also have the concept of spatial transformation. Similar research into Korean studies will not only charm and fascinate people, causing us to be so attached that we forget to return, but also continuously produce new discoveries that will continuously stimulate us.

The world of East Asia today is neither pacific nor calm. Under such circumstances, it is extremely important to strengthen our acquaintance and understanding of East Asia. More than two hundred years ago, in 1801, Chen Zhan (陳鱣), the practitioner of evidential research, was inspired to say, “A mountain of rain is going to come and the wind will fill the buildings”; and he once said to Yu Deuk-gong (柳得恭) of Chosun, “The world will become totally chaotic!” However, Yu Deuk-gong lacked a holistic view of East Asia, so he replied, “I am a foreigner, what difference does it make to me?” Yet he had not considered the saying that “When the nest overturns, how can the eggs hatch?” Within a few decades, the East Asian world met with a colossal and unprecedented change. The American scholar Samuel P. Huntington, in his *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (1996) stated that after the end of the cold war, the resistance and conflict caused by ideological attitudes would gradually attenuate, but that in their stead would very likely arise the “conflict of civilizations.” I very much agree with Huntington’s recognition and understanding of the importance of civilizations, but I do not agree with him in attributing the source of chaos in the world to the “conflict” between different civilizations. As I see it, the discussion and cooperation between different civilizations might very well be far greater than any conflict and resistance. In today’s world, the source of conflict is over the unremitting fight and seizure of “profit.” Mencius said, “When the high and low squabble about profits, the country is endangered.” These days it could be paraphrased as, “When each country quarrels about profit, the world is endangered.” Therefore, as a scholar in the present world, one even more should “narrate the past and think of what is to come.” Keep the present and wait for the subsequent. With such a background, to strengthen the research

about different cultural units, perhaps will be helpful for the human species to develop world peace. This, perhaps, is also one significant position for a Chinese scholar who takes part in Korean studies research.

I thank Professor Sim Gyeong-ho(沈慶昊), whose kind expenditure of mind and energy assisted my still unfinished essay to become translated into Korean, so that it might receive the abundant criticism and guidance of Korean scholars. I am honored and full of eager expectation. More than twenty years ago, I greatly benefited when I read Professors Sim's great article "Chaoxianshidai Du shi de kanxing" [Publications on the poems of Du Fu during the Chosun period]. When afterwards, I was fortunate to meet him, I learned more of the enormity and profound refinement of his erudition, his sincere kindness to others, the humor of his discussions. It has left a deep impression on me. Particularly following the strong connections between the Institute for the Study of Sinographic Texts and Culture, of Nanjing University, and the Chinese Character and Writing Research Center, of Korea University, these relations are even closer, with even more opportunities to pursue learning. Ji Yun(紀昀) of the Qing dynasty presented a poem to Park Je-ga(朴齊家), which said, "Eager to receive the scholars of the world/I recite poetry that most recalls the man of the east sea." In the late years of Chosun, Kim Taek-yeong(金澤榮) his own late years stayed at Nantong, China; once he said to Zhang Jian(張謇) and his brother, "For the good brothers of the Zhang household," "Nantong hereafter is my home." The interaction between people of China and Korea is the deep, thick knot most worthy of prizing; from ancient times to the present, it cannot be severed. I earnestly wish that this book can be published in Korea and can achieve the goal that Confucius described: "meet friends with civility, and use friendship to strengthen civility": allowing the cultural exchanges of China and Korea to become like the name of the national flower of Korea, the "inexhaustible flower"(無窮花)—flower forever without wilting.