

## The Tide Turns? South Korean critiques of ancient pseudohistory 2016–2018

1. Introduction
2. First moves: Song Hojŏng and Sim Chae-hun
3. Emergence of the Young Historians: *Yŏksa pip'yŏng* articles and first book
4. Winds of change: *Hankyoreh 21* Chin Myŏngsŏn
5. Reclaiming the public field: *Hankyoreh 21* “Real Ancient History” Young Historians
6. Turning the attack, restoring honor: Kim Hyŏn-gu’s “Colonial historiography cartel” (2017)
7. Unexpected reinforcement: Kim In-hŭi’s “Chiyou, an old disease of history” (2017)
8. Holding the field: Young Historians (2018) and Yi Mun-yŏng (2018)
9. Has the tide been turned?

### Introduction

Over the past decade in South Korea, two broad areas of historiographical contestation have played out in political and public arenas. One pertains to contemporary South Korean history and is associated with the New Right revisionist movement. The other is a longer-standing phenomenon of pseudohistory pertaining to early and prehistory of Korea and northern East Asia that principally asserts Koreans to have been in possession of an ancient continental empire centered on geographical Manchuria. Both these movements reached a climax of influence during the Park Geun Hye administration (2013-2017). This occurred within the context of the government policy to impose a single government-approved history textbook, and a broader atmosphere of government intimidation against public critics of the administration. While the New Right sought to promote their agenda through the government textbook project in collaboration with the government, ancient empire advocates adopted a politically broader strategy targeting the North East Asian History Foundation, a government funded institute that had been established in 2006 to coordinate and support professional research related to ongoing history disputes with mainland China and Japan. Led by empire advocate and prolific writer of popular pseudohistory, Yi Tŏk-il (b.1961), pseudohistorians emphasized a conspiracy-type polemic that accuses any scholar who rejects their assertions of ancient empire as promoting ‘colonial historiography’ to the benefit of China and Japan, and thus condemns them as “national traitors” 매국노 (Yi 2014, 2015 – Fig.1 and 6). This polemic is distinguished from genuine discourse concerning decolonisation owing to its highly reductionist nature involving wanton mischaracterization of targeted scholarship.



Figure.1. Yi Tŏk-il 2014.

Among lay believers and sympathizers of Korean pseudohistory were a bipartisan group of national assembly members who in late 2013 established the “The Special Committee for Counter Policies Concerning Distortions in Northeast Asian history” 동북아역사왜곡대책특별위원회 (hereafter Special Committee). Adopting Yi Tŏk-il’s accusations as their working premise, the Special Committee “investigated” the Northeast Asian History Foundation in a series of hearings held throughout 2014–2015. The result of this political interrogation was the termination of funding for two flagship projects, the Early Korea Project (2006–2017) based at Harvard University, and the Northeast Asia Historical Atlas project 동북아역사지도 (2008–2015) based in South Korea.

During the height of the committee hearings and until the weakening of the Park Geun Hye government, the academic establishment was notably silent and failed to provide public support for either project, or for those scholars questioned by the committee. However, from 2016, a coordinated response emerged. This began with public criticisms expressed by two established scholars, professors Song Hojŏng and Sim Chae-hun, and was followed by coordinated publications and public engagement led by an emergent generation of scholars who collectively named themselves the ‘Young Historians collective’ 젊은역사학자모임 (hereafter ‘Young Historians’). As surveyed below, their systematic critiques have since been joined by others, resulting in the publication to date of five paperback volumes that collectively deconstruct the flawed methodological

argumentation and colonial historiography polemic promoted by pseudohistorians (Chŏlmun 2017, 2018, Kim Hyŏn-gu 2017, Kim In-hŭi 2017, and Yi Mun-yŏng 2018).

For want of space this paper cannot examine or represent the details of every topic pertaining to Korean pseudohistory in detail.<sup>1</sup> Rather the aim is to narrate the chronology and contours of the movement, with greater space devoted to aspects that may not receive treatment elsewhere. However, for reference, the following will suffice as a non-exhaustive list of false assertions that comprise the central tenets of Korean pseudohistory, and are consequently recurring topics within the critiques surveyed below.

1. The early state of Old Chosŏn 古朝鮮 (trad. 2333 – 108 BCE) – traditionally regarded as the first state of Korean history – was not restricted to the northern half of the Korean peninsula, but comprised an expansive empire encompassing geographical Manchuria.
  - i. Groups described as “Dongyi” 東夷 (‘eastern barbarian’) in Chinese sources, associated with Shandong and Manchuria, were a single ethnic nation descended from this territory.
2. The traditional Hwan’ung-Tan’gun foundation myth of Old Chosŏn encodes memory of this state.
3. The geographic origin of Old Chosŏn and the greater Korean nation was centered on Liaoxi 遼西 (region straddling modern eastern Hebei and western Liaoning provinces, China) and can be traced to the neolithic period.
  - i. Liaoxi origins is now archaeologically supported by the Hongshan culture 紅山文化 (4500-3000 BCE).
4. The understanding of Old Chosŏn as a continental empire was established by independence-activist historian and national martyr, Sin Ch’aeho (1880-1936).
5. Pre-1945 Japanese scholarship sought to hide these facts.
6. Post-1945, Sin Ch’aeho’s research was developed in North Korea by Ri Chirin (Ri 1963).
7. However, in South Korea this research was rejected by establishment scholars because they had been trained by Japanese scholars.
8. The Chinese Han commanderies that, according to orthodox history replaced Old Chosŏn with the Lelang commandery (108 BCE – 313 CE) centered on P’yŏngyang (Pyongyang), are a colonial Japanese fabrication.
  - i. As argued by Sin Ch’aeho and Ri Chirin, Lelang and other commanderies were located in Hebei province.
  - ii. Archaeology associated with Lelang at P’yŏngyang was either fabricated by the Japanese or is evidence rather of an indigenous polity.
9. Japanese scholars asserted the Mimana Nihonfu 任那日本府 to have been an office through which Yamato Japan ruled over the southern Korean peninsula, south of the Lelang commandery.
  - i. They equated Mimana Nihonfu to the early polity of Kaya.
  - ii. Mimana Nihonfu is principally attested in the Japanese history, *Nihon shoki* (720).
  - iii. Any research by Korean scholars on Kaya or the *Nihon shoki* is in order to support the Japanese hypothesis.
  - iv. Upon its discovery, the Kwanggaet’o Stele text was altered by Japanese military officers to support evidence of a Japanese invasion of the southern peninsula in 391 CE.
  - v. The inscription on the ‘seven-pronged sword’ 七支刀 (*ch’iljido*, J. *shichishitō* – kept at Isonokami Shrine in Japan) is evidence that Yamato was in fact founded by and subordinate to Paekche.
10. *Hwandan kogi* 桓檀古記 is an authentic historical text that came to light post-1945.
  - i. It provides evidence for Old Chosŏn and preceding periods of Hwan’guk and Paedal as having been continental empires.
  - ii. Together with another rediscovered text, *Kyuwŏn sahwa* 揆園史話, it attests the figure of Chiyou 蚩尤 (K. Chi’u) as a warrior king who defeated the Yellow Emperor of the Chinese – a reversal of the traditional *Shiji* 史記 (87 BCE) account.

<sup>1</sup> For a detailed treatment in English, see Logie 2019.

- iii. These books are rejected by establishment scholars as apocryphal works to hide the truth of ancient Korean empire.
  - iv. The authenticity of *Hwandan kogi* has been confirmed through its records of astronomical events.
11. Mainland China initiated the Northeast Project 东北工程 (2002-2007) that claims early Korean polities and mythology as having been Chinese, in order to establish a justification to invade and occupy the Korean peninsula.
- i. This mirrors Japanese historiography that was used to justify the 1910 annexation of Korea.

## 2. First Moves: Song Hojōng and Sim Chae-hun

The first full professor to publicly comment in the aftermath of the Special Committee hearings was Song Hojōng, a history professor at Seoul National University of Education who specializes on the history and presumed archaeology of Old Chosōn, and more recently on the early continental state of Puyō. Song is notable for having already published a book aimed at popular readership that actively criticized pseudohistorical interpretations of Old Chosōn (Song 2004 – Fig.2). He was also a contributor to the Early Korean Project volume on the Han Commanderies (Song 2013). He has thus become a regular target of attack for Yi Tōk-il and pseudohistory associations which paint him as the epitome of ‘establishment historians.’ Song had in fact been called to testify during the Special Committee hearings, but in later sessions found himself on the defensive for his views. Song broke silence through an interview carried in a *Hankyoreh* newspaper article of 24 March 2016, by journalist Kang Hūich’ōl titled, “The political danger tied to the ‘early history craze’ centered on Yi Tōk-il.” Therein Song is explicitly critical both of Yi Tōk-il and the then government of Park Geun Hye.

Song characterizes Korean pseudohistorians as fixated on the mythical notion of Tan’gun Chosōn (trad. 2333-108 BCE) and insistant on a Liaoxi centered history, which from the 2000s they have sought to support with the Neolithic Hongshan Culture (c.4500-3000 BCE). Song argues that in locating Old Chosōn in Liaoxi, they fail to account for the history of other attested groups such as the Donghu. Although accurate, this criticism ignores that pseudohistorians rather claim the Donghu as belonging to Old Chosōn. Concerning the Hongshan Culture, Song highlights that it dates to some two thousand years prior to earliest historical attestation of Old Chosōn. In critiquing Yi Tōk-il, he highlights the genealogy of ideas tracing from Yi through Yun Naehyōn back to Ri Chirin, whose arguments Song notes were largely premised on pseudolinguistic speculation (cf. Yun 1986 and Ri 1963). The pseudolinguistic aspect of Ri (1963), and Korean pseudohistory in general, is a fundamental fallacy that Korean critiques rarely address. On the political front, Song asserts that from late 2013 the government had been enabling pseudohistory through the Special Committee hearings as well as financial support with the purported objective of “overcoming colonial historiography and early history research.”



Figure 2. Song Ho-jōng 2004

Song further claims that Yi Tōk-il *cum suis* had been seeking to participate in the government textbook. We should note, however, that although this accusation would match the precedent of pseudohistorians active during the Park and Chun regimes, in line with the Ri-Yun lineage, Yi has rather positioned himself on the political left and much of his historiographical polemics – both concerning early history and the late Chosōn – are premised on attacking the conservative establishment. His most recent books at the time had expressly criticized the Park government for its handling of the Sewōl sinking (Yi 2014:14). Nevertheless, Yi was uncharacteristically silent about the textbook project, and it is conceivable that he would have participated given the opportunity to shape the representation of early history.

Finally, Song asserts the responsibility of professional historians to confront pseudohistorians, for which he is quoted, “Specialist historians must speak up on this problem so that pseudohistorians will not have a place to stand.”<sup>2</sup> Perhaps owing to the political climate under the Park Geun Hye administration, aside from these comments by Song, no other former participant of the Early Korea Project has to date spoken publicly against the government support of pseudohistory.

It was not until June of 2016 that a second professor of early history took up a bolder position against pseudohistory including the first active defense of the Early Korea Project. In June, Sim Chae-hun (Shim Jae-hoon) of Dankook University published an article in the journal *Sahakchi* titled, “North American research on early Korean history and the Harvard Early Korean Project,” in which he states:

“Staking my conscience as a researcher, I can state that the Northeast Asia History Foundation’s support for the Early Korea Project was successful. However, it would seem that the unique hotheadedness and simmering disposition of Koreans and their inferiority complex concerning history, were all utilized to create a distorted media discourse {misrepresenting the work of the Early Korea Project}.” (Sim 2016a:99)<sup>3</sup>

Sim’s own research principally focuses on early Chinese history and so he had not been directly involved in the Early Korea Project. However, having studied in the US at Chicago University, Sim has a strong command of English, and has demonstrated greater interest in Western – principally US – scholarship than many of his Korean peers. Although published in an academic journal, Sim’s comments were picked up by media outlets and he has since posted regular public comments through his Facebook account.

In the same year he had separately published a well received popular history book titled, “Examining Korean history while immersed in early China” (Sim 2016b – Fig.3). Part memoir of his academic career, including recollections of his experience studying in US, this book does much to introduce American scholarship on Northeast Asia to Korean readership. It also contains explicit criticism of Korean pseudohistory, for example, pointedly noting, “If bestsellers on Korean and ancient history stopped at making people feel good [about the past] there would not be a problem. However, it is a problem if those reading such books believe them to be actual history and become prisoner to an empty delusion. As for those who create such content, to say it coldly, regardless of their own intentions, they are actively deceiving society” (Sim 2016b:272).



Figure 3. Sim Chae-hun 2016b.

### 3. Emergence of the Young Historians collective: *Yöksa pip'yǒng* articles and first book

Parallel to Song’s comments, the first organized response to pseudohistory came in 2016 when a group of younger generation scholars published a series of nine articles across the spring, summer and winter editions of the quarterly history journal *Yöksa pip'yǒng* 역사비평. This special feature was titled, “Early Korean history and criticism of pseudohistory” 한국 고대사와 사이버역사학비판. This new affiliation of scholars have since coordinated their activities under the group name ‘Young Historians.’

The nine articles, together with the authors’ names and contemporary affiliations are as follows.

<sup>2</sup> “송 교수는 “전문 역사학자들이 용감하게 이 문제에 대해 발언함으로써 유사역사학이 설 자리가 없도록 해야 한다”고 강조했다.”

<sup>3</sup> “필자는 연구자로서의 양심을 걸고 동북아역사재단의 ‘고대한국 프로젝트’ 지원은 상당히 성공적이었다고 단언할 수 있다. 그런데 한국인 특유의 조급함, 냄비 근성, 역사 왜소 콤플렉스 등이 복합적으로 작용하여 왜곡된 여론을 형성했던 것 같다.”



*Yōksa pip'yōng* Vol.114 Spring, 2016

- “Pseudohistory and history fascism” Ki Kyōng-ryang (Lecturer at Kangwon National University)  
 “Is the theory of the Han Commanderies’ location on the Korean peninsula a product of colonial era historiography” Wi Kaya (PhD from Sungkyunkwan University, history department)  
 “Current day research on the Lelang Commandery” An Chōng-jun (PhD from Yonsei University, history department)

*Yōksa pip'yōng* Vol.115 Summer, 2016

- “Colonialist historiography and the heteronomy within ‘us’” Kang Chinwōn (Lecturer at Seoul National University, Korean history department)  
 “Research on the Mimana Nihonfu and colonialist historiography” Sin Kayōng (Doctoral candidate at Yonsei University, history department)  
 “Could the Han Commanderies have been located in the Luan river basin, after all?” Yi Chōngbin (Research professor at Kyung Hee University)

*Yōksa pip'yōng* Vol.117 Winter, 2016

- “Symbol of ethnonationalist historiography – reconsidering Sin Ch’aeho” Kwōn Sun-hong (PhD from Sungkyunkwan University)  
 “Tan’gun: history, myth, and the ethnic nation” Yi Sūng-ho (Lecturer at Dongguk University, history department)  
 “False imaginings within ethnonational[ist] history textbooks: focusing on highschool textbooks of the 4th and 5th national curriculum periods” Chang Mi-ae (Lecturer at Catholic University of Korea)

These articles collectively debunk key assertions of Korean pseudohistorians, particularly those that had been leveraged during the Special Committee hearings concerning the Han Commanderies. They also seek to deconstruct Yi Tōk-il’s colonial historiography polemic by narrating the genealogy of South Korean pseudohistory as a product of the Park Chung Hee era, created by amateur historians who had had careers within the pre-1945 Japanese empire. Although these articles are informative and generally well-argued, their academic style and location in a scholarly journal meant that their readership would be restricted and unlikely to reach a wider audience.

In terms of popularizing their critiques, the watershed occurred when the substance of these articles were collated into a paperback book published in February 2017 under the collective authorship of the Young Historians (Chōlmun 2017 – Fig.4). Titled “Early Korean history and pseudohistory,” this book heralds the Young Historians’ activities of public engagement that would subsequently include a newspaper series, podcasts and a second book.

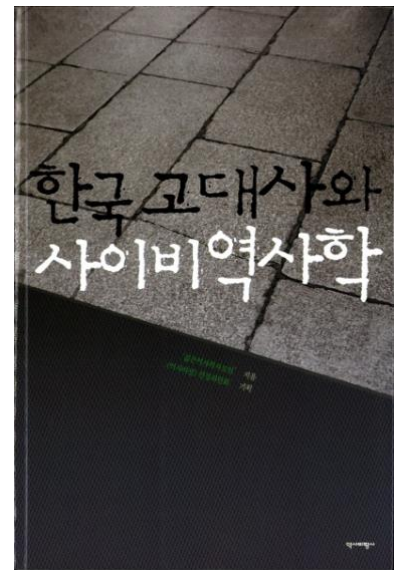


Figure 4. Young Historians 2017.

Young Historians (2017) is divided into three parts. The first two contain the previous nine articles with one extra by Ki Kyōng-ryang, titled “Are the Tan’gun Chosōn period records of astronomical observation true?” (Chōlmun 2017:191-211). Each of these chapter articles is additionally followed by a short “Box Talk” section that briefly addresses related subtopics or common hypotheses of Korean pseudohistory. The Box Talk titles are as follows:

- “Does pseudohistory exist only in Korea?” (Ki Kyōng-ryang)  
 “Is the Great Wall of China a symbol of national disgrace?” (Kang Chinwōn)  
 “What is the truth of Paekche’s expansion to Liaoxi?” (Chang Mi-ae)  
 “Where was the heartland of Old Chosōn?” (Yi Chōngbin)  
 “Did Wi Man cross the Yalu eastwards or southwards?” (Wi Kaya)  
 “Early history’s infinite challenge, *Nihon shoki*” (Sin Kayōng)

“What is the ‘45 BCE [Lelang commandery] census?’” (An Chŏng-jun)

“Were Koguryŏ, Paekche and Silla not on the Korean peninsula?” (Ki Kyŏng-ryang)

“Did Kija Chosŏn exist?” (Yi Sŭng-ho)

“Sin Ch’aeho criticizing Sin Ch’aeho” (Kwŏn Sun-hong)

Among these, Ki’s first Box Talk is notable for introducing generalizing definitions of pseudohistory based on Fritze (2009). Ki asserts that the following five of Fritze’s definitions closely match the methodology of Korean pseudohistorians: 1) cherry-picking evidence and ignoring evidence which does not match their theory, 2) recycling earlier scholarship which has since been disproven, 3) failing to distinguish between remote ‘possibility’ and actual ‘likelihood’ of given hypotheses, 4) arguing over basic facts (e.g. whether a given event occurred or not, or whether a certain place or special individual existed or not), and 5) ignoring greater bodies of evidence that point to a rational likelihood and consensus interpretations, while focusing on the one or two exceptions that support their pseudo-hypothesis.

Part 3 of *Young Historians* (2017) is based on a colloquium held at Kyung Hee University, 18 August 2016. It contains a brief critical response to the *Young Historians*’ articles by Korea University researcher Kim Hŏnju, and a follow up responses by five of the *Young Historians*. Titled, “The meaning and limits in the notion of ‘Pseudohistory’ and the dilemma of ‘correct history,’” the two main issues raised by Kim concern the suitability of the designation ‘pseudohistory’ and how best to address the challenge it presents (Chŏlmun 2017:277-284).

Kim argues that while Korean pseudohistory is methodologically flawed, the designation ‘pseudohistory’ fails to address pseudohistorians’ underlying nationalistic motivations, which they themselves trace to independence-activist historian, Sin Ch’aeho, who had sought to revive ancient history against the context of the colonial era and nationalist revitalization movement. Kim continues that although the circumstances are entirely different in the twenty-first century pseudohistorians maintain the colonial framing of Sin. He cautions that by focusing only on methodological shortcomings, critiques ignore that it is not the content so much as the spirit of Sin Ch’aeho that pseudohistorians are promoting. Thus the flawed evidence-based argumentation adopted by Yi Tŏk-il, is secondary to his narrative of continued Japanese influence on South Korean historiography, which matches the reductionist polemic holding currency among those who identify as political progressives. Kim suggests that ‘chauvinist historiography’ would thus be a more appropriate term for addressing this aspect than ‘pseudohistory.’

In response Ki Kyŏng-ryang and Wi Kaya both emphasize that, although provocative, ‘pseudo’ (*saibi* 사이비) is the most accurate qualifier to describe the phenomenon in question. While ‘chauvinist’ is not inaccurate, ‘pseudo’ makes clear that the methodologies are flawed to the extent that its advocates are not pursuing history, the clearest example being their willingness to use apocryphal texts such as *Hwandan kogi*, or forcing artificial interpretations of authentic sources to support their hypotheses (Chŏlmun 2017:286-287). They further highlight that academic historiography has internal contradictions that must continuously be addressed. These pertain firstly to historians assuming that they have successfully overcome the influence of colonial era Japanese scholarship, the problem being that while they may have achieved this within their academic world, it has not be well communicated to the general public (Chŏlmun 2017:302). The second problem is that the method by which this ‘overcoming’ was initially pursued was to emphasize the ethnic nation (*minjok*) and narrative of developmentalism even within early history, however, the assumptions of early nationhood and a developmental path to modernity are now being critically challenged (Chŏlmun 2017:298, 300). We should note that, even from the *Yŏksa pip’yŏng* articles the *Young Historians* were already addressing the issues raised by Kim, including the legacy of Sin Ch’aeho. While they have not withdrawn the term ‘pseudohistory,’ they have continued to address the aspect of ethno-nationalist chauvinism in articles highlighting South Korean genealogy of pseudohistory.

We may separately note that the hosting of the 2016 colloquium was likely related to the Institute of Korean Archaeology and Ancient History (IKAA) established at Kyung Hee University in early 2015. Their mission statement reads as follows:

“We have chosen Old Chosŏn and north Asian culture as our research topic due to multiple concerns about the recent situation surrounding research and understanding of Old Chosŏn... [R]ecently historians of early Korea are being challenged internally by irrational and nationalistic interpretations related to Old Chosŏn, while externally they are confronted with hegemonistic and neo-Sinocentric research and interpretations.”<sup>4</sup>

The ICAA website hosts articles critical of pseudohistory authored by some of the Young Historians, as well as a ten part series, “A Retrospective Account of the Early Korea Project at Harvard,” (2017.02.28 - 2017.08.14) authored by then director of the Early Korea Project, Mark Byington, translated into Korean.

Scholars affiliated as the Young Historians have also been founding members of the Man'in Mansaek Researcher Network 만인만색 연구자 네트워크 that was established in January 2016 to organize opposition to the government-authored textbook project, as well as to address other history-related issues including the Special Committee hearings, and the Park Geun Hye administration's secretly negotiated agreement with Tokyo over former wartime sexual slavery.<sup>5</sup> Man'in Mansaek's goals include public engagement to bridge the divide between professional scholarship and public interest. In April 2016, they launched a podcast titled “Man'in Mansaek Yŏksa-gongjak-dan” 만인만색역사공작단 which has since passed its three-hundredth episode in January 2020. With Young Historians members as active participants the podcast has featured two double-episodes critiquing Yi Tŏk-il, in April-May 2016 (episodes #3, #4) and March 2018 (episodes #118, #119) respectively. Following the publication of Young Historians (2017) in May and June of 2017 the podcast devoted a series of episodes to the same topics.

Separate to the Young Historians, the following spring 2017 edition of *Yŏksa pip'yŏng*, featured a further themed section addressing pseudohistory titled, “Fake history and apocryphal texts” 위사(僞史)와 위서(僞書), comprising the following five articles.

*Yŏksa pip'yŏng* Vol.118 Spring 2017

“The crisis in the study of early history and the spectre of colonial historiography” Cho In-sŏng (Professor at Kyung Hee University, history department)

“Background and origins to the construction of *Hwandan kogi*” Yi Mun-yŏng (Editor, novelist, and pseudohistory critic)

“*Book of Veles* as Russian literary forgery and 21st century history disputes of Eurasia” Kang In-uk (Professor at Kyung Hee University, history department)

“From criticism of false texts to research of false texts: comparison of Japanese and Korean false texts” Kim Si-dŏk (Professor at Seoul National University, Kyujanggak)

“On apocryphal texts” Pak Chihyŏn (Researcher at Chungnam Institute of History and Culture 충청남도약사문화연구원)

Of particular note, Cho In-sŏng is the author of the first scholarly critiques of *Hwandan kogi* (Cho 1988, 2000). Yi Mun-yŏng, meanwhile, is a long-term opponent of Korean pseudohistory whose activities are discussed below.

<sup>4</sup> “이번 연구의 주제는 [고조선과 북방문화]입니다. 이를 연구주제로 선택한 까닭은 고조선사 연구와 인식을 둘러싼 최근의 상황이 여러모로 우려되기 때문이었습니다... 하지만, 최근 한국고대사학계는 고조선사와 관련하여 안으로는 비합리적·국수주의적 인식의 도전을 받고 있으며, 밖으로는 패권주의적·신중화주의적 연구 내지는 인식의 도전에 직면하고 있습니다. 고조선사에 대한 연구 및 인식에 대한 연구를 보다 심화하고, 한편으로는 그 성과를 확산하는 작업이 필요한 이유를 여기에서 찾을 수 있습니다.” ICAA website, <http://www.ikaa.or.kr/home.php>

<sup>5</sup> ‘국정화 반대’ 젊은 역사학자들, 공론장 만들었다 2016.1.24 <http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/PRINT/727628.html>

#### 4. Winds of change: *Hankyoreh 21* Chin Myöngsön

In June 2017, the *Hankyoreh* newspaper affiliated magazine, *Hankyoreh 21*, ran two articles both authored by journalist Chin Myöngsön that discuss the fall-out of the Special Committee hearings and broader concerns of pseudohistory. This was followed-up by a series authored by the Young Historians, titled, “Real Ancient History” (2017.7.26 – 2017.9.6).

Chin Myöngsön’s articles were crucial for bringing details of the Special Committee hearings to greater public awareness. The first is titled, “A history of the plundering of ancient history written by political powers and pseudohistory” (2017.06.19) and discusses the circumstances under which the Northeast Asia History Foundation’s Northeast Asia Historical Atlas project was prematurely cancelled. The article is significant for giving voice to the scholars who had been working on the project. As of writing, it remains one of the chief sources of detail about the project.

The article introduces the nature of the atlas project and details the National Assembly special committee hearings noting the direct influence of Yi Tök-il and other pseudohistorians on the mischaracterization of the atlas project that had run from 2008 and been due for completion in 2018. According to Chin, the atlas project was established by the Northeast Asia History Foundation with an objective to replace the 1981 (sic) “Historical Atlas of China,” compiled by Tan Qixiang 谭其骧 (1911-1992) which has continued to be used in international scholarship and is the basis for claims that were promoted in the Chinese government’s recent Northeast Project (2002-2007). Scholars working on the Korean atlas explained to Chin that while the “Historical Atlas of China” consists of around 300 paper maps, the Korean atlas project had been constructed as an online database capable of producing an almost infinite number of maps; the basic maps they had submitted in 2015 to Northeast Asia History Foundation for interim appraisal alone numbered some 714.

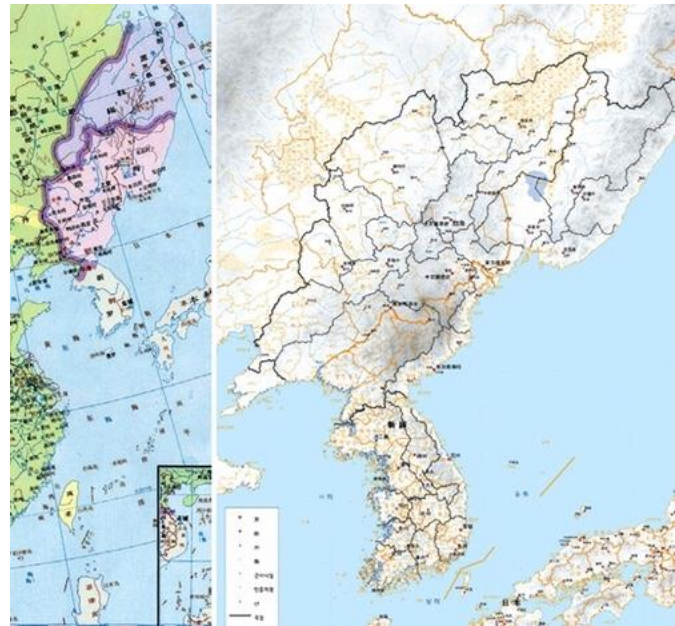


Figure 5. Detail of maps taken from Chin, with Tan Qixiang’s map on the left and the Korean atlas map on the right.

Chin highlights treatment of Parhae’s territory as an example of how the Korean maps were both reflective of current research and could be beneficial to the representation of Korean history. In contrast to the Chinese atlas that gives a limited territory for the state of Parhae, restricted to southeastern Manchuria and distinct from a separate Mohe polity to its north, the Korean atlas had been drawn to reflect more recent finds in Liaoning that have been taken to indicate Parhae’s territory to have extended further westwards (Fig.5). The Korean map also incorporates the ethnic Mohe territories as a part of Parhae. The scholars further highlighted that from an international perspective, the Korean atlas could have provided a more objective source on Northeast Asian historical geography, giving the example that, unlike the Chinese atlas, the Korean maps had marked Tibet as a historically distinct territory. For Korean historical research, meanwhile, they note the atlas had for the first time depicted the more than 4,000 administrative *myöñ* 面 subcounty level districts with their boundaries drawn according to current research.

As evidence of the sophisticated nature of the project, Chin notes a high level of interest had been shown from US cartographers, including Harvard University’s World Map project. The Korean scholars had visited Harvard and were hoping to share their database with the World Map, which at the time had 164 maps for China, twenty-six for Japan and just seven for Korea. However, during the interim appraisal in December 2015, the Northeast Asia History Foundation unexpectedly graded the Historical Atlas project a mere 14 points out of 100, resulting in its premature termination. The ostensible reason given for this inexplicably low appraisal was that the project failed to reflect “national identity” (국가 정체성) the sub-arguments being listed as follows:



- 1) Inappropriate representation of the Republic of Korea's position, size and form.
- 2) Not all place names written in hangul script.
- 3) Dokdo island not always marked.
- 4) East Sea (aka Sea of Japan) not marked.

Chin explains that owing to the nature of the database, which could produce desired information whenever relevant, such complaints were close to meaningless, and the maps submitted were in any event not final. Rather the motivation for terminating the project can be seen in points 1 and 3 which originate in the reductionist polemic of Yi Tök-il during the Special Committee hearings. Thus the charge of “inappropriate representation” of Korea's size and position refers to the refusal of professional historians to reflect the pseudohistorical notion of Korea having been an ancient empire spread across the entirety of Manchuria. Pseudohistorians in particular take issue with the locating of the Chinese Lelang commandery (108 BCE – 313 CE) at P'yöngyang, arguing it to have been outside of the peninsula, in the region of modern Liaoning. The scholars note that maps marking Lelang, in any event, represented no more than one percent of the entirety of the database.

The complaint about the apparent absence of Dokdo, meanwhile, pertained to a map of Silla's expansion in the years 551-600. Being both small and historically uninhabited, the representation of the far flung Dokdo rocks is clearly irrelevant for pre-20th century maps, however, during the Special Committee hearings, and in his 2015 book, Yi highlighted this as core evidence for his conspiracy theory of the academic establishment constituting a “pro-Japanese cartel,” as if by leaving out the Dokdo rocks, they were implying they do not belong to Korea's current day territory (Yi 2015:301).

Separate to Chin's article, Ki Kyöng-ryang argued in a blog post of 2 July that in Yi (2015) the Northeast Asia atlas maps, appear to have been Photoshopped in order to remove Dokdo which was in fact marked. This is evident both by the otherwise odd positioning of Dokdo's neighboring Ulleung-do island in the corner of a separate insert box, as well as through a clear change in colour gradient over the position where Dokdo would otherwise be located.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, an examination of the maps as reproduced in Yi (2015 – Fig.6) clearly have the Dokdo rocks visible, albeit unmarked due to their tiny scale (Fig. 7 and 8). It thus becomes clear that not only were Yi's accusations unreasonable, they were in fact fabricated.



Figure 6. Yi Tök-il 2015.



Figure 7. Yi 2015:306.

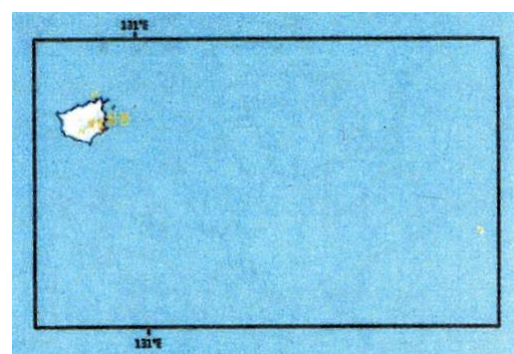


Figure 8. Yi 2015:306 Detail of Ulleung-do with the Dokdo rocks visible to scale on the right.

<sup>6</sup> Ki Kyöng-ryang 2017.6.2. “이덕일 이제는 스스로 독도를 지우기 시작했다” <https://kirang.tistory.com/792>

Chin’s second article is titled “Colluders with pseudohistory” (2017.6.26). It is noteworthy for acknowledging the role of the *Hankyoreh* newspaper and other ‘left-leaning’ media in having long provided an uncritical platform to pseudohistory. Chin writes, “In 2015, when the Special Committee hearings and Yi Tök-il together criticized the Historical Atlas project, most of the media accepted [their accusations] without verification. *Hankyoreh* and progressive media were no exception.”<sup>7</sup> He continues, highlighting that arguments utilized in the Special Committee hearings to criticize the Historical Atlas project – including Liaoxi location of Lelang, and reliability of the early *Samguk sagi* entries – can all be found in a ten-part series (in eleven parts), authored by Yi and carried in the *Hankyoreh* newspaper in 2009, titled “Yi Tök-il blasts mainstream academic history” (2009.05.13 – 2009.7.22).<sup>8</sup> Evidenced by many of the readers’ comments left below Chin’s articles, the shift by *Hankyoreh 21* to a position critical of Yi and pseudohistory has been interpreted by his followers and those on the self-identifying ethno-nationalist left, who are taken in by the polemic, as a betrayal, and will likely only have strengthened their conspiracy beliefs against the establishment.

### 5. Reclaiming the public field: *Hankyoreh 21* “Real Ancient History” Young Historians

The series authored by the Young Historians comprise seven articles that collectively represent a further refinement of topical foci and argumentation designed to debunk core tropes of pseudohistory. Each article takes a claim of pseudohistory and provides a clear refutation together with contextualization of the disputes. Although written as prose, below I summarize the claims and core refutations.

Article 1. “There are not even proponents of the Mimana Nihonfu theory in Japan” Wi Kaya (2017.7.26).<sup>9</sup>

Pseudo claims:

- Equating the Mimana Nihonfu with Kaya was a colonial era Japanese conspiracy.
- Current day establishment historians who reference *Nihon shoki* are pro-Japanese.

Refutation:

- There are no longer even Japanese scholars who support the view of Mimana having been an early Japanese organ of colonial control.
- South Korean scholars’ work on Mimana has worked to stress peninsular agency of Paekche and Kaya.
- The equation of Mimana/Imna to Kaya is independently attested in early Chinese and Korean sources and so is not a Japanese invention.

Article 2. “The political, all too political Kwanggaet’o Stele” An Chŏng-jun (2017.8.2)

Pseudo claim:

- The Sinmyo year (391) entry on the Kwanggaet’o Stele recording a Japanese Wae invasion of Paekche and Silla was falsified by Japanese military historians.

Refutation:

<sup>7</sup> “2015년 동북아특위와 이덕일 소장이 한 몸이 되어 동북아역사지도를 비판할 때 대다수 언론은 사실 확인 없이 ‘받아쓰기’만 했다. <한겨레> 등 진보언론도 예외가 아니었다.”

<sup>8</sup> “역사학계는 진보 지식인들이 유사 역사를 호의적으로 대하는 것에 진보언론의 책임도 매우 크다고 비판했다. 실제 동북아특위에서 동북아역사지도를 비판한 의원들이 주로 활용한 낙랑군 요령·하북 지배설, <삼국사기> 초기 기록 불신론 등은 이덕일 소장이 2009년 <한겨레>에 10여 차례 연재한 ‘이덕일, 주류 역사학계를 쏘다’에 나오는 내용이다. “<한겨레> <시사인> <프레시안> 등 진보를 표방하는 언론들도 예외 없이 사이버 역사학자들의 주장을 무비판적으로 수용한 기사들을 실은 바 있다.”

<sup>9</sup> Korean titles are as follows 임나일본부설 추종 학자 일본에도 없다 (Wi Kaya 2017.7.26), 정치적인, 너무나 정치적인 광개토왕비 (An Chŏng-jun 2017.8.2), 낙랑군은 평양에 있었다 (Ki Kyŏng-ryang 2017.8.8), 가짜가 내세우는 ‘가짜’ 프레임 (Ki Kyŏng-ryang 2017.8.14), 한국과 중국, ‘국뺨은 통한’ (Kang Chinwŏn 2017.8.23), 아직도 역사학계가 친일로 보이나요? (Kwŏn Sun-hong 2017.8.29), ‘민족사관’ 아니라 ‘반공-냉전사관’ 이다 (Kim Taehyŏn 2017.9.6).

- Evidence for the hypothesis that the stele text had been altered has been proven false.
- The text should be accepted as unaltered, but should be interpreted as an original exaggeration by Koguryō propagandists who wanted to exaggerate the threat of Wae in the south for dramatic effect.
- The accompanying claim that Paekche and Silla were subordinate to Koguryō is patently false.

Article 3. “Lelang commandery was located at P’yōngyang” Ki Kyōng-ryang (2017.8.8)

Pseudo claims:

- The Han Commanderies, particularly Lelang and (post-Han period) Daifang, were never located on the Korean peninsula, but rather in the region of (eastern) Hebei, or even further to the west.
- The “P’yōngyang location theory” was invented by colonial Japanese scholars.
- Anyone promoting it is therefore furthering colonial Japanese historiography.
- There is no evidence of the commanderies having been located on the peninsula.

Refutation:

- There was already a pre-20th century tradition of locating Lelang at P’yōngyang.
- Examples include both *Samguk sagi* (1145) and Chōng Yak-yong’s *Abang kang’yōkko* 我邦疆域考 (c.1813).
- Chinese sources contemporary to the period of the commandery – *Sanguozhi* 三國志 (completed 297, covering 221-280) and *Hou hanshu* 後漢書 (completed 445 CE, covering 205-220) – give the location of Lelang and Daifang relative to other Korean peninsular polities.
- In particular, the Samhan are described as south of Daifang, making it impossible for Lelang or Daifang to have been on the eastern Hebei coast.

Article 4. “A false frame established by falsehood” Ki Kyōng-ryang (2017.8.14)

Pseudo claims:

- All archaeology associated with the Lelang commandery at P’yōngyang was fabricated.
- The Old Chosŏn capital of Wanghŏm-sŏng 王險城 was located in Liaoxi (current day northeastern Hebei).

Refutation:

- There is overwhelming archaeological evidence of Lelang at P’yōngyang, including not only the results of Japanese colonial era excavations but many subsequent excavations by North Korean archaeologists.
- By contrast, there is no archaeological evidence of Wanghŏm-sŏng having been located in Hebei.
- What has been fabricated at P’yōngyang is the more recent Tan’gun tomb, “restored” 1993-4.
- North Korean authorities have been motivated by an ethnic chauvinism similar to that of South Korean pseudohistorians.

Article 5. “Korea and China share the same national self-conceits” Kang Chinwŏn (2017.8.23)

Common Chinese and Korean pseudo claim:

- The Hongshan culture of Inner Mongolia was a 5th civilization of the ancient world.

Chinese pseudo claim:

- Hongshan gave rise to northern Chinese civilization.

Korean pseudo claim:

- Hongshan is the origin of Korean Northeast Asian civilization.
- Jade ‘boar-dragon’ rings 玉豬龍 are bear designs, not boar, and are thus connected to the Hwan’ung-Tan’gun tradition.

- The ‘goddess mask’ similarly corresponds to the she-bear 熊女 of the Hwan’ung-Tan’gun foundation story.
- Stone-piled tombs are similar to Koguryō tombs.

Refutation:

- There is no evidence Hongshan was comparable to other ancient civilizations.
- Hongshan lacks evidence of: writing, urban settlements, and metallurgy.
- There is no indication of state formation processes.
- Korean attempts to link Hongshan with Tan’gun and ancient Korea are just as conceited as Chinese attempts to link it to ancient China through the Yellow Emperor myth.
- Korean claims also risk reversal by China, who through their own claim to Hongshan could argue Koguryō and Korea – as supposed descendants of Hongshan – to belong to ancient Chinese civilization.

Article 6. “Does the historical establishment still appear pro-Japanese?” Kwōn Sun-hong (2017.8.29)

Pseudo claim:

- South Korean establishment historians starting from Yi Pyōngdo (1896-1989) have continued only to pursue Japanese colonial historiography.

Refutation:

- Establishment historians have actively sought to overturn colonial historiography.
- In particular they have worked to negate Japanese ‘stagnancy’ 정태성론 and ‘heteronomy’ 타율성론 characterizations of Korean history through the ‘internal development theory’ 내재적 발전론.

Article 7. “Theirs is not a truly ethno-nationalist historiography but rather Cold War anti-Communist” Kim Taehyōn (2017.9.6)

Pseudo claim:

- Our historiography is positively ethno-nationalist 민족사학, in contrast to the pro-Japanese establishment historiography which is anti-Korean.

Refutation:

- Korean pseudohistory is not sincerely ethno-nationalist.
- The immediate predecessors of the current day generation of pseudohistorians were those of the 1970s, who were former Japanese imperialists turned pro-Park Chung Hee anti-Communists.
- Their notion of ethnic nationalism, was not that of the anti-Japanese March 1st uprising of 1919, but rather conceived itself as the antithesis to Marxist historical materialism.
- Their ethnic nationalism entirely ignored North Korea.
- *Hwandan kogi* is a fake text authored during the Park Chung Hees era.

Separate from the Young Historians’ activities, in the autumn of 2017 two new books appeared further critiquing pseudohistory, Kim Hyōn-gu’s “Colonial historiography cartel,” that focuses on Yi Tōk-il and associated networks, and Kim In-hŭi’s “Chiyou, an old disease of history,” that deconstructs pseudohistorians’ misappropriation of the Chinese mythical figure of Chiyou.

## 6. Turning the attack, restoring honor: Kim Hyōn-gu’s “Colonial historiography cartel” (2017)

Kim Hyōn-gu (b.1944) is an emeritus history professor of Koryo University who has devoted much of his career to the topic of early Korea-Japan relations. In 2010, Kim authored a popular history book summarizing his research, titled “Is the Mimana Nihonfu theory a fiction?” As seen above, the question of Mimana is one of the key components of the ‘colonial historiography’ polemic. In relation to Mimana, the oft-cited archetype of Japanese colonial interpretations is *Mimana kōbōshi* 任那興亡史 (1949 “A history of the rise and fall of Mimana”) written by Suematsu Yasukazu 末松保和 (1904-1992).

Yi (2014) asserts that any research on Mimana is tantamount to continuing colonial historiography, and that when establishment scholars work on Kaya they are secretly promoting the Mimana hypothesis. Addressed in Wi Kaya's article, these views were echoed in statements by assemblyman To Chonghwan who was a leading member of the Special Committee.<sup>10</sup>

Through wanton mischaracterization of Kim (2010), Yi (2014) accuses Kim Hyōn-gu of actively promoting the Mimana Nihonfu hypothesis and explicitly denounces him as a “national traitor” on a par to Yi Wan-yong (1858-1926), a figure known with the greatest infamy in Korea today as the minister who signed the 1910 treaty of annexation sealing Korea's temporary fate as a colony to Japan. In October 2014, Kim Hyōn-gu filed charges of defamation against Yi. Following an initial rejection the case went to trial and Yi was found guilty and sentenced to six months with a two year reprieve. However, following an appeal and problematic second trial Yi was ultimately cleared in May 2017. With legal options exhausted and Yi seemingly vindicated, Kim's “Colonial historiography cartel” (2017 – Fig.9) seeks to lay out his case for the discerning public.

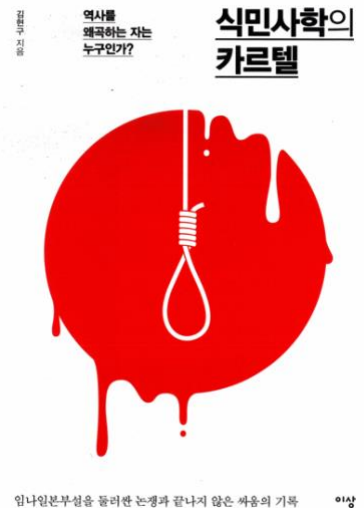


Figure 9. Kim Hyōn-gu 2017.

Kim's book consists of two main components: 1) a summary of the court cases with contextual information on Kim's research and details of the arguments put forward, and 2) a fierce counter attack against Yi Tōk-il which, in a reversal of Yi's own mantra, identifies Yi with a wider ‘cartel’ of actors promoting their conspiracy of colonial historiography. It should be noted that, until the tide of 2017 counter-critiques, when Korean scholars had previously sought to explain the fallacies and motivations of pseudohistorians they had typically characterized them, semi-apologetically, as being overly zealous Korean nationalists. This caution has likely been calculated to avoid the risk of being denounced themselves as unpatriotic or pro-Japanese. However, rather than treating Yi as a misguided patriot, Kim (2017) seeks to turn the tables, not only defending the record of Kim's own critical research on Mimana against Yi's false accusations, but explicitly accusing Yi of having in his earlier works promoted core aspects of the Mimana hypothesis himself, and thus to be guilty of the very crime with which Yi (2014) falsely accused Kim. “Colonial historiography cartel” seeks not only to clear Kim's name in the public record, but to highlight Yi's false credentials as a self-styled patriotic historian from which much of his public persona and political capital derives. This strategy is in line with the final two articles of the Young Historian's column, and is further established in the critiques of Yi Mun-yōng.

The timeline of the legal case is as follows:

2014.10	Kim files charges of defamation.
2015.4.30	Rejected on the grounds of lack of evidence.
2015.5	Kim appeals the decision and the case goes to trial.
2016.2.5	Yi found guilty and sentenced to six months with a two year reprieve.
	Yi appeals and the case goes to second trial.
2017.5.11	Yi found not guilty.

According to Kim (2017), when the case went to trial the question of whether Yi was guilty of defaming Kim's character hung on whether Yi's characterization of Kim's research was accurate. If so, then Yi's accusations of Kim being a “pro-Japanese traitor” could be accepted as Yi's patriotic opinion. If not, then it would represent defamation based on false accusations. Consequently the case revolved around three accusations made in Yi (2014) against the content of Kim (2010): 1) the Mimana Nihonfu is treated as fact, 2) Paekche is treated as a suzerain state and colony

<sup>10</sup> No Hyōng-sōk “[단독] 도종환, ‘역사관 비판’ 반박 “싸울 땐 싸우겠다”” 2017.6.6  
[http://m.hani.co.kr/arti/culture/culture\\_general/797721.html](http://m.hani.co.kr/arti/culture/culture_general/797721.html)



of Yamato Japan through which Yamato governed the south of the peninsula, and 3) Kim believes the *Nihon shoki* to be factual and fails to criticize Suematsu's Mimana Nihonfu hypothesis (Kim 2017:65).

Kim (2017) responds that, to the extent these arguments exist at all, they are based on the fact that his 2010 book cites the *Nihon shoki*, and that Yi was unable or unwilling to distinguish between the citations and Kim's accompanying critical analysis. Citing multiple supporting passages from Kim (2010) the court rejected all three of Yi's accusations as false (Kim 2017:66-74). In addition to the six month commuted sentence, Yi (2014) was banned from further publication.

Kim narrates that following the guilty verdict two articles appeared in newspapers in support of Yi. The first was part of a regular column in the *Kyōnggi ilbo* newspaper by former vice Minister of the Interior 행정자치부 부장관 (2003-2005) during the left-leaning Roh Moo-hyun administration, Hō Sōnggwan (b.1947) in which he criticizes the ROK prosecution for, in his view, prosecuting those who would criticize 'extreme right' historians. The second was by former head of policy 정책실장 to president Roh Moo Hyun, Yi Chōng-u (b.1950), appearing in the *Kyōngnyang sinmun* (2016.2.18 in Korean) under the title "Is Korea still a [Japanese] colony?" In response to these, the West Seoul court 서울서부지방법원 published the details of its verdict, which Kim reproduces (Kim 2017:77-78).

In the second trial the first verdict was overturned. According to this second verdict, although Kim (2010) does not contain passages explicitly supporting Yi's three accusations, the accusations themselves were not false statements (Kim 2017:80). Two arguments given to support this verdict are as follows: 1) although Kim argues the rulers of Mimana to have been Paekche (and not Yamato), he treats all other aspects of Suematsu's Mimana Nihonfu hypothesis, and the content of the *Nihon shoki* as fact, and 2) although on the surface, Kim appears to describe the relationship between the Paekche and Yamato courts as equal, in actuality he describes Paekche as though it were a suzerain state to Yamato (Kim 2017:118).

In response to the first point, Kim notes that, in having accepted Yi's fallacious arguments, the court had failed to understand the core problem of Suematsu's interpretation. Rather than being the question of whether Yamato had controlled the south of the peninsula – as advocated by Suematsu – they instead follow Yi in equating *any mention* of the Wae or Mimana operating on the peninsula to Suematsu, and by extension Japanese colonial interpretations (Kim 2017:124). On the second point, Kim again highlights the inability or unwillingness of the court to distinguish between citations from *Nihon shoki* and Kim's own critical analysis. Nevertheless, the concluding justification given in the verdict is that Yi's interpretation of Kim (2010) being "no different to Suematsu's Mimana Nihonfu hypothesis" represents Yi's subjective opinion of Kim's book based on his own reading, and is therefore not defamatory (Kim 2017:119).

Throughout "Colonial historiography cartel," Kim describes himself as someone who has devoted the past thirty years of his career as a professional historian working to disprove the colonial era Mimana Nihonfu hypothesis represented in the work of Suematsu. Already an emeritus professor, for Kim to end his career with his name and research having been actively besmirched by Yi Tōk-il is both personally tragic and a depressing irony. However, Kim (2017) not only details the Kafkaesque legal case, but mounts an active counter attack against Yi Tōk-il, denouncing him, not merely as a misguided Korean nationalist, but as a "historically unparalleled agent of colonial historiography" who in previous works has himself "openly marked [on maps] the [Japanese] Wae as occupying the southwest of the Korean peninsula" (Kim 2017:157).<sup>11</sup>

To support this accusation, Kim cites extensively from two of Yi's earlier works, "Riddles of Korean history 1" (1999 coauthored with Yi Hūigūn) and "700 year riddle of Koguryō" (2000). In both cases Yi argued that the Wae referred to as active on the Korean peninsula – as attested on the Kwanggaet'o Stele and in both *Nihon shoki* and *Samguk sagi* – represent an original Japanese ethnic polity which was located on the southwest of the peninsula

<sup>11</sup> "사상 유례가 없는 식민사학의 앞잡이 노릇을 하고 있고 버젓이 왜(倭)를 한반도 지도 서남부에 표기해 놓고 있는 이덕일."

before crossing to the Japanese isles and going on to establish Yamato. In particular, Yi accepts the description of the Wae as having controlled the south of the peninsula and been the dominant power over Paekche and Silla. Yi's argument precludes the Japanese colonial interpretations of the Wae invading the south of the peninsula from Japan – as the explanation is that rather the Wae came from the peninsula – but still premises the presence of the Wae as having formerly occupied the peninsula. Kim argues that this is therefore closer to Japanese interpretations, in particular Egami's horserider hypothesis, and in contrast to the Korean academic consensus which rejects the dominance of ethnic Wae over Paekche or Silla (Kim 2017:18-20). He further highlights Yi's then acceptance of the *Songshu* 宋書 (completed 478) Wae treatise which records an elaborate title bestowed on the Wae king in 438 indicating lordship over the Korean polities of Paekche, Silla, Mimana/Imna, Chinhan and Mohan (Mahan). Kim again notes that, in contrast to Yi (1999), Korean academic consensus rejects this source as ahistorical (Kim 2017:22). According to Kim, Yi (1999) further takes the keyhole-shaped tombs found around Naju in South Ch'olla province as evidence of the Japanese Wae presence. Yi (2000) repeats similar interpretations and includes a map of the peninsula, reproduced by Kim (2017:24) in which Wae is marked as a distinct polity south of Paekche.

Ironically these earlier interpretations by Yi are more reasonable than Kim is willing to allow. However, the valid argument made by Kim, is that according to Yi's recent 'colonial historiography' polemic – as adopted by both the National Assembly special committee leading to termination of the digital East Asian atlas project, and in the false characterization of Kim as a pro-Japanese historian – by accepting the *Nihon shoki* and other records without qualification and consequently reasoning the Wae to have been a dominant peninsular force over Paekche and Silla, Yi's earlier interpretations, by his own current standard, are closer to the premises of colonial era Japanese historiography than is Kim (2010).

In the two final chapters, Kim (2017) details further individuals and organizations either directly associated with Yi T'ok-il or sympathetic to his conspiracy narrative. Some of the individuals include: Ch'oe Chae-s'ok, a retired sociology professor of Koryo University who has authored several amateur works on early Korea-Japan relations (Ch'oe 1990 and 1999); Hwang Sun-jong, a civil servant who during the court case published a book repeating near verbatim written arguments that Yi had submitted to the Mapo police station in 2014 at the beginning of the case; the aforementioned assemblyman, To Chonghwan; and Seongnam city mayor Yi Chae-my'ong, who following Yi's acquittal had Tweeted a congratulatory message, "We must always uproot pro-Japanese [elements] that have infiltrated our society" (Kim 2017:156).<sup>12</sup> Organizations include: the internet group "Righteous army division for history" (역사의병대) whose website lists both Kim and Song Hoj'ong among "seven enemies of history," as well as Young Historians Sin Kay'ong and Ki Ky'ong-ryang among "the next generation of seven enemies of history"; "Headquarters of the people's movement for the dismantling of colonial historiography" 식민사학 해체 국민운동본부, who appointed Yi T'ok-il as head of their academic committee; and finally, the "Association for correct history heading to the future" 미래로 가는 바른 역사 협의회 (abbreviated to Misahy'op), an umbrella organization claiming to represent some 140 smaller groups established to support Yi T'ok-il during the defamation trial. We may note that the establishment of Misahy'op may also be seen as a reaction to the Man'in Mansaek network. Since Yi's acquittal it has become largely dormant and appears to have been superseded by the Taehan Sarang 大韓史郎 umbrella organization.

## 7. Unexpected reinforcement: Kim In-h'ui's "Chiyou, an old disease of history" (2017)

In contrast to the Young Historians and Kim Hy'on-gu, Kim In-h'ui's motivation and timing for writing a book critiquing pseudohistory appears to be coincidental to the Special Committee or immediate activities of Yi T'ok-il. Written as another popularly accessible paperback, this work nevertheless deconstructs one of the more egregious topics promoted within Korean pseudohistory, the claims that the Chinese mythological figure of Chiyou was a historical personage, and specifically, a Dongyi king of the pre-Old Chos'on period of Paedal who defeated the equally mythical Yellow Emperor of China at the battle of Zhuolu 涿鹿.

<sup>12</sup> "우리 사회 곳곳에 침투한 친일 세력들 언젠가 반드시 뿌리를 뽑아야지요. 이덕일 소장님 무죄판결 축하하고 환영합니다."

Completing her doctorate at Minzu University of China 中央民族大学, Kim In-hŭi's research and popular publishing has previously focused on the Miao people of southwestern China, and mythology associated with the pre-Qin period Dongyi of the Shandong region. Across these topics she had initially sought connections with early Korea. As expressed in the preface of Kim In-hŭi (2017 – Fig. 10), however, she began to adopt a more cautious position regarding discussions of mythology following negative reactions from domestic Korean reviewers over assertions she had made in both a popularly aimed book on Dongyi mythology (2009) as well as in an academic paper. Therein she had argued the Chiyou myth to originate with the Miao, rather than Dongyi of Shandong or, by extension, Korea.

Against the context of the history dispute with China over historiographical jurisdiction of Koguryŏ, Kim nevertheless followed up with another popularly aimed paperback problematically arguing the Miao to be descendants of Koguryŏ who supposedly dispersed to southwest China following its 668 overthrow (Kim 2010). However, she subsequently adopted a critical turn against nationalist interpretations of mythology. She recounts this occurred following the experience of an invited visit to Taiwan in 2013 to participate in a mass ceremony organized by the syncretic religion of Weixin 唯心聖教, that utilizes the idea of Chiyou as a Dongyi ancestor as a means to claim Koreans as a part of a greater pan-East Asian Chinese race. Weixin also has connections to the promotion of Chiyou in mainland China, and so Kim has been able to utilize her research background to produce a systematic critique.

Kim (2017) deconstructs the Chiyou phenomenon through explanation of the following three competing claims to Chiyou as a mythological ancestor: 1) as an ancestor to the Miao of southwestern China, 2) as a figure of northern China associated with the Yellow Emperor mythology, and 3) within Korean pseudohistory. She highlights the contradiction that both Chinese and Korean pseudohistorians argue Chiyou as a 'Dongyi ancestor,' but with competing opinions on the classification of the Dongyi as either "Chinese" or "Korean." Historically, she shows that Chiyou's association with the Dongyi of northern China occurs through his role as rival to the Yellow Emperor as described at the beginning of *Shiji*. However, while the Yellow Emperor is an invention of the Han dynasty era, the tradition of Chiyou significantly predates this, being first attested in the earlier *Shangshu* 尚書 (Book of Documents) where, Kim argues, Chiyou is associated with the Bronze Age state of Chu 楚 to the south of an emergent Zhou 周 and thence to the Miao, rather than Dongyi of northern China. Chronologically surveying sources and traditions, Kim demonstrates how the Chiyou myth has been re-purposed and relocated at least three times. In the pre-twentieth century Chiyou is a rival 'other' to ideas of Chinese identity (Zhou, Han and Song periods), while from the mid-20th century Chiyou has been utilized in the project of creating a larger multi-ethnic Chinese identity, and finally further appropriated by Korean pseudohistorians to support their claims over the Dongyi and early Chinese territory.

Kim traces current competing claims between Chinese and Korean pseudohistory to mainland China's ideological shift to ethnic-nationalism in the 1990s, stimulating the ongoing wave of Korean pseudohistory. Among the latter she includes express criticism of Yi Tŏk-il's book "Old Chosŏn were rulers of the continent" for discussing Chiyou as an object of contestation of between Korea and China (Yi and Kim 2006, Kim In-hŭi 2017:241). For all Korean pseudohistorians she highlights their reliance on apocryphal texts *Kyuwŏn sahwa* and *Hwandan kogi* (1979), that both feature Chiyou as a Korean Dongyi ancestor, however, she neglects to examine the preceding history of these modern forgeries prior to the 1990s.

Similar to the other critiques of Korean pseudohistory, and particularly analogous to claims over the Hongshan culture, Kim explains the phenomenon as a product of ethnic chauvinism, warning that the logic adopted by Korean pseudohistorians is no better than that of Chinese chauvinism against which they seek to compete. She terms the flawed methodology of both Korean and Chinese pseudohistory as *simsa* 心史 (lit. "heart/mind history"), stating,

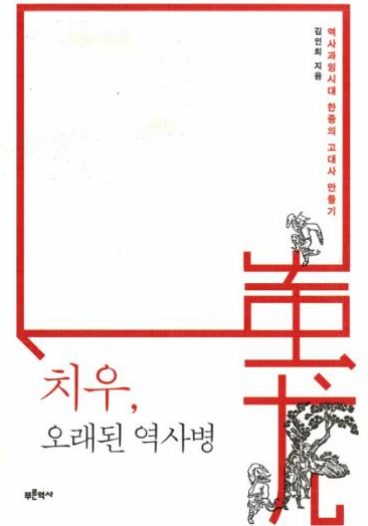


Figure 10. Kim In-hŭi 2017.

“*simsa* is not history based on concrete sources, but refers to history written in accordance with our wishes”<sup>13</sup> (Kim 2017:11). She further elaborate that the titular phrase of Kim (2017) “disease of history,” is adopted from Nietzsche’s 1874 essay, “On the Use and Abuse of History for life” in *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen* (Untimely Meditations), in which he denounces artificial exaggerations of history as harmful to life and therefore a disease (Kim 2017:279). In the concluding paragraphs, Kim ties this disease more specifically to what she terms the “neo-ethnic nationalism” 신민족주의 of mainland China rather than Korean pseudohistory, but she suggests to her readership that Koreans should also heed Nietzsche’s warning (Kim 2017:285-6).

### 8. Holding the field: Young Historians (2018) and Yi Mun-yŏng (2018)

Two further paperbacks comprise the final wave of critiques, appearing in the autumn of 2018. The first is a follow-up volume by the Young Historians, loosely based and expanding on their *Hankyoreh 21* series. The second is by Yi Mun-yŏng and represents the most definitive contextualization and deconstruction of Korean pseudohistory to date.

Titled “Beyond [chauvinist] desires of early Korean history,” Young Historians (2018 – Fig. 11) comprises the following eleven chapter titles, listed below with the authors’ updated affiliations.

- “How should we view the history of Old Chosŏn?” Ki Kyŏng-ryang (Catholic University of Korea, assistant professor)
- “Was Lelang Commandery not on the Korean peninsula?” Ki Kyŏng-ryang
- “The discovery of the Kwanggaet’o Stele and the Korea – China – Japan history dispute” An Chŏng-jun (University of Seoul, assistant professor)
- “Did Paekche really advance into Liaoxi?” Paek Kil-nam (Seoul Baekje Museum, academic researcher)
- “The story of Paekche and Wae told by the *ch’iljido* seven-pronged sword” Im Tong-min (Korea University, PhD candidate)
- “A war for survival – Silla’s unification of the Three Kingdoms” Yi Sŏng-ho (Donguk University, lecturer)
- “Were the Silla Kim clan Xiongnu descendants?” Ch’oe Kyŏng-sŏn (Yonsei University, PhD candidate)
- “The past, present and future of the Mimana Nihonfu hypothesis” Wi Kaya (Sungkyunkwan University, liberal arts researcher 학예연구사)
- “To whom does the history of Parhae belong?” Kwŏn Sun-hong (Sungkyunkwan University, doctoral student)
- “When should we view the zeniths of early states?” Kang Chin-wŏn (Gyeonggi University of Science and Technology, assistant professor)
- “Legacies of the military dictatorship(s) hidden in the *Hwandan kogi*” Kim Tae-hyŏn (Yonsei University, doctoral student)

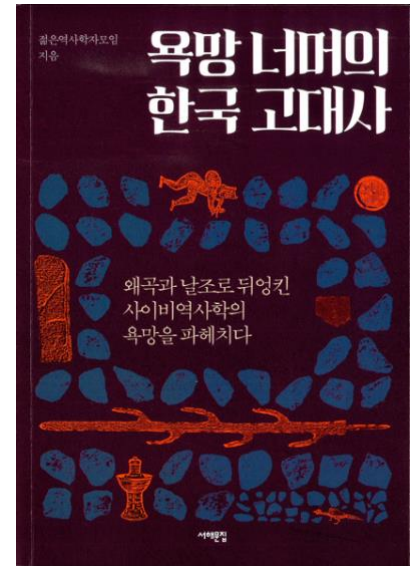


Figure 11. Young Historians 2018.

While the choice of topics continues to focus on those promoted within pseudohistory, the preface explains that Young Historians (2018) seeks to go beyond merely debunking fallacies and conceits of pseudohistory. Rather they attribute the phenomenon of belief to underlying chauvinism long inculcated within general Korean history education. On this point they allege that chauvinism has not only been a characteristic of pseudohistory, but has also influenced the academic establishment (Chŏlmŭn 2018:6). The implication is that the influence of chauvinism within the establishment explains their lack of means to counter more critically the exaggerated chauvinism of pseudohistory as the interpretative and motivational difference in positions has been limited to one of degrees rather than truly paradigmatic. In their treatment of the above topics, the current authors thus strive to transcend nationalist frames present even within mainstream academic scholarship, and focus instead on conveying critically objective state-of-the-field discussions. Kim Taehyŏn’s final chapter ties back to contextualizing contemporary Korean pseudohistory, emphasizing its immediate origins in the Park Chung Hee era – when such influential apocrypha as

<sup>13</sup> “심사는 구체적인 증거에 기반한 역사가 아니라 마음이 원하는 대로 쓴 역사를 말한다. 우리는 치우를 통해 각자 원하는 대로 쓴 심사를 보았다.”

*Hwandan kogi* were forged – and the deeper influence of Japanese pan-Asianism. This topic receives further expansive treatment in the second book of 2018, Yi Mun-yŏng’s “Critique of pseudohistory: *Hwandan kogi* and distorted early history.”

Yi Mun-yŏng (b.1965) is a unique force in critiques of Korean pseudohistory. Having majored in history at university, Yi’s principal career has been as a novelist and editor. As recounted in the preface to Yi (2018 – Fig.12), Yi had been aware of the *Hwandan kogi* from its first Korean language translations that appeared in 1986 but had found the contents obviously forged. With the spread of the internet in the early 1990s, Yi describes how he joined an early online history forum only to encounter believers in *Hwandan kogi* with whom he soon became engaged in debates and arguments. In 2004 he established his blog under the name Ch’orokpul 초록불의 잡학다식, that has since become almost wholly devoted to critiquing pseudohistory. Based on his accumulated sources and blogposts, in 2010 he published a book, “Invented Korean history,” which represents the first popularly accessible book critiquing Korean pseudohistory, though is now out of print. This had little impact on pseudohistorians, but gained him recognition among professional scholars (Yi 2018:10). From June 2016, a year ahead of the Young Historians, Yi authored a monumental sixty-part column for the *Maeil kyŏngjae* newspaper, titled “Korean history at the bottom of the water” 물밑 한국사 (2016.6.27 – 2017.8.14) that drew significant ire from pseudohistorians. His contributing *Yŏksa pip’yŏng* article meanwhile marked his first peer-reviewed publication (Yi Mun-yŏng 2017). Comprising four parts, Yi (2018) represents the distillation of his longterm critical engagement and informal but thorough research of the history of Korean pseudohistory.



Figure 12. Yi Mun-yŏng 2018.

Part 1 discusses the nature of pseudohistory and broader contextual roots of Korean pseudohistory. Of the former he highlights the phenomenon of apocryphal texts, and function of conspiracy theories. For the latter he introduces Japanese Turanism, and emphasizes the influence of Japanese colonial historiography on pseudohistorians themselves while distinguishing their motivations from early independence-activist historian, Sin Ch’aeho. Yi narrates that while Sin initially authored exaggerated nationalist history to counter Japanese imperialism, Sin himself subsequently rejected such Social Darwinist infused discourses turning instead to anarchism (Yi 2018:86-87). Part 2 comprises a detailed account of each of the major South Korean pseudohistorians active during the decades of autocratic rule, including Ch’oe Tong (1896-1973), Mun Chŏng-ch’ang (1899-1980), An Ho-sang (1902-1999), Yi Yurip (1907-1986) and Im Sŏngguk (1928-?). For each he highlights their pre-1945 careers which invariably involved close ‘collaboration’ with the Japanese empire and military. He further narrates their collective activities during the Park Chung Hee period, including their attacks on the academic establishment that initiated the ‘colonial historiography’ polemic, and lobbying the government over national textbook content.

As the representative apocrypha of Korean pseudohistory, Part 3 focuses on *Hwandan kogi* itself, first demonstrating how suspected author Yi Yurip had published variant draft extracts in magazines during the 1970s prior to publishing the completed text in 1979. Yi (2018) then systematically exposes and deconstructing the many inconsistencies found within the final text. Yi Mun-yŏng is not the first to debunk the apocryphal nature of *Hwandan kogi*. It was initially critiqued by Kyung Hee University professor, Cho In-sŏng (Cho 1988 and 2000 – the former also cited in Young Historians 2018). In addition to Yi’s own blogsite, the process of *Hwandan kogi*’s modern creation was recently demonstrated in an MA dissertation by former KBS documentary producer, Chang Yŏng-ju (Chang 2017).

Part 4, then broadens out to critically survey twenty-three further perennial topics of pseudohistory, most being interrelated either to *Hwandan kogi* or addressing facets of the ‘colonial historiography’ conspiracy theory. The short chapter titles are as follows:

1. The monster called Chiyou
  - Cites Kim In-hŭi (2017).



2. The story of the original copy of *Kyuwŏn sahwa*
  - Demonstrably forged after 1914.
3. Was Old Chosŏn established in 2333 BCE?
4. Where was Old Chosŏn located?
5. Tan'gun was also worshipped by pro-Japanese
  - The movement to restore Tan'gun's traditionally known gravesite during the 1920-30s was led by Japanese collaborators.
6. Did Hwan'guk really exist?
  - In one edition of *Samguk yusa* pseudohistorians interpret a variant character of Hwan'in 桓因 to represent a Japanese attempt to change Hwan'guk 桓國 to Hwan'in.
7. Self-serving interpretations of the Hongshan culture
8. The method by which pseudohistorians claim Confucius
  - Pseudohistory at once denigrates China yet would claim Chinese culture as Dongyi.
9. The mystery of Lelang Commandery
10. Did the Great Wall expand all the way to P'yŏngyang?
11. The historical document, *Taikang dilizhi* 太康地理志
12. Where was the 'China' mentioned in *Hunmin chŏng'ŭm*?
13. The fiction of the *karimt'o* script
14. The English literature scholar who was transformed into a pseudohistorian
  - Exposes a false attribution originating with pseudohistorian Song Hosu (b.1932) that Japanese scholar, Ueno Kagetomi 上野景福 (1910-1996), had asserted Sumerians to have migrated from the east, supporting the hypothesis of Mesopotamia being an off-shoot of Hwan'guk.
15. The strange tale of iron stakes that would sever the country's {geomantic energy} veins
  - Discusses a common conspiracy theory pertaining to the colonial era.
16. The Government General of Korea will not return
  - Discusses false attributions to former colonial Government-Generals, Abe Nobuyuki 阿部信行 (1875-1953) and Saitō Makoto 齋藤實 (1858-1936), that would support the colonial historiography polemic.
17. Did Empress Hō really come from India?
  - No, but the myth continues to be cited as history in textbooks and is supported by Hindu nationalists.
  - Introduces Yi Kwang-su's "The invented myth of Empress Hō coming from China" (2017).
18. Nonsense stories surrounding the Kwanggaet'o Stele
  - Contrary to pseudohistorians' assertions, leading colonial scholar Shiratori Kurakichi 白鳥庫吉 (1865-1942) recognized that the stele records Japanese Wae being defeated by Koguryō.
  - Cites from Yi Sŏng-si's "Invented ancient [past]" (2001).
19. Were the Three Kingdoms really in Chinese territory?
20. "Are you fighting for independence with a correct knowledge of history?"
  - A statement falsely credited to Kim Ku (1876-1949), but likely invented by Yi Yurip.
21. The truth of the Korean people having been invaded more than 900 times
  - This number was stated by Im Sŭnguk based on the unsupported assertion of former independence activist, turned journalist, Yu Pong-yŏng (1897-1985).
  - Highlights the victimization narrative.
22. The history book, *Manzhou yuanliu kao* 滿洲源流考, loved by pseudohistorians
  - *Manzhou yuanliu kao* (1777) appears to support assertions of early Korean states having had jurisdiction over Manchuria, but it was created by the Manchu Qing to legitimate their own origins.
23. The truth of Fu Sinian 傅斯年 (1896-1950) who is elevated by pseudohistorians<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> 1. 치우라는 괴물, 2. 『규원사화』 원본 이야기, 3. 고조선은 기원전 2333 년에 건국되었을까?, 4. 고조선은 어디에 있었을까?, 5. 친일파가 모신 단국도 있다, 6. 환국은 정말 있었을까?, 7. 홍산문화를 둘러싼 아전인수

- Fu Sinian’s *Yixiadongxishuo* 夷夏東西說 (1933 “Yi [from] the east, Xia [from] the west”) is regularly cited by Korean pseudohistorians as evidence that the Dongyi and Xia (taken as Chinese) were distinct races, however, Fu regarded both to be Chinese.

Returning to the preface, in addition to his personal story, Yi sets out his premise for why the motivation behind Korean pseudohistory should be regarded as a problem. Against the context of ongoing history wars with China and Japan, he notes that even some non-believers of *Hwandan kogi*, nevertheless suggest it could be a useful means for countering revisionist chauvinism of China and Japan. Yi’s response is to remind us that to promote fabrications knowingly is dangerous and no longer scholarship (Yi 2018:12). Concerning the perceived threat of Japanese and Chinese historiography, represented by right-wing textbook revisionism and the Northeast Project respectively, Yi asserts that Japanese revisionism is largely rejected by Japanese civil society, while mainland China’s Northeast Project was transparently created for domestic political concerns and has consequently been rejected by international scholarship. For Korea to respond to the Northeast Project with its own exaggerated claims to territory premised on false logic that China can easily debunk, he argues, would simply enable China’s political objectives (Yi 2018:12). Concerning an assertion often made by pseudohistorians that China initiated the Northeast Project in preparation for justifying future occupation of North Korea – thus drawing analogy in motivation to colonial Japanese historiography – Yi argues that the Korean War already demonstrates that China would interfere with Korean affairs regardless of historiographical legitimization and thus irrespective to the Northeast Project (Yi 2018:13).

Concerning terminology, Yi notes that practitioners of South Korean pseudohistory have commonly been referred to as “*chaeya* 在野 (lit. ‘in the wild’) historians,” a term that initially reflected the amateur status of pseudohistorians during the autocratic period and connoted their oppositional position to the ensconced academic establishment – the latter derogatorily referred to by pseudohistorians as “*kangdan* 講壇 (‘lecture rostrum’) historians.” Yi argues “*chaeya* historian” to be misleading as it implies them to be practicing the critical methodology of history which as pseudohistorians they do not (Yi 2018:14). As a non-professional but trained historian, Yi asserts that *chaeya* is a better description of himself. A further point, not mentioned by Yi, is that several influential pseudohistorians currently occupy history positions in Korean universities and consequently the critical definition of pseudohistory is no longer aligned with professional status.

Alluding to the activities of the Young Historians, Yi closes his preface with the following entreaty.

“This book sets out to examine in detail what pseudohistory is, by what path and to what point it has developed, and what kind of negative influence it is having on us. I hope from the bottom of my heart that this will be my last book about the problem of pseudohistory. For hereafter, it should no longer be a *chaeya* historian, but specialists, who make history their trade, who should deconstruct pseudohistory with keen[er] glistening blades” (Yi 2018:15).<sup>15</sup>

## 9. Has the tide been turned?

As surveyed above, the period between 2016-2018 has witnessed a swelling of critiques that can be hoped to have achieved a degree of critical impact on public discourse. Most importantly the series of paperback books and media

---

해석, 8. 유사역사학이 공자를 소비하는 방법, 9. 낙랑군 미스터리, 10. 만리장성은 평양까지 이어졌었나?, 11. 『태강지리지』라는 사료, 12. 훈민정음에 나오는 ‘중국’은 어디?, 13. 가림토 문자라는 허구, 14. 영문학자가 사이비 역사학자로 둔갑당하다, 15. 나라의 맥을 끊는 쇠말뚝 괴담, 16. 조선총독은 돌아오지 않는다, 17. 허왕후, 과연 인도에서 왔는가?, 18. 광개토왕비에 얽힌 영터리 이야기들, 19. 삼국은 정말 중국 땅에 있었을까?, 20. 역사는 제대로 알고 독립운동 하시나요?, 21. 여 차례 침공당했다는 한민족의 진실, 22. 유사역사학이 아끼는 『만주원류고』라는 역사책, 23. 유사역사가들이 떠받드는 부사년의 진실.

<sup>15</sup> “이 책에서는 유사역사학이 무엇인지, 어떤 길을 통해 어떤 위치에 도달했는지, 그리고 그것이 우리에게 어떤 악영향을 미치고 있는지 하나하나 따져보기로 한다. 이 작업이 유사역사학 문제에 대한 나의 마지막 책이 되기를 가슴 깊이 바란다. 이제부터는 필자 같은 ‘재야학자’가 아니라 역사학을 업으로 삼는 전문가들이 서슬 푸른 칼날로 유사역사학을 해부해야 하니까.”

engagement has fulfilled the immediate imperative to provide stylistically accessible materials to a wider readership and audience. These critiques effectively serve the following functions: 1) to debunk assertions of Korean pseudohistory, 2) to expose the conspiracy theory aspect of the ‘colonial historiography’ polemic, and 3) to contextualize the modern origins of the phenomenon, highlighting its interconnection with the pre-1945 Japanese ideology of pan-Asianism and thus stripping it of self-proclaimed Korean nationalist cachet. Although either Young Historians (2018) or Yi (2018) alone would be sufficient to inform a discerning reader, in the battleground that is the early history shelves of bookstores, these books still remain outnumbered even by variant editions of *Hwandan kogi*, to say nothing of the continuous flow of newly published books promoting pseudohistory that dominate the display tables.

Following Yi Tök-il’s acquittal in the defamation case brought by Kim Hyön-gu, the temporally banned Yi (2014) was republished in 2018. In the central Gwanghwamun branch of Kyobo bookstore, it remained on prominent display throughout 2019. Meanwhile, Yi Tök-il’s latest book to touch on early history, “Yi Tök-il’s history of Korea,” released December 2019, advertises on its front cover the fallacious claim of “restoring a seven thousand year history,” a figure that reaches back to the neolithic, and supported within through discussion of the Hongshan culture. On the authenticity of *Kyuwŏn sahwa* and *Hwandan kogi*, meanwhile, Yi (2019) contains the following pronouncement.

“Because these books only came to light more recently, it is desirable for there to be concrete research and debate about their content, however, it is neither rational nor a scholarly attitude to reject the entirety [of their contents] as apocryphal based [only] on one or two minor problems. The most important reason that establishment historians unconditionally [label them] as apocrypha is none other than due to the system of their own historical understanding which is inherited from colonial historiography. That North Korean scholars cite these books as authentic histories is similarly an expression of their self-confidence [knowing] they had entirely overcome the distortions of early history of Japanese colonial historiography already in the early 1960s.” (Yi 2019:45)<sup>16</sup>

Feigning critical caution, this passage is at once enabling to believers while being solely premised on the ‘colonial historiography’ polemic. Yi’s mention of the 1960s alludes to Ri (1963), which has recently been published in South Korea with an introduction by Yi (Ri 2018:6-25).

Critiques of pseudohistory have limited to no effect on true believers, or those such as Yi Tök-il and other marginalized scholars who have little to gain – financially or politically – by abandoning their fantasy of ancient empire and flawed argumentation. Due to the difficulty of changing people’s mind, Yi Mun-yŏng thus expresses the opinion that it is more important to focus on stopping anymore people from falling into the “swamp that is *Hwandan kogi*” than to convert such certified believers (Yi 2018:8).

On this front there is cause for cautious optimism. Yi Tök-il and the majority of pseudohistory promoters, including politicians who led the Special Committee hearings, are of a similar age cohort, having been born in the early-to-mid 1960s. This generation spent their formative years during the very period identified in the current critiques as having seen the maturation of Korean pseudohistory coupled with a strict educational regime focused on instilling anti-Communism and South Korea-focused ethno-national patriotism. As this cohort entered university and participated in democracy protests of the 1980s, this South Korean chauvinism was most vocally challenged only by a broader pan-peninsular ethnic nationalism – the *minjung* people’s movement – born of contingent resistance to the South Korean autocratic regimes, and coinciding with the popular spread of ancient pseudohistory stimulated

---

<sup>16</sup> “이 책들은 후대에 모습을 드러냈으므로 그 내용에 대해서 구체적 연구와 토론이 이루어지는 것은 바람직하지만 한두 가지 지엽적 문제를 가지고 전체를 위서라고 배척하는 것은 합리적인 학문태도가 아니다. 강단사학에서 이 책들을 무조건 위서라고 모는 가장 중요한 이유는 일제 식민사학을 계승한 자신들의 역사인식 체계와는 다르기 때문이다. 북한 역사학계가 이 책들을 진서로 인용하는 것은 마찬가지로 1960년대 초반에 이미 일제 식민사학이 왜곡한 고대사관을 모두 극복했다는 자신감의 발로인 것이다.”

by the publications of *Hwandan kogi*. Thus both ideational leanings of the South Korean political spectrum have enabled chauvinism which is why Korean pseudohistory continues to enjoy bipartisan political support. This generation is now at the height of their political influence, however, its ideational influence is already weakening among younger generations. Although subsequent generations have continued to experience nationalist education that works to instil shame and anger regarding the colonial period and recent history dispute with Beijing, compared to the 1960s' generation, they are positively exposed to many more competing narratives and multiple sources of information. And although a younger protégé of Yi Tök-il could well emerge, any such person will have to work twice as hard to ensnare a less indoctrinated audience and simultaneously contend with the vigour of the Young Historians, who show no sign of withdrawing from public engagement.

One area that currently remains relatively neglected by the above critiques of pseudohistory, however, is the connection between pseudohistory and present day new religions, in particular the Sangsaeng media organization, belonging to the millenarian religion of Chŭngsando (est.1974), that publishes the most prominent editions of *Hwandan kogi* found in bookstores (An 2012). We can only hope that if the current critiques are effective in exposing the pseudoscientific nature of Korean pseudohistory, and to echo Song Hojŏng's entreaty to deny pseudohistorians a space to stand, further publications will increasingly be relocated to the religion and fiction sections of bookstores rather than the history section.

## References

- An Chŏng-jun 안정준. 2016. "On'ŭllal ũ nang'nanngun yŏn'gu" 오늘날의 낙랑군 연구 [Current day research on the Lelang Commandery]. *Yŏksa pip'yŏng* 역사비평 114:262-284.
- An Kyŏng-jŏn (annotator) 안경전 (역주). 2012. *Hwandan kogi (pogŭp p'an)* 환단고기 (보급판) [Old records of the Hwan and Tan states (popular distribution edition)]. Daejeon-si: Sangsaeng ch'ulp'an 상생출판.
- Chang Mi-ae 장미애. 2016. "Minjok ũ kugsa kyokwasŏ, kŭ an e tam'gin hŏsang" 민족의 국사 교과서, 그 안에 담긴 허상: 4.5 차 교육과정기 고등학교 국사 교과서를 중심으로 [False imaginings within ethnonational[ist] history textbooks: focusing on highschool textbooks of the 4th and 5th national curriculum periods]. *Yŏksa pip'yŏng* 역사비평 117:252-278.
- Chang Yŏng-ju 장영주. 2017. "Hwandan kogi sŏngnip kwajŏng" 환단고기 성립과정: 내용 변화를 중심으로 [The process of *Hwandan kogi*'s creation: focusing on changes to the content]. (MA dissertation) Inha University.
- Chin Myŏngsŏn 진명선. 2017.06.19. "Kwŏllyŏk kwa saibi yŏksa ka ssŭn kodaesa ch'imt'alsa" 권력과 사이버 역사가 쓴 '고대사 침탈사' [A history of the plundering of ancient history written by political powers and pseudohistory]. *Han'gyŏre 21* 한겨레 21 (online). [http://h21.hani.co.kr/arti/cover/cover\\_general/43709.html](http://h21.hani.co.kr/arti/cover/cover_general/43709.html)
- : 2017.06.26. "Yusayŏksa ũ kongmojadŭl" 유사역사의 공모자들 [Colluders with pseudohistory]. *Han'gyŏre 21* 한겨레 21 (online). [http://h21.hani.co.kr/arti/society/society\\_general/43767.html](http://h21.hani.co.kr/arti/society/society_general/43767.html)
- Cho In-sŏng 조인성. 1988. "Kyuwŏn sahwa wa hwandan kogi" 규원사화와 환단고기. In *Han'guksa simin kangjwa* 한국사시민강좌 2.
- : 2017. "Kodaesa p'adong kwa singminjuŭi sahak ũ mangnyŏng" '고대사파동'과 식민주의 사학의 망령 [The crisis in the study of early history and the specter of colonial historiography]. *Yŏksa pip'yŏng* 역사비평 118:10-39.
- Chŏlmŭn yŏksa hakcha moim 젊은역사학자모임 [Young historians' collective]. 2017. *Han'guk kodaesa wa saibiyŏksahak* [Early Korean history and pseudo historiography]. Goyang: Yŏksa pip'yŏngsa 역사비평사.
- : 2018. *Yongmang nŏmŏ han'guk kodaesa* [Beyond [chauvinist] desires of early Korean history]. Paju: Sŏhaemunjip 서해문집.
- Ch'oe Chaesŏk 최在錫. 1990. *Paekche ũ taehwa wa ilbonhwa kwajŏng* 百濟의 大和와 日本化過程 [Paekche's Yamato and the process of Japanicization]. Seoul: Ilchisa 一志社.
- Ch'oe Chaesŏk 최在錫. 1999. *Kodae han'guk kwa ilbon yŏldo* 古代韓國과 日本列島 [Early Korea and the Japanese archipelago]. Seoul: Ilchisa 一志社.
- Fritze, Ronald H. 2009. *Invented Knowledge: False History, Fake Science and Pseudo-Religions*. London: Reaktion Books.

- Kang Chinwŏn 강진원. 2016. “Singminjuŭi yŏksahak kwa uri an ŭi t’ayulsŏngnon” 식민주의 역사학과 ‘우리’ 안의 타율성론 [Colonialist historiography and the heteronomy within ‘us’]. *Yŏksa pip’yŏng* 역사비평 115:212-231.
- Kang Hŭi-ch’ŏl 강희철. 2016.3.24. “Yi tŏg’il chungsim sanggosa yŏkp’ung e tŭriun chŏngch’ijŏk wihŏmsŏng” 이덕일 중심 ‘상고사 열풍’에 드리운 정치적 위험성 [The political danger tied to the ‘early history craze’ centered on Yi Tŏk-il]. *Han’gyŏre* 한겨레 (online).  
http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/culture/book/736780.html
- Kang In-uk 강인욱. 2017. “Pellesŭsŏ ro pon rŏsia ŭi wisŏ wa 21 segi yurasia yŏksa punjaeng” ‘벨레스서’로 본 러시아의 위서와 21세기 유라시아 역사분쟁 [Book of Veles as Russian literary forgery and 21st century history disputes of Eurasia]. *Yŏksa pip’yŏng* 역사비평 118:74-97.
- Ki Kyŏng-ryang 기경량. 2016. “Saibi yŏksahak kwa yŏksa p’asijŭm” 사이비 역사학과 역사 파시즘 [Pseudohistory and history fascism]. *Yŏksa pip’yŏng* 역사비평 114:218-237.
- Kim Hyŏn-gu 김현구. 2010. *Imna ilbonbu sŏl ūn hŏgu in’ga* 임나일본부설은 허구인가: 한일분쟁의 영원한 불씨를 넘어서 [Is the Mimana Nihonfu hypothesis a fiction: transcending the eternal cause of Korea-Japan disputes]. Paju: Ch’angbi 창비.
- : 2017. *Singminsahak ŭi k’arŭt’el* 식민사학의 카르텔 [Colonial historiography cartel]. Seoul: Isang midiŏ.
- Kim In-hŭi 김인희. 2009. *Sohossi iyagi* 소호씨 이야기: 산둥 다윈커우 동이족의 탐색과 발견 [The story of Shaohao: search and discovery of the Shandong Dawenkou {material culture} of the Dongyi nation]. Paju: Mulle 물레.
- : 2010. *1,300 nyŏn tiasŭp’ora, koguryŏ yumin* 1,300년 디아스포라, 고구려 유민 [Koguryŏ refugees, the 1,300 year diaspora]. Seoul: P’urŭn yŏksa 푸른역사.
- : 2017. *Ch’iu, orae toen yŏksabyŏng* 치우, 오래된 역사병 [Chiyou, an old disease of history]. Seoul: P’urŭn yŏksa.
- Kim Si-dŏk 김시덕 2017. “Wisŏ pip’an esŏ wisŏ yŏn’gu ro” 위서 비판에서 위서 연구로: 일본 위서의 검토 및 한국 위서와의 비교 [From criticism of false texts to research of false texts: comparison of Japanese and Korean false texts]. *Yŏksa pip’yŏng* 역사비평 118:98-123.
- Kwŏn Sun-hong 권순홍. 2016. “Minjokchuŭi yŏksahak ŭi p’yosang, sin ch’aeho tasi saenggak hagi” 민족주의 역사학의 표상, 신채호 다시 생각하기 [Symbol of ethnonationalist historiography – reconsidering Sin Ch’aeho]. *Yŏksa pip’yŏng* 역사비평 117:196-223.
- Logie, Andrew. 2019. “Diagnosing and Debunking Korean Pseudohistory.” *European Journal of Korean Studies* 18(2):37-80.
- Pak Chihyŏn 박지현 2017. “Wisŏ rŭl mal hada” 위서(偽書)를 말하다 [On apocryphal texts]. *Yŏksa pip’yŏng* 역사비평 118:124-140.
- Ri Chi-rin. 1963. *Kojosŏn yŏn’gu* [Research on ancient Chosŏn]. Pyongyang: Kwahak’wŏn ch’ulp’ansa.
- : 2018 [1963]. *Ri chirin ŭi kojosŏn yŏn’gu: taeryuk kojosŏn ūl ch’ajasŏ* [Ri Chirin’s Research on ancient Chosŏn: in search of continental Old Chosŏn]. Seoul: P’ip’ŭllain.
- Sim Chae-hun 심재훈. 2016a. “Kumi ŭi han’guk sanggosa yŏn’gu wa habŏdŭ kodae han’guk p’ŭrojekt’ŭ” 구미의 한국 상고사 연구와 하버드 ‘고대한국 프로젝트’ [North American research on early Korean history and the Harvard Early Korean Project]. *Sahakjŭ* 사학지 52(6):83-107.
- : 2016b. *Kodae chungguk e ppajyŏ han’guksa rŭl paraboda* 고대 중국에 빠져 한국사를 바라보다 [Immersed in early China, examining Korean history]. Seoul: Purŭn yŏksa 푸른역사.
- Sin Kayŏng 신가영 2016. “Imna ilbonbu yŏn’gu wa singminjuŭi yŏksa’gwan” ‘임나일본부’ 연구와 식민주의 역사관 [Research on the Mimana Nihonfu and colonialist historiography]. *Yŏksa pip’yŏng* 역사비평 115:232-251.
- Song Hojŏng 송호정. 2004. *Tan’gun, mandŭr’ŏjin sinhwa* 단군, 만들어진 신화 [Tan’gun, the invented myth]. Seoul: Sanch’ŏrŏm 산처럼.
- : (Song Ho Jung) 2013. “Old Chosŏn — Its History and Archaeology.” In *The Han Commanderies in Early Korean History*, edited by Mark E. Byington, 49-80. Cambridge (MA): Korea Institute, Harvard University.
- Wi Kaya 위가야. 2016. “Hansagun hanbandosŏl ūn singminsahak ŭi sanmul in’ga” ‘한사군 한반도설’은 식민사학의 산물인가 [Is the theory of the Han Commanderies’ location on the Korean peninsula a product of colonial era historiography]. *Yŏksa pip’yŏng* 역사비평 114:238-261.



- Yi Chǒng-pin 이정빈 2016. “Hansagun kwayōn nanha yuyōk e issōssūlkka” 한사군, 과연 난하 유역에 있었을까? [Could the Han Commanderies have been located in the Luan river basin, after all?]. *Yōksa pip'yōng* 역사비평 115:252-274.
- Yi Kwang-su 이광수. 2017. *Indo esō on hōhwanghu, kǔ mandūr'ōjin sinhwa* 인도에서 온 허왕후, 그 만들어진 신화 [The invented myth of Empress Hō who came from India]. Seoul: P'urūn yōksa 푸른역사.
- Yi Mun-yōng 이문영. *Mandūr'ōjin han'guksa* 만들어진 한국사 [Invented Korean history]. Seoul: P'aranmidiō 파란미디어.
- : 2017. “Hwandan kogi ūi sōngnip paegyōng kwa kiwōn” 『환단고기』의 성립 배경과 기원 [Background and origins to the construction of *Hwandan kogi*]. *Yōksa pip'yōng* 역사비평 118:40-73.
- : 2018. *Yusayōksahak pip'an: hwandan kogi wa ilgūrōjin kodaesa* 유사역사학 비판: 『환단고기』와 길그러진 고대사 [Critique of pseudohistory: *Hwandan kogi* and distorted early history]. Goyang: Yōksa pip'yōngsa.
- Yi Sōng-si 이성시. 2001. *Mandūr'ōjin koda* 만들어진 고대: 근대 국민 국가의 동아시아 이야기 [Invented ancient [past]]. Sam'in 삼인.
- Yi Sūng-ho 이승호. 2016. “Tan'gun yōksa wa sinhwa, kūrigo minjok” 단군: 역사와 신화, 그리고 민족 [Tan'gun: history, myth, and the ethnic nation]. *Yōksa pip'yōng* 역사비평 117:224-251.
- Yi Tōk-il 이덕일. 2000. *Koguryō 700 nyōn ūi susu'kke'kki* 고구려 700 년의 수수께끼 [700 year riddle of Koguryō]. Seoul: Taesan ch'ulp'ansa 대산출판사.
- : 2014. *Uri an ūi singminsagwan* 우리 안의 식민사관: 해방되지 못한 역사, 그들은 어떻게 우리를 지배했는가 [The colonial view of history within us: unliberated history, how have they controlled us?]. Seoul: Man'gwōndang 만권당.
- : 2015. *Maeguk ūi yōksahak, ōdi kkaji wanna* 매국의 역사학, 어디까지 왔나 [Treasonous historiography, how far has it come?]. Seoul: Man'gwōndang.
- : 2019. *Tasi ch'annūn ch'ilch'ōn nyōn uri yōksa i tōk-il han'guk t'ongsa* 다시 찾는 7,000 년 우리 역사 이덕일의 한국 통사 [In search of our 7,000 year history: Yi Tōk-il's history of Korea]. Paju: Tasan püksū 다산북스.
- Yi Tōk-il and Kim Pyōnggi 김병기. 2006. *Kojosōn ūn taeryuk ūi chibaeja yōtta* 고조선은 대륙의 지배자였다 [Old Chosōn were rulers of the continent]. Seoul: Wijūdōmhausū 위즈덤하우스.
- Yi Tōk-il and Yi Hūigūn 이희근. 1999. *Uri yōksa ūi susu'kke'kki 1* 우리 역사의 수수께끼 1 [Riddles of Korean history 1]. Seoul: Kim'yōngsa 김영사.