

# Characteristics of Origination and Development of Korean Literature in Enlightenment

**Kim, Chol Min & Kim, Myong**

Department of Korean Literature of Korean Language and Literature Faculty

Kim Il Sung University, Democratic People's Republic of Korea

Email: ciocl@ryongnamsan.edu.kp

**Ho, Chon**

Department of English Language and Literature of Foreign Languages and Literature Faculty

Kim Il Sung University, Democratic People's Republic of Korea

**Abstract** This essay studies Korean literature produced in the era of Enlightenment in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries in Korea and looks at the characteristics of the origination and development in comparison of chiefly the British literature in the Age of Enlightenment. It studies the ideas that permeated the whole of the society in the second half of the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, and ascertains that the literature at the time constitutes a new flow with its new ideas and modern styles quite distinctive from the outdated in the past. The origination and development of the literature produced during in the era of Enlightenment in Korea turned out to be somewhat different from its counterparts in Europe in the light of the specific socio-historical circumstances, creators' makeup and their outlooks on world, though they were based on the science and reason as well as their confidence in the intellectual power, to say nothing but the patriotic mind, which resulted in the Kapsin Coup D'etat and the following struggles against foreign forces occupying Korea at that time.

**Keywords** Korean literature; literary history; Enlightenment; characteristics; thematic ideas

**Authors** **Kim, Chol Min** is a researcher at the Department of Korean Literature of Korean Language and Literature Faculty, Kim Il Sung University, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. His main research area is Korean literature and Asian literary contacts. **Kim, Myong** is a researcher at the Department of Korean Literature of Korean Language and Literature Faculty, Kim Il Sung University, the

Democratic People's Republic of Korea. His main research area is Korean literature and Asian literary contacts. **Ho, Chon**, is Lecturer at the Department of English Language and Literature of Foreign Languages and Literature Faculty, Kim Il Sung University, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. His main research area is British literature and other European literary contacts.

## Introduction

Korean literature in the era of Enlightenment in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries is identified with in comparison with others on the account of origination and development. There are many careful and sincere attempts to see what the essence of the literature produced at the time is. Korean literature of the era of Enlightenment achieved success and some valuable experiences in creation and turned out to be a separate literary flow with its authentic way of interpretation of reality.

Literary legacies of the world reflect a variety of national life and movements of different countries at different times of historical periods and show creative wits and wisdom, genius and valuable experiences and lessons that had historically been accomplished.

The literary history says Enlightenment took important position along with humanism, classicism, sentimentalism, romanticism, critical realism, and the like. It played an important role not only for the literary development but also for the social advancement in modern history, bringing great changes to the society; "The thinkers of the Enlightenment said that religious beliefs should not be accepted without questioning, and their ideas helped to influence the political revolutions in France and in [...]" (Addison 432).

Enlightenment was an intellectual and scientific movement which had to do with religious, social, political and economic issues, and helped develop towards modern civilization as was defined in: "An intellectual and scientific movement of eighteenth century Europe which was characterized by a rational and scientific approach to religious, social, political, and economic issues" (Dictionary.com. *Age*).

There were many who were engaged in writings of different sorts in Enlightenment as in: "The Enlightenment produced numerous books, essays, inventions, scientific discoveries, laws, wars and revolutions" (History.com *Enlightenment*), and out of them came literary works--say, novels and plays etc., constituting a new flow of literature which was conveying the enlighteners' thoughts chiefly in an artistic presentation.

The study of literary successes and valuable experiences of the past help people to have better understanding of their national culture, thereby bringing about high spirit of national pride and self-esteem. It also adds to the abundance of the treasure house of world literature. Researches made into the achievement of the literature in Korea have a universal significance; they give a wide and rich knowledge of literary development not only to the men of letters but also people of good-natured mind all over the world, because the knowledge of Korea's history and culture, high spirit of national dignity and patriotism, the noble emotions and wisdom, the beautiful customs and folklore helps develop friendship and neighborly relations among different nations and countries over the world.

Anyhow, their contributions to the literature and history diversifies: "There was no single, unified Enlightenment. Instead, it is possible to speak of the French Enlightenment, the Scottish Enlightenment and the English, German, Swiss, or American Enlightenment" (History.com *Enlightenment*). And "There is little sense on the precise beginning of the Age of Enlightenment" (Wikipedia, *Age*).

The literature produced in Enlightenment in Korea has characteristics on the account of its growth and development; chiefly due to the socio-historical conditions of its origination and development, to say nothing of the literary foundations traditionally laid down as well as the creators' makeup, which equally resulted in different contribution to the literature and the socio- historical development, thus being quite characteristic when it is put in comparison with the Enlightenment literature in Europe as in "Enlightenment, a European intellectual movement of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in which ideas concerning God, reason, nature, and humanity were synthesized into a worldview that gained wide assent in the West and that instigated revolutionary development in art, philosophy, and politics" (Duignan, *Enlightenment*).

Of course there were some similarities; "Enlightenment thinkers were typically humanists who supported equality and human dignity. They stood opposed (in varying degrees) to supernatural occurrences, superstition, intolerance, and bigotry" (Sullivan, *What*).

Enlightenment thinkers during the Age of Enlightenment in Korea made great efforts to advance and civilize the country from the aged backwardness as said above in spite of great difficulties, and the literature produced during the Enlightenment era contributed to enhancement of human dignity, opposing supernatural occurrences, superstition, intolerance, and bigotry of the past days.

Korean literature which came out at the late nineteenth century was permeated chiefly with the Kaehwa idea (an idea of modern advancement and civilization).

Overcoming difficult conditions under difficult circumstances, these days writers had in common the anti-feudal, and anti-aggressive, patriotic ideas, which got into a solid foundation of ideological contents of the literature prevailing at that time.

Writers at that time tried to get themselves free from the outdated and corrupt manners and customs, and conventions of the feudal days, creating characters more vivid and individual than they had ever been in the past, and discarded the outdated way of description.

The same facts could be picked up from European Enlightenment as in “The Enlightenment was both a movement and a state of mind. The term represents a phase in the intellectual history of Europe, but it also serves to define programs of reform in which influential literati, inspired by a common faith in the possibility of better world, outlined specific targets for criticism and proposals for action” (Luebering 101).

Enlightenment in literature in Europe is a part of the ideological and cultural movement to replace feudal society with the capitalist one. “Enlightenment thinkers in France and throughout Europe questioned traditional authority and embraced the notion that humanity could be improved through rational change” (History.com, *Enlightenment*). However, it was impossible for Korea to improve humanity through rational change because Korea was ruthlessly trampled down of its independence by foreign forces in comparison with the Enlightenment in Europe.

“Central to Enlightenment thought were the use and celebration of reason, the power by which humans understand the universe and improve their own condition. The goals of rational humanity were considered to be knowledge, freedom and happiness” (Duignan, *Enlightenment*). Korean people, then, suffered wretched existence under the domination of foreign forces, namely the Japanese occupation.

Every effort made by Korean to get knowledge, freedom and happiness by the use of reason was blocked and ruthlessly suppressed by the foreign invaders. So the specific targets for criticism and proposals for action were all primarily concerned with the sovereign independence of the nation plundered by the Japanese imperialists, and the struggle to get back national dignity. And this idea gathered strength with those works by the anti-Japanese, patriotic righteous volunteers, which had put primary attention to awakening people to the anti-Japanese, patriotic ideas and independent spirit of the nation.

All these slowly but definitely proceeded towards a new phase of literature, Enlightenment, which was appreciating the strong spirit of the country’s sovereign independence and the aspiration of advancing towards modern civilization out of medieval backwardness. This could be seen in thematic and ideological content of

the works. And characters often came from patriotic people who stood up in the struggle to drive out foreign aggressors. It is remarkable that a variety of devices of interpretation of reality were used to picture life, customs and folklore. And character-portrayals were depicted in depth of details true to life, hence quite realistic.

Approaches to Enlightenment literature are different, too, in different regions and countries. Some men of letters in certain regions and countries put primary attention to the authors and individual works, while some to the creative method and forms and genres and so on.

There were many approaches to the literature produced in the era of Enlightenment in Korea and they are discussed and analyzed in many articles and essays.

A trend of art and literature is a flow of art and literature modified by the same ideological and aesthetic characteristics at a certain period of historical time. When the works of creative workers in one or some counties carry similar features because of their similar ideological attitude towards man and life, social ideals, aesthetic views and artistic taste as well, they take the same tendency, and this tendency finally forms a literary trend and covers a wider scope of people with the same thoughts and artistic descriptions.

Enlightenment in European literature came out as a part of ideological and cultural movement carried out by the bourgeoisie in their effort to replace the outdated feudal society with the capitalist one in the eighteenth century. "The eighteenth century marked the beginning of an intellectual movement in Europe, known as the Enlightenment, which was, on the whole, an expression of struggle of the bourgeoisie against feudalism. The enlighteners fought against class inequality, stagnation, prejudices and other survival of feudalism. They attempted to place all branches of science at the service of mankind by connecting them with the actual needs and requirements of people" (Liu 126-127).

The enlighteners appreciated man and his life free from the fetters of feudal status system and religious ignorance against feudal system, and showed their aspiration for the new society where the ideals of Enlightenment would be brought into reality. They rejected fixed unities of classic conventions and established realistic principles of representation of reality. Enlightenment in European literature had great impact upon the development of progressive literature with its strong attitude of criticism against feudal society, and upon the realistic descriptions as in "In the age of Enlightenment, no authorities, political or religious or otherwise, were accepted unchallenged, while almost all the old social and governmental forms

and almost all the traditional concepts were placed under ruthless examination and criticism and acknowledged to be unreasonable and discarded” (Chen 5).

As the result of Enlightenment there was a great change brought about; “European politics, philosophy, science and communications were radically reoriented during the course of the ‘long eighteenth century’ ‘1685-1815’ as part of a movement referred to by its participants as the Age of Reason, or simply the Enlightenment” (History.com, *Enlightenment*).

Enlightenment in Eastern literature shares common features with those of European Enlightenment as long as it enlightened people in the aspiration for modern social progress out of illiteracy, ignorance, outdated customs of life, and medieval feelings with the help of science and reason. Enlightenment in Eastern literature, however, bore differences from its counterpart of Europe in so far as they linked with anti-aggressive, patriotic struggles for the nation and country against foreign invasions and subordination, to say nothing of the aspirations for modern civilization.

Approaches to literature might be subdivided into three different categories: a) study of literary history which traces back the literary development from the present writings to the origination and the laws governing the development in the progress: b) study of writers with their creative activities and techniques, unique and authentic: c) study of literary tendencies with the ideological and artistic characteristics, social significance and position, and its representative works.

Every methodology has its strength and weakness and none of them has a supremacy over the others. Therefore the choice of methodology to Enlightenment literature depends on the purpose of the intended study to come. This essay takes a historical approach to Enlightenment in literature.

### **Korean Literature Produced in the Era of Enlightenment in Korea: Its Characteristics**

Studies of Enlightenment in DPR Korea in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the twentieth century are reflected in the following books. One of the researchers made study of those novels which were produced, embodying Enlightenment, in the period of the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the nineteenth century to the early twentieth century (“Enlightenment Era”) dealing with their origination, development of Sinsosol (novel of a new-type), characteristics, representatives with their writers of the time (Un Jong Sop, *Study*). A second one conducted research into some literary forms of Enlightenment of modern Korea with the tendency of strong anti-Japanese, patriotic feelings (Ri Kyu Chan, *Study*), while a third one examined the growth and development of progressive poetry including Changga (song of a new-type in modern style voguish

at the turn of the nineteenth century with deep note of anti-Japanese, patriotic feelings and aspiration for independence) at the time of Enlightenment era in Korea (Ri Jang Song, *Study*). And a fourth one included study of Enlightenment literature while making research into the origination and development of Sinkuk (drama of a new-type) in the era of Enlightenment (Rim Tuk Gil, *Study*).

These studies have to do with the successes and experiences gained with the development of Enlightenment literature in all-out way in Korea. And Enlightenment literature was here approached chiefly by literary forms and genres like poetry, novel and drama.

This essay entitled *The Characteristics of Origination and Development of Korean Literature in Enlightenment* proves the existence of Enlightenment as a literary trend in Korea as well as the ideological and aesthetic achievements gained by the enlighteners, the characteristics and historical stages of development of Enlightenment in Korea, which intends to excavate more of its successes both in ideas and arts so that the literature produced in Enlightenment era in Korea adds to the development of world progressive literature, constituting part of valuable treasure of world literature abreast with other Enlightenments.

Art and literature is a production of history and social system in a certain period of times so this essay takes a history-based study in which the chief objects of study are a) ideological and aesthetic principle of Enlightenment as its basis and the social circumstance at the turn of the nineteenth century, the growth of creative descriptions into a trend and subdivisions of the development, b) major themes and ideas, and representative writers with their masterpiece, c) the characteristics of the artistic interpretation.

Generally speaking, Enlightenment in literature regards it as beautiful to remove outdated conventional and obsolete things of old society in pursuit of the civilized and modern development, and to present reality into literary works as it is, rather than through visions and dreams, so that people would take them to their own feelings and sentiments.

Enlightenment in Europe turned out to be anti-feudal and anti-Catholic in the viewpoint toward the world in the eighteenth century, for instance in England, France and Germany, and in Russia some time later in the nineteenth century as in "The Age of Reason, or the Enlightenment, occurred in the eighteenth century in Europe and North America" (Pen and the Pad, *Types*).

Enlightenment literature in France prepared the mind of people for the coming bourgeois revolution, who were unaware of their wretched living and social situations due to the influence of outdated feudalism, social status system

and ignorance over many centuries. However, in England where the bourgeois revolution already took place, Enlightenment attacked upon the feudal remnants left out by the incompletely-carried-out bourgeois revolution and the social evils newly-emerging out of the capitalist society as in “So the English Enlighteners, different from their French counterparts of the eighteenth century, did not call for the launching of a revolution but urged the carrying-on of the revolution to the finish” (Chen 5).

The enlighteners offered “Reason” as the absolute criteria with which they examined all sorts of social phenomena. They “birthed a new reverence for reason and scientific knowledge [...] rather than religion [...] as a means of [...]. Because the Age of Reason held logic and rationality in such [...]” (Pen and the Pad, *Types*), and idealized “the man in nature” and his life, attacking the feudal society and social evils, following their ideals.

Enlightenment in Korean literature was built on the ideological basis of the Kaehwa idea. This came out into being in the 1850s by the middle-layer class intellectuals like O Kyong Sok (1831-1879) and Ryu Hong Gi who were aware of the interests of the middle-layers of the bourgeoisie. It was further brought into a system of thoughts around the 1870s-1880s chiefly by the effort of Kim Ok Gyun (1831-1894).

The essence of the Kaehwa idea is a bourgeois reformism intended to establish bourgeois political system in place of feudal tyranny, and advance the country in the capitalist way in all the fields including politics, economy and culture. The Kaehwa idea aimed, in politics, at getting rid of the feudal system which was based on tyranny, and establishing a modern system of state on the ground of constitutional Monarchy. In economy, it intended to introduce modern science and technology as well as business management, and advocated capitalist enterprises, while the state should accumulate capital. In culture, it raised as an important issue to establish a modern system of education, and for its realization they attempted to reform educational system and its content. They also intended to develop the social treatment of women, the setup of welfare public services, social relief, freedom in belief, and the like in order to solve social problems. In military affairs, they insisted on the strength of national defense based on draft system, modernization of the army education, training and equipment. The enlightenment group of the Kaehwa idea took the Kapsin Coup D’etat to establish a constitutional monarchy as the same practice in Europe as in “The Age of Enlightenment led directly to the American Revolution and French Revolution and strongly influenced the Industrial Revolution” (Dictionary.com, *Age*).

The Kaehwa idea embodied the idea of Enlightenment of the bourgeois which reflected the lawfulness of social development in our country at that time when feudalism gave way to capitalism in its initial stage of development, and it was then the most advanced ideology.

The Kaehwa idea shares some features in common with the European Enlightenments as long as they criticized the existing social order of feudalism and tyranny, and desired to set up a new society on the basis of reason, crying out for liberty and equality.

The ideological and aesthetic principle in the literature shows difference at the same time because of the difference of some specific socio-historical circumstances in which the Enlightenment movement was effected, though carrying on some similar features. The Kaehwa idea which underlaid Enlightenment in Korea was typically combined with anti-aggressive, patriotic idea as was required by the status quo at that time.

In the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries the national dignity of Korea was ruthlessly trampled down by foreign forces' aggression and occupation of our country so there were many fights fought against aggressors and for the country's freedom, and to relieve the country's destiny out of misery and poverty on a nation's scale.

Shifting from industrial capitalism to imperialism the European and American powers were mad about holding the more of colonies among themselves, turning their covetous eyes to Eastern countries which were then backward. Korea was one of the victims of the open aggressions. America sent aggressive armed ship "General Sherman" to our country in the year of 1866 and attempted grave-robbery on Nam Yon Gyun's tomb in 1868. "Sinmi Yangyo" in 1871 and the "Unyo-maru" Incident in 1875 were all committed by the foreign forces' aggressions.

It was Japanese imperialism which ran amuck to take by force Korea's sovereignty with the heinous "Kanghwado Treaty," the "Ulsa Five-Point Treaty" in 1905, and it finally committed a large-scaled armed aggression upon Korea. Since then Korea turned into a colonial semi-feudal society with the whole of nation enslaved and a regular capitalist development ruthlessly checked.

Under such circumstances as were mentioned above, people's struggle broke out across the country in order to take back the lost sovereign independence of the country from the foreign aggressors, which gathered strength by fierce peasant's uprising and youth's struggle, namely the Kabo Peasant War (peasant's uprising in the Year of the Horse by the lunar calendar) in 1894. Mass struggles to drive out foreign aggressors were combined with the struggle against feudal rulers. So

the movement to advance the country towards modern development took strong character of anti-aggression and patriotism.

This is eloquently proved in the fact that most of the writers of the literature in Enlightenment era were the chiefs of the righteous volunteer armies and patriotic martyrs together with patriotic intellectuals who conducted various ideological and theoretical activities along with sorts of patriotic cultural drives to overcome nation's crisis.

The Kaehwa idea plus the anti-aggressive, patriotic idea became the ideological basis of the literature in Enlightenment era in Korea, and that had a tangible impact upon the origination and development of Enlightenment into a literary trend.

Patriotic cultural movement waged out by intellectuals triggered off Enlightenment in Korean literature right before and after Japanese occupation of Korea. It was conducted from its starting point in the strong sense of anti-Japanese character, and it brought about a fresh upsurge in the fierce flames of anti-Japanese struggle when the nation was all out against the "Ulsa Five-Point Treaty" fabricated and forced by the Japanese gangsters in November 1905. In this period, leaders of that movement suggested the restoration of national sovereignty, and fought their way out in "Naesu Woihak" (strengthening nation's power at home while learning from other advanced states) and "Self-reliance" by the promotion of education and industry. They carried out vivacious activities to enlighten masses of people by the help of various learnings, press campaign and Korean language movement in cooperation with many organizations, of which the educational movement stood out conspicuous.

People concerned with educations raised up their voices that ups and downs of the nation, the country's existence and people's survival, are all dependent on education, and stressed that they should direct efforts to education of the compatriots for the sovereign independence of the nation and modern development, and they did their best for its realization.

Literature in Enlightenment era in Korea took its definite shape of Enlightenment what with such invoking consciousness as national independence and patriotism, what with aspiration longing after modern development of the society.

The representatives who put forward literary view of Enlightenment, criticism and engaged in creative works were Pak Un Sik (1860-1926), Ri Hae Jo (1869-1927), Ri Sang Hyob (1880-1936), Kim Taek Yong, Jang Ji Yon (1864-1921) and Sin Chae Ho (1880-1936).

Pak Un Sik and Ri Sang Hyob fairly understood and stressed the social and

educational significance, and value of novels and dramas from the viewpoint of Enlightenment. Kim Taek Yong and Jang Ji Yon emphasized the socio-political function of literature, primary significance of ideological content, and combination of ideas with art in poetry in their essays and criticisms.

In his literary essays and criticisms, Sin Chae Ho particularly stressed the function and role of literature for the education of people in patriotism and national sovereignty. In the preface to his novel "Hwaoui Hyol" (1912), Ri Hae Jo pointed out in general to the variety of life depiction in different genres of novel, and said that although his novel wasn't that sensitive or elegant, "it is worth of clearly mirroring what is good or evil by vividly picturing people's everyday life, activities and situation of the time with no deception." It is clear that he had a proper understanding of the function of novel, and stressed its principle of realistic description, in which it should describe man and his life as it is in reality, objectively and honestly.

The whole length of development of Enlightenment in Korean literature is subdivided into two stages.

The first stage is stretching from the time before and after the Kabo Peasant War to the time of the fabrication of the "Ulsa Five-Point-Treaty" by the Japanese imperialists and its occupation of Korea by force, i.e. from the mid-1890s to the year of 1905.

In this stage of development, historical biographies, fables and political essays flourished in prose. The historical biographies are "A Tale of Ulji Mun Dok," "A Tale of Kang Kam Chan," "A Tale of Choe Do Tong" and "A Tale of Yang Man Chun," which tell the exploits of patriotic generals and heroes. These novels inspired people with anti-aggressive, patriotic ideas, and encouraged them to the struggle for the independence of the country. And fables "A Record of the Meeting between Birds and Beasts" (An Kuk Son 1854-1928), "Dialogue between a Fox and a Cat," "A Crafty Monkey," "A Fox backed up by a Tiger" and the like exposed the burglarious nature of the Japanese imperialists and the treachery of national traitors to bitter attacks and descriptively emphasized the importance of the new education and culture. There were many patriotic essays written, which advocated the anti-aggressive, anti-feudal ideas and Enlightenment. They are Pak Un Sik's "No Development in Education, No Existence," "Reforms of the Old Customs," Sin Chae Ho's "A Patriotic" and "The Relation between History and Patriotic Mind," Jang Ji Yon's "Let's Wail Bitterly and Loudly," "Talks of Patriotism" (Pak Song Hum) and "The Necessity of the Korean Language and Korean-alphabet" (Ju Si Gyong). They all emphasized that people had to defend national rights against

falling with “Independence,” “Defense of Civil Rights,” “Industrial Development” and “Educational Promotion,” and advocated the idea of achieving civilization. Words of songs in a style of essay were also created. They were composed in various genres with different devices while inheriting conventional form of lyrics in the past, and served the purpose of attacking the Japanese imperialists and national traitors.

The second stage of development of Enlightenment in Korean literature stretches from 1905 to the early 1910s.

In this period Sinsosol (novel of a new-type) and Changga (song of a new-type) were worked out and flourished. They were of great significance in the development of Enlightenment literature in Korea. The name “Sinsosol” first appeared on the novel entitled “Tears of Blood” which was published in serials in the paper “Mansebo” since 1906. The novels of new-type chiefly had to do with new ideas of civilization: “Naesu Woihak,” “Sovereign Independence,” “Defense of Civil Rights” and “Modern Civilization.” As for the plot, they got rid of the conventional style of “Sweet after Bitter” (happy end which arrived after suffering from some difficulties), the remnant of medieval novels. The new-type novels insisted on creating characters on real persons and real events in reality. Language interpretation was styled into spoken and written language of the time. One of the pioneers and representatives of the novel of new-type is Ri Hae Jo (1869-1927). His important novels are about 30 pieces including “A Bell of Freedom” (1910), “A Tale of a Meager Face” (1906), “A Sword of Exorcism” (1908), “A Screen of Peony Blossoms” (1911), “Hwaoui Hyol” (1912), “A Korean Mandolin” (1913). With all the differences in the subject matters, characters, plots and artistic descriptions they were all done on the same theme of sovereign independence and civilization. He created not only the novel of new-type but also adapted classic novels into the novel of new-type like “Ok Jung Hwa,” “Kang Sang Ryen,” “Yonoui Kak” etc. He also translated foreign novels so as to arouse the idea of modern civilization. An Kuk Son, Kim Kyo Jye, Choe Chan Sik and Ri Sang Hyop also found their position amongst the new-type modern novelists. Choe Chan Sik wrote “Chuwol Saek” (a colour of the moon in autumn) (1912), “Un Oui Song” (1912) and political novel “Sol Jung Mae.” Kim Kyo Jye produced such novels as “Microscope,” “Airship” and “Peony.” These novels exposed to the ridicule the corruptions and contradictions of the feudal society and spoke to the country’s independence and civilization, though not thorough-going in their attacks upon feudal system, because they carried no clear idea of anti-Japanese imperialists, failing to bring fundamental changes into the social system. The novel of new-type, however, contributed to the growth

and flourish of Enlightenment with the achievements gained in the thematic and ideological contents, truthful representation of life as well as providing with realistic description, and unity between spoken and written language. Changga was equally important for the development of Enlightenment. It was the 1890s when Changga began created as a style of verse with the theme of patriotic, cultural movement of Enlightenment. Newspaper "Independence" at that time carried such Changga as "A Song of Patriotism" (Ri Yong U) and "A Song of Independence" (Ri Jung Wan) for the first time dated back to May 1896. Changga was one of the effective means of patriotic cultural movement of Enlightenment, enjoying most popularity first among the youth and students, then the masses of people on a wide scale. They were created chiefly on the themes of "Sovereign Independence," "Defense of People's Rights" and "Modern Civilization," though there were some on other issues. These songs sincerely reflected people's idea, feeling and aspiration at the time; hatred against aggressors, grieves of the ruined nation, ardent desire for the realization of the country's independence and freedom, and civilization. At the same time, they tried their best to explore and introduce new and various genres and expressions of poems as was required by the time, thus contributing to encouraging people's ideas of patriotic independence and civilization, and to the development of realistic poetry of the nation.

Generally speaking, at the turn of the nineteenth century, various forms of writings were produced including novel of new-type, Changga, historical and biographical novels, fables, political essays as well as lyrics in the style of political essay, which embodied anti-aggressive patriotism, sovereign independence and civilization. And they finally turned out into a literary trend of Enlightenment in Korea, reflecting the socio-historical facts and aesthetic requirement of the period.

Enlightenment in some European countries came into being and developed throughout the eighteenth century as in "It was a European movement as it prevailed not only over England but also over Russia and Germany and especially France where there were such giants as Montesquieu, Diderot, Voltaire and Rousseau, writing on the eve of the French Revolution of 1789" (Chen 4).

France saw flowering of Enlightenment prior to the coming of bourgeois revolution in 1789. The representatives were Montesquieu (1689-1755), Voltaire (1694-1778), Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) and Diderot (1713-1784). In Germany, Enlightenment literature flourished in the literature of the "Storm and Stress" from 1770s-1780s to the 1830s. Johann Christophe Friedrich von Schiller (1759-1805)'s "The Robbers" (1781) and "William Tell" (1804) and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832)'s dramatic poem "Faust" (1772-1832) are the

striking examples.

In comparison to France and Germany, the English Enlightenment saw its flourish as early as Daniel Defoe (1660-1731)'s "Robinson Crusoe" (1719) and Jonathan Swift (1667-1745)'s "Gulliver's Travels" (1726), which were the most significant pieces in the early stage of development of Enlightenment not only for England but also in Western Europe. During the 1740s and 1760s Samuel Richardson (1689-1761)'s novel "Pamela" (1740) and "Clarissa" (1748) and Henry Fielding (1707-1745)'s "Tom Jones" (1749) brought an upsurge of creation in its development.

### **Major Thematic, Ideological Contents and Artistic Descriptions of the Literature Produced in the Era of Enlightenment in Korea**

Enlightenment in literature raised many issues of some social importance. "Some of the major ideas that originated during the Age of Enlightenment, also known as the Age of Reason, were confidence in humanity's intellectual powers, a much lesser degree of trust in the older forms of traditional authority and the belief that rational and scientific thoughts will lead to [...]" (Reference.com, *What*).

People believed at the time that if only reason is appealed to, there would be nothing unchanged, and education is the very means to bring about them. "Its adolescence belongs to the two decades before and after 1700 when writers such as Jonathan Swift were employing 'the artillery of words' to impress the secular intelligentsia created by the growth in affluence, literacy, and publishing. Ideas and beliefs were tested whenever reason and research could challenge traditional authority" (Luebering 101).

Out of the traditional authority, the old feudal politics, morality and customs, and religion were the chief objects of attack. "Such powerful ideas found expression as reform in England and as revolution in France and America" (Luebering 101).

As they did in Europe, the writers in the era of Enlightenment in Korea opened their "artillery of words"; some attacked the decayed politics and expressed the denial of the social stations of feudal system, and some criticized the long-standing old customs and other social evils that were trampling on women's rights, and some revealed their intentions to reform the society.

Anyhow, the Enlightenment in Korea was not merely motivated by reason which resulted in certain innovations of some fields as in Europe: "The Enlightenment, a philosophical movement of the eighteenth century, characterized by belief in the power of human reason and by innovation in political, religious, and

educational doctrine” (Dictionary.com, *Enlightenment*).

Enlightenment literature in Korea took sovereign independence along with anti-aggression and patriotism as its major thematic and ideological content as they were under foreign forces’ domination. They hold the banner of “Naesu Woihak” that intended to drive out foreign forces and ensure sovereign independence as well as modern development of capitalism. The literature had greatly encouraged people to stand up against foreign invaders. The same examples could be picked up in history: “The Enlightenment has had an enormous impact on modern history. The American Revolution and the French Revolution were direct products of Enlightenment mentalities” (Nate Sullivan *AP World*).

This finds its expression in the righteous volunteer’s songs and the poems by patriotic intellectuals. Poems “A Western-made Rifle” and “The Invasion of Kanghwado Island by the Western Power,” Ryu Rin Sok, the chief of a righteous volunteer army, denounced European and American powers for their aggression of Korea, and praised the righteous volunteers who were struggling to drive them out. He also wrote many manifestos and poems including “With Worries over the World,” “We Bewail the Stateless People,” “We Curse the Five-Traitors and the Seven-Traitors,” “Mourning over a Deceased Patriot,” in which he expressed his ardent love towards his fatherland and hatred of the Japanese imperialists and the national traitors.

Poems “Rising Myself Up” by Choe Ik Hyon, another chief of the righteous volunteer army, “I Recite it in the Prison” (Jon Hae San), “A Song of Hurray” by the patriotic martyr An Jung Gun and “Grieving over the Death of Jong Si Hyon, the Chief of the Righteous Volunteer Army of Musan-area” (Kim Taek Yong 1850-1927 and Hwang Hyon 1855-1910) carried deep pathos of the loss of the country, the passionate love for motherland, bitter indignation and hatred of their enemies as well as their desire for the country’s independence and their fighting spirit. Although those poems by the chiefs of the righteous volunteer armies and other patriotic poets have some shortages, they clearly showed strong notes of Enlightenment by energetically revealing highly patriotic passions and national spirit in deep emotions, thus contributing to the education of the people in anti-aggressive, patriotic spirit and to rousing them to the struggle against foreign aggressions.

There were songs on the same theme; “A Song of Newspapers” (Kim Kyo Ik, 1896), “A Song of Independence” (1896), “A Historical Record of Meetings” (1906), “A Song of Opening School” (1906), “A Song of Student” (1907) and “A Song of Young Boy” (1910). And there are many other songs which sing songs about people who were burning their hearts with the indignation and resentment

against aggressors who deprived Korean people of their independence, and enslaved them to Japanese imperialism, and carry the ardent aspiration for taking back the lost independence and freedom of the country and their determination to realize at the earliest date the civilization and Enlightenment.

Literature produced in Enlightenment era in Korea was also written on the theme of “Modern Civilization” like some other Enlightenment literature in the world. “While the Enlightenment was a tremendous broad movement, there are several core themes that were characteristic of it. One was reason. Enlightenment thinkers typically denounced supernatural occurrences as mere superstition.” (Nate Sullivan, *AP World*)

Enlighteners tried to discard things unnatural both in society and nature and the result was a civilization. Novels of new-type “Microscope” and “The Island of Mandarin Duck” implemented the idea of civilization by criticizing the corruption of politics of the colonial society and offering the necessity of its reform, while “The Pipha Castle” and “A Sword of Exorcism” exposed to ridicule the absurdity and harmfulness of superstition, and emphasized getting rid of medieval darkness. “Voice of Ghost,” “A Screen of Peony Blossoms” and “Chuwol Saek” embodied the idea of civilization by bitterly criticizing the old conventions and social evils that roughly violated human right of women. Novel of new-type “The Omen of a Dream” was written by a writer whose pen name was Ban A in 1907. It tells a story of a woman who was exerting her efforts to bring up her son as was wished by her late husband, who had taken part in the movement of political reform.

The anti-aggressive, patriotic ideas and sovereign independence as well as passion for modern development were chiefly conveyed through such characters as the anti-Japanese righteous volunteers, patriotic martyrs, intellectuals and civilized women.

In art and literature, the word presentation is used as a literary quality, distinguished from other types of social consciousness, to represent life into art and literature, with which it touches people’s heart aesthetically and emotionally. And this quality of presentation is chiefly revealed through characters, their relations and conflict, and storyline.

Korean literature in Enlightenment era had, first of all, created such portrayals as anti-Japanese patriotic volunteers and deceased patriots, who were consummation of the spirit of the anti-aggressive patriotism and national independence. These characters were the very products of the time when people stood up across the country in arms against Japanese invaders. They were depicted in various literary forms like songs, ballads and narratives, etc.

“A Song of the Righteous Volunteer Army” and “Kunbaba” are brilliant examples of songs and ballads which praised high the anti-Japanese righteous volunteers with their militant spirit, dauntlessness and valor, burning hatred against the Japanese imperialist aggressors through the voice of lyrical hero or narrator, who are none other than the anti-Japanese righteous volunteers. Along with these songs, narratives “A Tale of the Pyongsan Righteous Volunteer Army” and “A Legend of Paekmyong Cave” carried such noble feelings as the indomitable patriotic spirit possessed by righteous volunteers who died a heroic death in the battlefield, defending their villages and country against foreign invaders. And there were also songs by several chiefs of the anti-Japanese righteous volunteer armies: “With Worries over the World” (Ryu Rin Sok), “Rising Myself up” (Choe Ik Hyon) and “I Recite it in the Prison” (Jon Hae San) as well as “A Song of Hurray” written by An Jung Gun, the staunch anti-Japanese deceased patriot, who honestly and ardently expressed annihilating militant spirit, patriotic fidelity with which lyrical heroes—that is, the chiefs of the anti-Japanese righteous volunteers and deceased patriots burnt their hearts. They sang loudly their ardent desire for national independence, too.

Therefore, the artistic images of the anti-Japanese righteous volunteers and deceased patriots constitute an important delineation of character-portrayals unlike those of European literature due to the peculiarity of the socio-historical circumstances of the time in which these creative works were produced.

Next, in the Korean Enlightenment literature patriotic intellectuals together with women of passion for civilization constitute another delineation branch in character-portrayals.

They are Mr. Ri Hyep Pan in “Microscope,” Mr. Ri, a minister in “Mt. Chiak” and Kim Chang So in “A Red-Blossoming Peach Tree” who are all upper bureaucrats of the Enlightenment group imbued with the Kaehwa idea, and the others are patriotic political reformers such as Han Dae Hong and Mr. Pak in “The Omen of a Dream.” The novels of new-type in the Korean Enlightenment literature also created the Kaehwa idea-oriented women of new education. They were Ri Jong Suk in “Peony,” Hyon Kum Son in “A Red-Blossoming Peach Tree” and Jang Mae Son in “Sol Jung Mae.” There were also woman-characters who favoured the civilized idea like Mrs. Jong in the novel of new-type “The Omen of a Dream” and Sin Sol Hyon in “A Bell of Freedom.” These works created positive characters with the conspicuous Kaehwa idea, while the negative characters of the bigoted, conservative feudalism, thus the positive characters playing the leading role in overcoming feudalism and for the solution of those themes of “Sovereign

Independence,” “Civilization” and “Defense of Civil rights.” And they also added to eradication of superstitions and so on, unfolding realistic pictures in which the corruption and downfall of the feudal society are exposed to ridicule while capitalist relations growing in strength.

Next in the Enlightenment of the Korean literature there was a delineation of pro-Japanese reactionary bureaucrats and nobility. Fables “A Record of the Meeting between Birds and Beasts” (An Kuk Son 1854-1928) and “Dialogue between a Fox and a Cat” exposed to the bitter ridicule the anti-popular deeds of the pro-Japanese feudal rulers and bureaucrats, and their servile submissions, while “A Crafty Monkey” and “A Fox backed up by a Tiger” attacked the treachery of the traitors of the nation together with the gangster-like nature of the Japanese imperialists, and emphasized the importance of new education and new culture.

Literature produced in Enlightenment era in Korea gives character-portrayals so detailed a delineation that they are very real, true to life.

Setting is a circumstance which includes all the external elements that exert influence upon the existence and change and development of a thing. The settings man is put in is a coverage of social- and natural elements which have impact upon the life of human being and his development as well. The artistic description of social settings in art and literature is as much important as every individual character in the representation of thematic and ideological concept of the writer. The social settings where characters are put in influences upon the personality, and it turns out to be in turn a condition for its development.

The European Enlightenment literature has character-portrayals who live in thick of reality, but many of them are put in an imaginable and fantastic settings apart from reality. Say those heroes and heroines from Montesquieu’s novel “Letter from the Persians,” Diderot’s novel “Nun,” Rousseau’s novel “Emile” in France and in England Daniel Defoe’s “Robinson Crusoe” and Jonathan Swift’s satirical novel “Gulliver’s Travels.”

Comparing to them, the characters in the Korean Enlightenment literature are delineated very real as they usually live and act in a specific reality of the times. One of the representatives is the novel of new-type “Mt. Chiak” (two parts) in two volumes (Ri In Jik’s). This novel tells the story of a storm and distress of a family due to the second wife’s cold treatment with the daughter-in-law of the first wife, who passed away at present.

There lives a man at the foot of Mt. Chiak. His name is Hong Chol Sik, who is brought up at the hand of stepmother after he lost his mother early. He marries the daughter to Mr. Li, who is a reformed minister in the capital city. Chol Sik cherishes

a passion in his heart to learn for the country, and asks his father-in-law to help him after discussing it with his wife. He does not tell it to his own father, the bigoted and conservative councilor. He leaves home for the study abroad. Mr. Hong, the councilor, learns it later, loses his temper, and makes a great fuss, which is bitterly aggravated by the stepmother's misconduct. She has a hatred of the daughter-in-law. Availing the opportunity of her husband's absence, a rich man's son Choe Chi Un, attracted to the beauty of Mrs. Ri, wife to Hong Chol Sik, makes a plot with the help of Ok Dun, a waiting maid to the councilor Hong's house. She forges a fuss against Mrs. Ri as if she has an illicit relation with a passer-by, and instigates Mrs. Kim the lady of the house to expel her daughter-in-law out of the house into a deep mountain. Mrs. Ri is fortunately saved by a hunter. After many distresses she becomes a nun, but she cannot help being teased by the monks at the temple so that she finally throws herself into a well. At the crucial moment she is rescued by a passer-by, who is none other than Mr. Hong. However, he fails to notice that she is his daughter-in-law. In the meantime, her maid Kum Hong does her best to look for her lost lady and she even goes to that temple, but fails to find out her whereabouts. Then she goes to see Mr. Ri, the minister and tells everything that happened to his daughter. Minister Ri disguised Kum Hong as a ghost so that all the members of Mr. Hong the councilor's family might get frightened, and cause them to go to a temple for their safety. And then he gets his hands on Ok Dan and her accomplice in a crime. Hearing Kum Hong telling all the facts, Mr. Hong the councilor expels his second wife Mrs. Kim to her father's home. And Mrs. Ri returns home in the capital where she meets dramatically Mr. Hong Chol Sik on his just returning at home from his study abroad. Mr. Hong gets in office as a magistrate and punishes all the criminals at the local government. The novel ends with Mrs. Kim, the stepmother, starting a new life and enjoying courteous treatment from Mr. Hong. The enlighteners in our country turned to the specific reality and took people who were living in deep reality for the artistic description, and give them aesthetic appraisals.

Art and literature finds its technique of interpretation in an artistic presentation, in which man and his life is created as real as it is. Technique of interpretation takes important position in creative works, on which the quality and features, mood, style and form are all dependent. For instance, a writer uses first-person narrative and lyrical soliloquy for his creative work, then it will be styled into first-person novel with deep lyricism. And it will be a fable novel, when it chiefly uses personification of animals and symbolic device.

Literature produced in Enlightenment era saw that old descriptive methods

employed by medieval literature were discarded, and new structures and kinds of literary forms were employed in practice. Enlighteners made great efforts to overcome such conventional style as “Sweet after bitter” in plot, and fantastic and unrealistic settings. In the storyline of new-style novels, plain description of medieval literature was overcome and three-dimensional character-description was ensured. And outdated style of narratives gradually gave way to the detailed descriptions of lives. And character-portrayals, unification of the written and spoken language, remarkably reduced Chinese characters, and employment of the device of dialogue were the typical example of Enlightenment in literature at the time.

While patriotic cultural movement was carried on with vigor in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, some foreign stories were translated, and then adapted for the specific purpose of education of people in national independence, and for the nation’s efflorescent culture, together with adapted novels which aimed at enlightening people.

Adapted versions, different from the original ones, featured not only meeting the requirement of the actual situation and the time but also writer’s ideological and aesthetic intensions: the character’s name, social and historic background were changed into others on the account of themes and ideas. “The Establishment of Sweden” (translated by Pak Un Sik, 1907), “Iron World” (translated by Ri Hae Jo, 1897) are the examples of adapted stories. Although adapted stories and the translated novels were somewhat different from each other, both of them were called equally adapted stories because they were chosen, translated and adapted, with the same aim at educational purpose.

Men of letters intended to answer to the specific socio-political situation and the demands of the times when people stood up against the Japanese imperialist’s aggression, and the patriotic cultural movement of Enlightenment was waged with force. They tried to inspire the spirit of sovereign independence by adapting foreign novels which helped them speak to the national independence and Enlightenment so these forms are socially taken important, though limited.

## **Conclusion**

This essay makes a close examination into the literature produced in Enlightenment era of Korea. It focused on the areas of the origination and stages of development of Enlightenment, its major thematic, ideological contents and the artistic descriptions along with forms and genres in good combination with the concrete socio-historical circumstances of Korea in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries.

Literature produced in Enlightenment era features that it was built on the basis

of the Kaehwa idea, the anti-Japanese, patriotic idea, and the anti-feudal and modern civilization-oriented ideas. The enlighteners intended to replace the old feudalism with the capitalist one. It was an urgent requirement to drive out foreign forces which checked the due development of the times.

The literature produced in the era of Enlightenment turned out into a new literary flow with its new thematic, ideological contents of the anti-Japanese, patriotic ideas, and the civilization in modern style of presentation, which underwent different stages of development from growth to flourish. This quite compares with Enlightenment in Europe which was chiefly motivated by science and reason, the main object of whose criticism was feudalism and religion.

Study of Korean Enlightenment gives people over the world not only a wide and rich knowledge about the art and literature in Korea, but also adds to the diversity of world-treasure house of literature. And it is also significant for the development of neighborly relations among the nations and countries in the world by getting better acquainted with the history, culture and national customs and manners of others despite different cultural and emotional backgrounds.

### Acknowledgements

The authors would like to express gratitude to many colleagues who gave us valuable materials for the completion of the manuscript. The authors are grateful to the following works cited: Addison Wesley Longman, Chen Jia, Liu Bingshan, Nate Sullivan, J.E. Luebering, and History.com Staff.

### Works Cited

- Age of Enlightenment*. Wikipedia. Available at: <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Age\\_of\\_Enlightenment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Age_of_Enlightenment)> (accessed May 15, 2018)
- “Age of enlightenment.” *Define Age of enlightenment at...* Dictionary.com. Available at: <<http://www.dictionary.com/browse/age-of-enlightenment>> (accessed May 15, 2018):101
- Chen, Jia. *A History of English Literature*. (Vol. II.), Beijing: The Commercial Press, 1984: 5
- Duignan, Brian. “Enlightenment.” *European History*, 2018. Last updated Mar 28, 2018. Available at: <<https://www.britannica.com/event/Enlightenment-Eur>> (accessed May 21, 2018)
- “The Enlightenment.” *Enlightenment: Define Enlightenment* Dictionary.com. Available at: <<http://www.dictionary.com/browse/enlightenment>> (accessed May 15, 2018)
- European Literature*. Available at: <[www.wsfcsl2.nc.us/cms/lib/.../europeanhistoryliterature.pptx](http://www.wsfcsl2.nc.us/cms/lib/.../europeanhistoryliterature.pptx)> (accessed Feb 20, 2018)
- “Introduction.” *Enlightenment: Facts & Summary*. History.com. 2009. Available at: <<http://www.history.com/topics/enlightenment>> (accessed May 21, 2018)

- Literature Glossary-Enlightenment*. Shmoop.com. Available at: <<https://www.shmoop.com/literature-glossary/enlightenment.html>> (accessed Feb 20, 2018)
- Liu, Bingshan. *A Short History of English Literature*. newly revised and enlarged ed. 河南人民出版社, 2012:126-127
- Longman, Addison Wesley. *Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Barcelona, Cayfisa, 1998: 432
- Luebering, J.E. "Enlightenment." *History of Europe*" Encyclopaedia Britannica.com. 2018. Available at: <<https://www.britannica.com/topic/history-of-Europe>> (accessed May 15, 2018)
- Pen and the Pad. *Types of Literature in the Age of Reason* Available at: <<https://penandthepad.com/types-literature-age-reason-8195425.html>> (accessed Feb 20, 2018)
- Ri Jang Song. *Study on the Development of Progressive Poetry of Modern Time*. Pyongyang, Kim Il Sung University Publishing House, 1994
- Ri Kyu Chan. *Study on the Anti-Japanese, Patriotic Literature of Modern Time in Korea*. Pyongyang. Academy of Social Sciences Publishing House, 2006.
- Rim Tuk Gil. *Study on the Development of the Progressive Drama before the Liberation of Our Country*. Pyongyang, Kim Il Sung University Publishing House, 1996
- Sullivan, Nate. "What Was the Enlightenment? Major Themes of the Enlightenment: Major Figures of the Enlightenment." *AP World History: Tutoring Sollution*. Available at:<<http://www.history.com/topics/enlightenment>> (accessed May 21, 2018)
- Un Jong Sop. *Study of the History of Modern and Contemporary Novels before the Country's Liberation*. (vol. 1.2.) Pyongyang, Kim Il Sung University Publishing House, 1986
- What Were Some of the Major Ideas of the Age of Enlightenment?* Reference.com. Available at: <<https://www.reference.com/history/were-major-ideas>> (accessed May 15, 2018)