

# A Study on North Korean Narratives of Ancient Fictions in the 1950s

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## Abstract

In the mid-1950s, North Korea's socialist construction efforts were carried out across the entire society. Even in the field of classical literature, the history of classical novels was written from a Marxist-Leninist perspective to educate the masses. Yi Ŭng-su and Kim Ha-myŏng made the first attempt to write the North Korean history of ancient novels in the 1950s using a Marxist-Leninist methodology, which was based on their research on the history of ancient novels in the pre-division period. In 1959, under the influence of the Chollima Movement, the first collectively written book of literary history, *Chosŏn munhak t'ongsa* [The complete history of Korean literature], was published by the Literature Research Center of the Institute of Language and Literature, Academy of Sciences of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Therefore, the North Korean narrative about classical novels in the 1950s took two forms. Compared to what had been written by Yi Ŭng-su and Kim Ha-myŏng in the mid-1950s, the part of *The Complete History of Korean Literature* devoted to classic literary history was more detailed and added more critical logic, such as humanitarianism. The North Korean history of ancient novels in the 1950s is different from the South Korean version of the same period, and it is also different from the North Korean history of ancient novels after the establishment of the Juche Literary Theory. In other words, the North Korean history of ancient novels in the 1950s can be seen as having a unique transitional character amid a period in which the North Korean system was being established.

**Keywords:** history of ancient novels, socialist realism, humanitarianism, Marxism-Leninism, Juche Literary Theory



# Introduction

After the division of the two Koreas, academic exchanges between North and South Korea ceased, and they each developed different narratives about the history of ancient novels in different ways, following its own path. North Korea in the 1950s stood on a unique historical terrain. The Juche Ideology was still in its infancy, and the influence of the ideology in the field of literary theory was not yet prominent. On the other hand, it is also quite different from the narrative style of the classic novel history, which was influenced by Marxism-Leninism and centered on the nationalism of the South.

Therefore, if we examine how North Korean has compiled the history of the ancient novels in the 1950s, we can find it different from the South Korean history of ancient novels of the same period and inconsistent with the North Korean history of class novels after the establishment of Juche Literary Theory in the 1970s. Of course, it is not the case that North Korean history of ancient novels after the 1970s is completely different from that of the 1950s. Indeed, the narrative style of North Korean history of ancient novels after the 1970s can be seen as a modification of the Juche Literary Theory's position on the history of ancient novels in the 1950s under the influence of Juche Literary Theory.

Conscious of the uniqueness of North Korean narratives of the 1950s, this study aims to identify the unique areas of the narratives. Among the North Korean sources available to date, this study has yet to find a specialized North Korean historical account of the 1950s. Instead, this article will focus on the sections of the *Chosŏn munhaksa: 1–14 segi* [Korean literary history: 1st–14th centuries] (1956) and the *Chosŏn munhaksa: 15–19 segi* [Korean literary history: 15th–19th centuries] (1955) by Yi Ŭng-su and Kim Ha-myŏng, respectively, and *The Complete History of Korean Literature* (vol. 1) (1959) by the Literature Research Center of the Institute of Language and Literature, Academy of Sciences of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

# The Logic of North Korea's Narratives on the History of Ancient Novels in the 1950s

After the end of the Korean War in the 1950s, North Korea entered a phase of post-war reconstruction. Ideological construction was also part of the process. The university textbook *Korean Literary History*, written in the mid-1950s, was published against this background. Yi Ŭng-su's *Korean Literary History: 1st–14th Centuries* (Ŭ. Yi 1956) was the first volume in this series (Ŭ. Yi 1956).

Unlike the nationalistic literary histories of the South, which were established during the same period, North Korea aimed to build a new literary history with a socialist ideology. In 1954, Kim Il-sung made the following remarks about ideological construction in North Korea at the Fifth Plenary Session of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea:

We still have the grave and unforgivable defect of throwing away the noble heritage of our forefathers' works on history, geography, and other fields of military, political, economic, and cultural life, instead of analyzing them from a Marxist-Leninist point of view, consuming them, and developing them.

There is even a phenomenon that, in some severe cases, we even use old sayings and songs, but not our own.

We must continue to struggle against these intolerable manifestations of the heritage of our noble scientific culture.

We must realize that only on the basis of rightly consuming the heritage of our own noble scientific culture and developing it can we hastily or rightly consume the advanced scientific cultures of other countries. (Ŭ. Yi 1956, 10)

Kim Il-sung's remark captured the point and necessity of compiling a literary history, including a history of North Korean fiction, at the time. To summarize, it does not exclude: (1) the correct inheritance of the past cultural heritage from a Marxist-Leninist standpoint; and (2) the discussion of other cultures after establishing one's own identity in the field of culture. Moreover, what Kim Il-sung is referring to here when

he talks about the correct inheritance is related to the “new position on modern art.”

The “new position on modern art” was a policy that cultivated patriotic ideas and class struggle consciousness among the masses. In 1955, at the April plenary meeting of the Central Committee of the Workers’ Party of Korea, Kim Il-sung announced the direction of modern art, pointing out that it was an urgent task to arm the people with patriotic ideas and to thoroughly educate them from a class-based perspective (Ŭ. Yi 1956, 11). This view of artistic history was later established as the Juche Theory of Art, in line with the development of the Juche Ideology.

Kim Il-sung’s remarks at the Fifth Plenary Session of the Central Committee of the Workers’ Party of Korea in 1954 and the April plenary session of the Central Committee of the Workers’ Party of Korea in 1955 were the direct inspiration for Kim Ha-myōng’s *Korean Literary History: 15th–19th Centuries* (for use at universities) in 1955 and Yi Ŭng-su’s *Korean Literary History: 1st–14th Centuries* (also for use at universities) the following year.

## Yi Ŭng-su’s Narratives on the History of Ancient Novels

Yi Ŭng-su’s history of fiction had several characteristics. First, Yi discussed the issues regarding the category of national literature. He put Korean literature in the category of “Chosŏn literature” because it expresses the thought and feelings of Chosŏn people, the reality of life, and the local landscape of the Chosŏn dynasty. He also said that oral literature is an important source of epic literature and that the relationship between oral literature and epic literature has the characteristic of being interchangeable. In addition, he treated records and transmissions (*ki* 記 and *chŏn* 傳, respectively) as genres of ancient literature and incorporated them into the development of epic literature. His work in this regard expanded the scope of discussion more than narratives about the history of fiction in the South during the same period.

In terms of evaluating works of fiction, Yi also used the author's class-based attributes as a criterion for evaluating novels (Ŭ. Yi 1956, 12–16). On an ideological level, Yi criticized religion and individual heroism while applying a collectivist logic that praised the masses.

Furthermore, Yi traced the roots of epic literature to mythology, saying that ancient literature had a very strong mythological character. He also argued that ancient mythological fantasies were not pure fantasies but were related to historical facts and had a close relationship with realism. In this way, he may have intended to connect the roots of realism with ancient mythology in the context of the era when socialist realism was highly promoted in North Korean society.

The materialist view of literature is also applied to Yi's history of fiction. From a materialist perspective, ancient society was not a class-based society, so ancient myths had no class-based characteristics at all (Ŭ. Yi 1956, 22–27). Therefore, he did not treat the Dan'gun myth, which exhibits class characteristics, as an ancient myth. This is the most distinct difference from the South Korean history of classic fiction.

Yi also treated mythology as a purely oral literature, placing the consideration of true epic literature at the level of documentary literature after entering the written age. He divided the post-mythological epic literature written at the level of documentary literature into two main fields: chronicles and transmissions, which he further divided into subgenres: chronicles, biographies, narrative forms, and travelogues. Yi's folktale literature is similar to the "folktale literature" talked about by Cho Yun-je before the liberation from the rule of Japan, and it is not oral literature but documentary literature. Therefore, he defined folktale literature as prose that records acknowledgments, customs, miracles, and facts that are difficult to categorize as chronicles, biographies, and travelogues (Ŭ. Yi 1956, 27).

Regarding the relationship between chronicles, biographies, and folktale literature, Yi considered chronicles to be the origin of biographies and folktale literature (Ŭ. Yi 1956, 97) and that because they all have narrative elements, there was some overlap. Since he did not view folktale



literature as oral literature, folktale literature was not an early form of prose like mythology, but a new form of prose that emerged in late antiquity. This perspective is distinctly different from the existing history of novels in South Korea during the same period.

In addition, Yi considers Koguryō's *Yugi* [Extant records], Paekche's *Sōgi* [Documentary records], Shilla's *Kuksa* [State history], and Koguryō's *Shinjip* [New compilations] as the original sources of biography and folktale literature. He argued that the early periods of chronicles were mainly in the form of founding periods, such as *Tan'gun'gi* [Records of Tan'gun], *Tongmyōngwanggi* [Records of King Tongmyōng], *Shilla kōn'gukki* [Records of Shilla's founding], *Paekche kōn'gukki* [Records of Paekche's founding], and *Kayaguk kōn'gukki* [Records of Gaya's founding]. This is quite different from the South Korean views of these works of the same period, which treated them as founding myths and akin to oral traditions. In other words, Yi emphasized the archival nature of these works. He characterized the chronicles as the first form of narrative prose literature in Chosŏn and almost the only prose form between the 1st and 7th centuries (Ŭ. Yi 1956, 35–36).

It was during the Unified Shilla period that biographical literature emerged as an independent entity, completely separated from chronicles (Ŭ. Yi 1956, 143). Regarding the *Choshin chŏn* [The tale of Choshin], which Yi called the biographical literature of this period, he emphasized its novel-historical value, saying that there was no work that exemplified the modern novel like *The Tale of Choshin* because the dream narrative was consistent with the modern novel in that it is composed by the author's fabrications (Ŭ. Yi 1956, 151). However, this did not mean that Yi treated *The Tale of Choshin* as a novel like Chang Tōk-sun did. In Yi's view, biography is a form of folktale literature that predates the development of the novel.

According to Yi's argument, folktale literature emerged after chronicles and biographies. He affirms the novel-historical significance of folktale literature and biography, saying that folktale literature, along with biography, has rich novelistic elements and is an important source for later

novels. This affirmed the novel-historical significance of folktale literature and biography from the perspective of documentary literature.

Yi also argued that the main collections of folktale literature during the Unified Shilla period were the *Kyerim japp'ŷŏn* [Miscellaneous tales of Gyeongju] and the *Shilla sui chŏn* [Records of the strange and unusual in Shilla] (Ŭ. Yi 1956, 131). He inferred the nature of these two works as narrative collections from their names (Ŭ. Yi 1956, 156), and this inference was shared by Kim T'ae-chun. A further development in Kim's discussion is his characterization of the narrative nature of the *Miscellaneous Tales of Gyeongju* and the *Records of the Strange and Unusual in Shilla* as a collection of folktale literature or a collection of folktale literature in the "strange and unusual" format.

Yi Ŭng-su defines the "strange and unusual format" as "a narrative that contains biographical facts and is characterized by fragments of myths or legends, with the author's own evaluation added to them" (Ŭ. Yi 1956, 172), giving it a significance as an important source and origin of biographical tales and novels dating back to the Middle Ages. In other words, Yi Ŭng-su treated the "strange and unusual format" as a special group of folktale literature. The novelistic significance of treating the "strange and unusual format" as a series was the background for the emergence of the genre name "strange and unusual format" in North Korea in the 1970s. Yi Ŭng-su called Ch'oe Ch'i-won's long-form poem "Ssangnyŏbun" [The twin sisters] and centered his analysis on this poem. As such, North Korean literary history in the 1950s did not fully recognize the novelistic value of Ch'oe Ch'i-won as it did in South Korea.

During the Unified Shilla period, a new type of folktale literature emerged in the form of fables. When Yi Ŭng-su discussed the allegorical folktale literary work titled *Hwawanggye* [Admonitions to the king of flowers], he emphasized the four-six format of the work. In other words, the folktale literature that Yi Ŭng-su is talking about is a concept of the documentary level, like the folktale literature defined by Cho Yun-jae before the liberation. In addition, Yi emphasized the succession relationship between fables and

the Chosŏn dynasty's novels by pointing out that the *Kut'o sŏlhwa* [The tale of a rabbit] and the *Admonitions to the King of Flowers*, allegorical literary works or oral folktales of this period, developed into *Pyŏljubu chŏn* [The tale of a terrapin] and Imje's *Hwasa* [The history of flowers], respectively.

In Koryŏ, the chronological, biographical, and narrative forms of literature continued to develop, with the chronology being represented in Hong Kwan's *P'yŏnnyŏn t'ongjae* [Comprehensive annals], Kim Kwan-ŭi's *Koryŏ p'yŏnnyŏn t'ongjae* [Comprehensive annals of Koryŏ dynasty], and Chŏng Ka-shin's *Ch'ŏnch'u kŭmgyŏngnok* [Reflections from the mirror of this age], Min Chi's *Sedae p'yŏnnyŏn chŏryo* [Abridged essence of the annals of the generations] and *Ponjo p'yŏnnyŏn kangmok* [Annotated events of the present dynasty]; biographies such as Kakhun's *Haedong kosŭng chŏn* [The biography of eminent monks in Korea]; and folktale literature such as the *Samguk yusa* [Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms] and the newly developed *p'aesŏlch'e* (creative prose) form of literature.

However, in terms of content, Yi considered creative prose literature of this period less valuable as a subject of literary history because it mainly expressed the deeds and ideas of kings and nobles. On the other hand, Yi affirmed the value of some creative prose literary works, saying that they reflected the country's autonomy in its diplomatic relations with Japan, Korea, and Mongolia.

It is noteworthy that North Korean literary history in the 1950s did not completely exclude external influences. Yi Ŭng-su viewed the cultural creation efforts of the 1st through 7th centuries as being related to the vigorous importation of foreign cultures and noted the parallels between the Four Ancient Poems and the *Shijing* [Book of odes]. Yi's speculation that the chronicles—such as Koguryŏ's *Extant Records*, Paekche's *Documentary Records*, Shilla's *State History*, and Koguryŏ's *New Compilations*—also included biographical literature was based on the fact that transmission literature such as the *Shiji* [Records of the historian], the *Hanshu* [History of the Han], and the *Sanguozhi* [Records of the Three Kingdoms] may have been included in the category of chronicles in the ancient chronological systems of Chosŏn

and China, referring to the relationship between Korean and Chinese chronicles and biographical literature.

## Kim Ha-myŏng's Historical Narratives on Ancient Fictions

Kim Ha-myŏng's *Korean Literary History: 15th–19th Centuries* (H. Kim 1955) can be considered as a series alongside Yi Ŭng-su's *Korean Literary History: 1st–14th Centuries* (used in universities).

Kim characterized the 15th to 17th centuries as the peak of the development of feudal society. He said that during this period, the masses of the people were simultaneously engaged in the struggle against foreign invasion and the struggle against feudal oppression and exploitation (H. Kim 1955, 5–6). Based on his explanation about the historical background of Chosŏn biographies, in the second half of the 15th century, the economic center shifted to the cities, and the aesthetic needs of the city residents influenced the creation of literary prose (H. Kim 1955, 53).

Kim divided the 15th century literature of prose into two types: expansive and negotiated. Broad literature of prose is a general term for folktale literature, critical literature, diary literature, travel literature, and historical literature. Based on the artistic achievements of fables, the author's creative consciousness and the addition of novelistic elements immediately become novels that are distinct from fables, and the close ontogenetic relationship between fables and novels explains the background of the emergence of the *Kŭmo shinhwa* [New stories from the Gold Turtle Mountain] (H. Kim 1955, 54). Combining Kim's argument with Yi Ŭng-su's reveals the entirety of North Korea's perception of novel development in the 1950s: "chronicles → biographies → narrative literature → handwritten forms → literature of prose → novels."

Kim Ha-myŏng regarded *New Stories from the Gold Turtle Mountain* as Korea's first novel. This was an acceptance of the opinion prevalent before the division of the Korean Peninsula. In addition to the longitudinal relationship

between the development of prose forms, such as the prose of the preceding period, and the development of prose forms, Kim also discussed the transversal relationship between the aesthetic needs of the people and the legitimacy of literary development. The condition of aesthetic demands was later absorbed into the legitimacy of literary development with the development of North Korean Juche Literary Theory.

In the 16th century, it was the works of Im Che that occupied an important position in the history of the novel. Kim Ha-myŏng affirmed the status of Im's works in the history of fiction in terms of their love for the motherland and the people and hatred for the bureaucrats of the *yangban*, and in terms of their implication, refined expression, and rich lyricism.

North Korea called the Imjin War the "Imjin Fatherland War" and argued that during the war, there was an improvement in the people's class awakening and patriotic ideology. In response to the war, the people strengthened their anti-feudal consciousness and achieved class awakening. Literary works that dealt with this were considered to meet the aesthetic needs of the people. The emergence of the Korean novel in the seventeenth century was the result of efforts to fulfill these demands, and it was defined as a legitimate outcome of the development of prose literature such as chronicles, biographies, and narrative works in the preceding period.

Meanwhile, Kim Ha-myŏng affirmed the historical value of the *Unyŏng chŏn* [The tale of Unyŏng] in terms of exposing the anti-masses nature of the feudal system, which was presumed to have been written before the early 17th century. He also affirmed the novel's historical significance in terms of patriotic ideas and conformity to the new tasks of the times, as well as the works of fiction that were presumably created during the same period, such as the *Imjillok* [Record of the Black Dragon Year], *Pakssi puin chŏn* [The tale of Mrs. Pak], *Rimgyŏngŏp chŏn* [The tale of Rim Kyŏng-ŏp], and the *Honggildong chŏn* [The tale of Hong Kil-dong]. In addition, Kim recognized the novel historical value of 17th-century Korean novels not only because they were written in Korean, but also because they became new indicators of the

development of novel literature in terms of their thematic aspects, characterization, and composition.

From the late 17th century to the 19th century, a new trend of realism emerged in fiction literature. Kim Ha-myŏng explained that the aesthetic demands of the people increased in the context of the era, mainly due to the growth of the currency-based economy, the awakening of people's national and class consciousness, and the development of realist thought. As a result, the characterization and portrayal methods of fiction literature became more democratic and realistic. He also argued that the emergence of realistic fiction literature during this period was due to the rules of literary development.

In the same period, narratives surrounding the history of fiction in South Korea usually evaluated the period after the reigns of King Yŏngjo and his successor Chŏnggo as a period of stagnation in the development of fiction (H. Kim 1955, 268). From a materialist historical development perspective, Kim argued that the development of the currency-based economy in the 19th century led to the development of novels in terms of themes and forms (H. Kim 1955, 268). He argued that, mainly in terms of realism, novels in the 19th century mostly got rid of traces of fantastic elements, with the writing style becoming more colloquialized and realistic depictions significantly strengthened (H. Kim 1955, 316). Kim Ha-myŏng's emphasis on the strengthening of realist tendencies in 19th-century novels is likely related to his intention to rationalize the claims of socialist realist literary theory at the time by linking it to socialist realism, which was the core of literary creation theory in the North Korea at the time.

## Historical Narratives of Ancient Fictions in the Late 1950s

Whereas *Korean Literary History* was, from the mid-1950s, a product of individual creativity, *The Complete History of Korean Literature*, published in 1959, was North Korea's first collectively written work of literary history. It was directly

related to and a product of the Chollima Movement that took place in North Korea in the late 1950s.

In December 1956, Kim Il-sung delivered a speech, “To Raise a Revolutionary Upsurge in Socialist Construction,” to a plenary session of the Central Committee of the Workers’ Party of Korea and called for increased productivity. A comprehensive effort of innovation began in earnest the following year. In 1959, the Chollima Movement began as an extension of these efforts aimed at innovation. The Chollima Movement, which was carried out under the slogan “One for all, all for one,” was not limited to factories but was practiced in all fields of society, including culture and thought (Kim 2011). Against this background, the first collectively written literary history of North Korea, *The Complete History of Korean Literature*, was compiled by the Literature Research Center of the Institute of Language and Literature, Academy of Sciences of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea.

The history was composed of two volumes, the first volume dealing with the history of classical literature before the 19th century, and the second volume dealing with the history of modern literature in the 20th century. In addition to adopting a Marxist-Leninist methodology, the two volumes were based on historicist principles and aimed to reveal the tradition of patriotism, peoplehood, and humanitarianism in the context of progressive literature.

*The Complete History of Korean Literature* (vol. 1) states that people’s literature has its origins in the oldest oral tales and songs, but like Yi Ŭng-su, it considers the Tan’gun Myth as a founding story and did not see it as a product of primitive times. The text judged that, according to Marx’s view of artifacts, elements such as the monarchical hereditary system, the bastardization system, and the use of national symbols in the Tan’gun Myth were added and supplemented during the oral process because it was difficult to determine which period of time they were the product of, as they were developed after the society had already become quite advanced.

In primitive societies, the development of knowledge was limited due to low productivity, and the development of literature and art in primitive societies was also limited due

to their simple perception of the world. The formation of a class-based state during the Three Kingdoms period and the importation of Chinese characters had a tremendous impact on the development of epic literature, and, like Yi Ŭng-su, the examination of epic literature was also examined from the perspective of archival literature.

With the establishment and development of the class-based state during the Three Kingdoms period, the ruling class imported Chinese narrative methods and composed chronicles such as the *Extant Records* and the *Documentary Records*, which became a valuable foundation for the development of ancient prose literature and, like Yi Ŭng-su secured the first position in the folktale literature of the chronicles. The chronicles contain numerous myths, legends, songs, proverbs, and other works of people's oral literature, which is said to be the greatest literary value of the chronicles, and it was argued that people's oral works had a great influence on the development of epic literature, so the status of oral works was considered significantly higher than that of Yi's history of fiction.

The oldest surviving work from the period before the 7th century is a letter from King Taemushin of Koguryŏ to Grand Administrator of Liaodong of the Han dynasty in book 14 of the *History of the Three Kingdoms*, and inscriptions such as the tomb inscriptions of King Kwanggaeto played a promotional role in the development of ancient biographical literature (Institute of Language and Literature 1959, 26). It was argued that prose literature such as Shilla's *Kallyŏmmun* [Remonstrance to the king] and Paekche's *Okchung sangsŏ* [Letters from prison] directly influenced the prose literature of the Unified Shilla period, including fable and satirical literature, biography, and travelogue literature. In other words, *The Complete History of Korean Literature* (vol. 1), like Yi Ŭng-su's *Korean Literary History: 1st–14th Centuries*, examines the development of epic literature from an archival perspective, but is more specific than Yi's work about the connections between the developmental processes within epic literature during this period.

The 7th to 9th centuries, or the Unified Shilla period, was defined as a period of quasi-ethnic formation and the



establishment of a feudal centralized government (Institute of Language and Literature 1959, 44). The text emphasized that epic prose texts such as Kim Tae-mun's *Hwarang segi* [Annals of the Hwarang], *Kosŭng chŏn* [Biographies of eminent monks], *Miscellaneous Tales of Gyeongju*, Ch'oe Ch'i-won's *Records of the Strange and Unusual in Shilla*, and Kim Chang-ch'ŏng's *Haengnok* [Practice records], as well as Hyecho's travelogue *Wango ch'ŏnc'ukuk chŏn* [Memoir of the pilgrimage to the five regions of India], and Sŏlch'ong's creative allegory *Admonitions to the King of Flowers*, jointly played a role in laying the foundation for later national literature. On the other hand, works such as *Kimyushin chŏn* [The tale of Kim Yu-shin], *Changbogo chŏn* [The tale of Chang Po-go], *Chiŭn chŏn* [The tale of Chiŭn], *The Tale of Choshin*, *Manp'a shikchŏk* [Flute for ending all the waves], and *Sŏnyul hwansaeng* [The reincarnation of monk Sŏnyul] were not treated as works of the Shilla period, but as literary creations of Kim Pu-shik and Iryŏn and treated as works of the Koryŏ period. It is another characteristic of *The Complete History of Korean Literature* (vol. 1) that it determines which period a work belongs to, based on the year of publication of the collection, not the time in which the characters lived.

The text also agreed with Yi Ŭng-su's view that prose forms developed and separated from chronicles, including biographical literature such as the *Records of the Strange and Unusual in Shilla*, which was a precursor to the novel in the Shilla period, biographies such as Kim Tae-mun's *Biographies of Eminent Monks* and Kim Yu-shin's *Practice Records*, and allegorical prose such as Sŏlch'ong's *Admonitions to the King of Flowers*.

Of these, the most artistically superior one was said to be "The Twin Sisters" It was viewed it as biographical prose, and its literary form was the same as that of the biographical novel collection *New Stories from the Gold Turtle Mountain*, thus viewing this work as part of the same lineage as "The Twin Sisters." *The Complete History of Korean Literature* (vol. 1) assessed Ch'oe Ch'i-won, who was recognized as the author of "The Twin Sister" as a humanitarian who advocated the free expression of human individuality (Institute of Language and Literature 1959, 85–88). In other words, the text approached

“The Twin Sisters” from a humanitarian perspective.

*The Complete History of Korean Literature* (vol. 1) considered the works contained in the *History of the Three Kingdoms* and the *Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms* as works of the Koryŏ dynasty. Among the works included in the *History of the Three Kingdoms*, it was said that the works that were highly appreciated in terms of epic literature were biographies of heroes such as *The Tale of Kim Yu-shin* and *Ŭljimundŏk chŏn* [The tale of Ŭljimundŏk], biographies of scholars and artists such as *Kangsu chŏn* [The tale of Kangsu], *Ch’oech’iwon chŏn* [The tale of Ch’oe Ch’i-won], *Sŏlch’ong chŏn* [The tale of Sŏlch’ong], and *Solgŏ chŏn* [The tale of Solgŏ], and biographies such as *Ondal chŏn* [The tale of Ondal], *Sŏlssinyŏ chŏn* [The tale of Mrs. Sŏl], and *Tomi chŏn* [The tale of Tomi]. In particular, the book showed appreciation toward the novelistic aspects of people’s biographies because they had a pioneering position in the process of development of the fiction genre.

The *Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms*, which extensively compiled biographical sagas and oral tales in the form of unofficial histories, was also considered to be a step forward in the development of traditional biographical texts and in preparing for the rise of novel literature. This development led to the emergence of a new prose style, the literary prose style, in the late 12th and 13th centuries, which marked a major stage in the development of prose.

*The Complete History of Korean Literature* (vol. 1) explains the inevitability of the emergence of *p’aesŏlch’e* as a legitimate result of the development of prose and emphasizes its inevitability as a result of the fact that the fixed form of the existing four-six prose could not fully express the complexity of real life due to the intensification of social class contradictions in the late 12th century, and that *p’aesŏlch’e* arose in order to escape the constraints imposed by the Anthology of Refined Literature-style popularized by the past system on the individuality and originality of writers. *The Complete History of Korean Literature* (vol. 1) highly appraises *p’aesŏlch’e* fiction’s historical status, saying that it was the origin of fiction literature and the source of essay literature and literary criticism.

Like Kim Ha-myōng, *The Complete History of Korean Literature* (vol. 1) also characterized *New Stories from the Gold Turtle Mountain* as the first collection of biographical short stories. The text cited Kim An-ro's *Yongch'ŏn tamjŏkki* [Records of Mr. Dragon Spring's talks in solitude] to recognize the influence of the *New Stories from the Gold Turtle Mountain* and *Chŏndŭng shinhwa* [New stories for trimming the lampwick]. At the same time, it argued that the content of *New Stories from the Gold Turtle Mountain* show Kim Si-sŭp's original talents and ideas, and that it also utilizes national characteristics by vividly showing the living emotions and mental world of the Chosŏn people. This thesis was in line with the prevailing thesis in the South during the same period.

In the 17th century, with the rise of the Pragmatic School, numerous novels appeared, which led to the conclusion that the novel only entered a full-fledged stage of development at this time (Institute of Language and Literature 1959, 307). The logic was that novels such as Im Che's *The History of Flowers* and *Sŏoksŏl* [The tale of an imprisoned rat] written in the 16th century, further maintained the development of the novel in terms of form and played a role in connecting the emergence of the novel with the full-fledged novel period. To summarize, the novel began with *New Stories from the Gold Turtle Mountain*, entered the full-fledged novel period through Im's novels, and reached completion in terms of content and form with the advent of *The Tale of Unyŏng* and *The Tale of Hong Kil-dong*.

*The Complete History of Korean Literature* (vol. 1) argued that, in the 18th century, socioeconomic fluctuations and the development of practical thought rapidly promoted the secularization of fiction. Novels of this period were characterized by the themes of "secular" issues that were of concern in the daily lives of ordinary people, and the protagonists were ordinary people. The novels leaped over the medieval method of reflecting reality and established a realism that legitimately reflected true life (Institute of Language and Literature 1959, 359).

Fictional literature in the 19th century was given a transitional character that connected medieval and modern

novels. This developmental view is a consistent perspective of the materialist view. Its logic was re-emphasized in *The Complete History of Korean Literature* from Yi Myŏng-sŏn to Kim Ha-myŏng.

The history of fiction in *The Complete History of Korean Literature* largely follows the novel history narratives of Yi Ũng-su and Kim Ha-myŏng. However, there are also some differences. The changes include the exclusion of aristocratic literature from the perspective of people's literature, the overemphasis on the huge role of labor in the development of art, and the literary criticism of works such as Hyech'o's *Memoir of the Pilgrimage to the Five Regions of India* and "The Twin Sisters" from the humanitarian dimension.

## Conclusion

The most distinctive feature of North Korea's narrative concerning the history of classic fiction in the 1950s is the critical logic of realism. This is because one of the main tasks of North Korea's literary and creative community in the 1950s was to indoctrinate workers with communist ideas by creating more socialist realist works. The realist context of the classics was relevant and justified by the political and social realities of the time.

Another characteristic of North Korean narratives of classical fiction during this period is that the critical logic was adjusted according to the changing political environment of the Communist camp, mainly the Soviet Union. For example, the emphasis on humanitarianism in *The Complete History of Korean Literature* was a new principle of literary criticism when compared to the *Korean Literary History* series for universities in the mid-1950s. This change was related to the anti-Stalin trend in the Communist camp in the late 1950s. In 1956, at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Khrushchev delivered a secret speech criticizing the cult of Stalin. An important theoretical device for criticizing the cult of personality at the time was "humanitarianism."

The history of the old novels in *The Complete History of Korean Literature* can be considered a relatively open-minded North Korean history of literature currently available. This is evidenced, for example, by the discussion of the relationship between the *New Stories from Gold Turtle Mountain* and the *New Stories for Trimming the Lampwick*; the emphasis on the influence of Chinese novels in 18th-century Korean fiction; and the comparative literary comparison of *The Tale of Hong Kil-dong* with Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516) and Thomas Canvanera's *The Sun Country* (1620) in Western Europe.

In the 1960s, North Korea's external environment was destabilized by intra- and inter-sectarian conflict within the Communist camp. Conflicts with the Soviet Union in the first half of the 1960s and again with China from 1966 to 1969 led to a deterioration in relations. During the same period, the Vietnam War further strained relations between North and South Korea. In this unstable political environment, North Korea promoted the Juche ideology. At the First Session of the Fourth Supreme People's Assembly in December 1967, Juche was formalized as the guiding idea for the country's activities. At the same time, the Ten Tenets of the Republic, which were finalized at this meeting, demanded that Juche ideas be implemented in all sectors as the first priority (C. Yi 2011, 43). The 1960s saw the rise of Juche ideas and the acceleration of personal worship of Kim Il-sung, so much so that literary histories and histories of old novels from the 1960s onward are often accompanied by Kim Il-sung's instructions. The logic of literary criticism that emphasized autonomy was also strengthened. As a result, the narrative style of North Korea's narratives about the history of fiction was once again modified based on the narratives about the history of fiction that emerged in the 1950s.

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## Glossary

- Changbogo chŏn* 張保臯傳  
*Chiŭn chŏn* 知恩傳  
*Chŏndŭng shinhwa* 剪燈新話  
*Choshin chŏn* 潮信傳  
*Chosŏn munhak t'ongsa* 朝鮮文學通史  
*Chosŏn munhaksa* 朝鮮文學史  
*Ch'oech'iwon chŏn* 崔致遠傳  
*Ch'ŏnch'u kŭmgyŏngnok* 千秋金鏡錄  
*Haedong kosŭng chŏn* 海東高僧傳  
*Haengnok* 行錄  
*Hanshu* 漢書  
*Honggildong chŏn* 洪吉童傳  
*Hwarang segi* 花郎世記

*Hwasa* 花史  
*Hwawanggye* 花王戒  
*Imjillok* 壬辰錄  
*Kallyömmun* 諫獵文  
*Kangsu chön* 強首傳  
*Kayaguk kôn'gukki* 伽倻國建國記  
*Kimyushin chön* 金庾信傳  
*Koryö p'yönnnyön t'ongjae* 高麗編年通載  
*Kosüng chön* 高僧傳  
*Kuksa* 國史  
*Kümo shinhwa* 金鰲新話  
*Kut'o sölhwa* 龜兔說話  
*Kyerim japp'yön* 鶴林雜編  
*Manp'a shikchök* 萬波息笛  
*Okchung sangsö* 獄中上書  
*Ondal chön* 溫達傳  
*Paekche kôn'gukki* 百濟建國記  
*Pakssi puin chön* 朴氏夫人傳  
*Ponjo p'yönnnyön kangmok* 本朝編年綱目  
*Pyöljubu chön* 鼈主簿傳  
*p'aesölgch'e* 稗說體  
*P'yönnnyön t'ongjae* 編年通載  
*Rimgyöngöp chön* 林慶業傳  
*Samguk sagi* 三國史記  
*Samguk yusa* 三國遺事  
*Sanguozhi* 三國志  
*Sedae p'yönnnyön chöryo* 世代編年節要  
*Shiji* 史記  
*Shijing* 詩經  
*Shilla kôn'gukki* 新羅建國記  
*Shilla sui chön* 新羅殊異傳  
*Shinjip* 新集  
*Sögi* 書記  
*Sölgch'ong chön* 薛聰傳  
*Solgö chön* 率居傳  
*Sölssinyö chön* 薛氏女傳  
*Sönyul hwansaeng* 善律還生  
*Söoksöl* 鼠獄說  
*Ssangnyöbun* 雙女墳  
*Tan'gun'gi* 檀君紀

*Tomi chŏn* 都彌傳  
*Tongmyŏngwanggi* 東明王紀  
*Ŭljimundŏk chŏn* 支文德傳  
*Unyŏng chŏn* 雲英傳  
*Wango ch'ŏnc'ukuk chŏn* 往五天竺國傳  
*Yongch'ŏn tamjŏkki* 龍泉談寂記  
*Yugi* 留記