Yi Ok 李鈺 and His *Iŏn* 俚諺 (Folk Vernacular)

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Abstract: Yi Ok 李鈺 (1760–1815) was a prolific writer who lived in Hanyang (modern Seoul) during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Among the massive pile of writings he left behind, his *Iŏn* 俚諺 (Folk Vernacular) best reveals his broad and multifaceted linguistic and literary knowledge, which in turn epitomizes the cultural complexity of late Chosŏn. In its three introductory treatises, as well as in the ensuing sixty-six pentasyllabic Sinitic quatrains written in female voices, Yi Ok illustrates why and how he writes poems about how "heaven and earth and the ten thousand things" (*ch'ŏnji manmul* 天地萬物) speak through him. This article combines a scholarly introduction to Yi Ok's life and oeuvre with a philological translation of his *Iŏn* that unpacks the complexity of Yi Ok's age to gain a fuller understanding of the last stage of Literary Sinitic (*hanmun*) literature in traditional Korea.

Keywords: Yi Ok 李鈺 (1760–1815), *Iŏn* 俚諺, *hansi* 漢詩, Sinitic poetry, vernacular, literary language

Introduction

Among Yi Ok's (1760–1815) writings, numbering nearly two hundred (four of which were of book length), his *Iŏn* 俚諺 is an outstanding work in which the author not only actively addresses and argues his ideas about language and literature but also exemplifies them through poems.[1] It comprises a tripartite essay ("Iŏn in" 俚諺引 [Introducing *Iŏn*]) followed by sixty-six poems under four different modes (*ajo* [雅調 "elegance"], *yŏmjo* [艷調 "allure"], *t'angjo* [宕調 "dissoluteness"], and *pijo* [悱調 "rancor"]). Serving as a preface to the poems, the "Iŏn in"— divided into "Illan" 一難 (First criticism), "Inan" 二難 (Second criticism), and "Samnan" 三難 (Third criticism)—uses a format whereby Yi Ok converses with a fictitious critic to defend himself and unfolds lengthy dialogues about what he thought literature and poetry should be. He declares that poetry is not created by poets but by reality, which is manifested in the form of emotion; that this belief of his compels him to write about tangible, real-life matters, rather than moral principles and integrity, and in the local vernacular, rather than in orthodox Literary Sinitic (henceforth, LS); and that the best voice to assume to do this is that of women. This is exemplified by the sixty-six pentasyllabic quatrains (*oŏn chŏlku* 五言絶句) that follow, all in female voices. They focus on local matters, particularly those of women, emulating and employing the local vernacular language of Korean, yet displaying Yi Ok's erudite, sophisticated, and brilliant talent in LS, not to mention his characteristic wit.

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Yi Ok was an eccentric writer who lived under King Chŏngjo's 正祖 (r. 1776–1800) rule in Hanyang 漢陽 (present-day Seoul) of Chosŏn Korea (1392–1910). The most frequently noted aspect about him is that his name was mentioned in the *Sillok* 實錄 (Veritable Record of Chosŏn) as a student who was reprimanded by King Chŏngjo. As a student selected into the State Confucian Academy (Sŏnggyun'gwan 成均館), he was taken to task by the king for writing in a non-classical style from Qing China (1644–1911), which the king himself labeled *p'aegwan sop'um* (稗官小品 "fiction and vignettes"). This incident in which Chŏngjo made an example out of him is at the core of what later came to be known as the *munch'e panjŏng* (文體反正 "rectification of literary styles").[2]

Yi Ok showed literary talent in a wider variety of genres than did his contemporaries, ranging from poems and rhapsodies to essays, treatises, biographies, policies, encyclopedic notes, and drama. Despite his colorful literary profile, not to mention his somewhat dramatic career, Yi Ok had not been spotlighted as a significant writer of Chosŏn. Until the end of the 1990s, he and his works were sporadically mentioned mostly as novel or radical examples of the Literary Sinitic literature that unfolded in late Chosŏn. As interest in late-Chosŏn literature grew, Yi Ok's literature began to be noticed by scholars.[3]

1. His Life

Little is known about Yi Ok's family background. He was from a branch of the Chŏnju Yi 全州李氏, the royal family of Chosŏn but with numerous branches.[4] He had three brothers and six sisters, and he and his younger brother were from the second wife of his father. Though he was not a concubinary son (*sŏŏl* 庶孼), his mother (née Hong 洪) was a daughter of a concubinary son. His paternal family was also a concubinary branch for generations until King Injo 仁祖 (r. 1595–1649) allowed them to become a legitimate lineage in recognition of the contribution his great-great-grandfather Yi Kich'uk 李起築 (1589–1645) made to the 1623 restoration (Injo panjŏng) of the throne.[5] His great-grandfather and grandfather served as military officers, but no one else in his direct family served in a government position. His father was a presented scholar (*chinsa* 進士) but did not hold an office. Nevertheless, his family seems to have been quite well-off and owned large estates, living in Hanyang for generations. This places Yi Ok within the close network, or at least in the vicinity, of the *kyŏnghwa sajok* 京華士族—rich Hanyang-based *yangban* residents, whose ties with their countryside domiciles weakened and who instead constructed their own cultural and political identity in the distinctive environment of the capital city. In particular, many of them shared similar interests and tastes in arts and culture that transcended their different backgrounds—whether political faction, family background, or class status (legitimate or concubinary), enjoying the urbanizing and dynamic life that the eighteenth-century Hanyang provided, with a special penchant for contemporary Qing-Chinese culture. Most frequently mentioned among them include Yi Tŏngmu 李德懋 (1741–1793) and Pak Chiwŏn 朴趾源 (1737–1805), Hong Taeyong 洪大容 (1731–1783), Pak Chega 朴齊家 (1750–1805), and Yu Tŭkkong 柳得恭 (1749–?). Yu Tŭkkong, especially, who was also a senior maternal cousin to Yi Ok,

influenced him greatly with the books and experiences he brought back from his envoy trips to China (Yi Hyŏnu 2009: 14). But Yi Ok was in no position to vie for a prominent political career. He was still of concubinary birth and neither his patrilineal nor matrilineal lineage was powerful enough to promise him direct access to a career in officialdom in anything higher than marginal posts. In this respect, he was somewhat different from other *kyŏnghwa* literati. Being selected into the State Confucian Academy was perhaps the most prestige that his brilliant literary talent had afforded him.

Yi Ok was initiated into the State Academy as a student scholar (*yuhak* 幼學). In 1789, he was given a chance to bypass the first-stage exam (*ch'osi* 初試) and proceed directly to the metropolitan exam for winning the second-highest place at the regular examination of the Academy (*Ilsŏngnok*, Chŏngjo 13 [1789]/2/29). The next year, he passed the level of licentiate (*saengwŏn* 生員) at the Augmented Examinations (*chŭnggwangsi* 增廣試). An incident two years later then changed his life. His answer on an assigned test (*ŭngje* 應製) caught the king's (Chŏngjo) attention, who had already been unhappy with the deterioration of literary bearing (*munp'ung* 文風) among his scholar-officials. Chŏngjo blamed the spread of tasteless and secular *p'aegwan sop'um* on the influx of books purchased in China by envoys and interpreters (*Chŏngjo sillok*, Chŏngjo 16 [1792]/10/19).

Chŏngjo singled out Yi Ok for reprimand by not allowing him to take another civil service examination before composing fifty pieces of four-six prose (*saryungmun* 四六文).[6] Had it not been for this royal chiding, Yi Ok might have remained forgotten among the multitude of literati writers. Even with the king's scolding, however, Yi Ok did not change his ways. In the eyes of Chŏngjo, the fifty pieces he wrote simply repeated the same tasteless style, so the king again ordered him to present 100 pieces of regulated verse within ten days. Yi Ok yet again was unable to satisfy the king with his poems and was placed in the military reserve (*ch'unggun* 充軍) in 1795 (*Ilsŏngnok*, Chŏngjo 16 [1792]/12/16; Chŏngjo 19 [1795]/8/7 [no. 1]). He was sent first to Chŏngsan 定山 (modern-day Ch'ŏngyang in Ch'ungch'ŏng Province), after which he came back to Seoul to take another examination. His answer was still criticized for being "fickle and eccentric" (*ch'oswae)*[7] so he was sent further away to serve in the navy reserve in Samga 三嘉 (in the area of modern-day Hapch'ŏn, Kyŏngsang Province). The following year, he came back to take a special examination (*pyŏlsi* 別式), in which his answer was chosen as the best among the candidates. But the king reviewed this too and was displeased yet again with his policy essay and ordered it ranked lowest on the list. Then Yi Ok was in mourning for his father's death for three years, after which he was called back to Samga to serve out the rest of his reserve duty.

Chŏngjo's behavior in response to Yi Ok's writing was indeed strange. It was almost too personal or even emotional for a king to treat a prospective retainer-talent (*hyŏllyang* 賢良) in such a way. It would require another full-fledged deliberation to understand why the king behaved so—too long for this introduction to tackle. Suffice it to say for now that it was his fundamental convictions as a Confucian king (*yuhak kunju* 儒學君主) that lay behind his behavior. He fashioned himself

as a teacher-king to his ministers and literati, second only to King Sejong 世宗 (r. 1419–1450), whose solemn duty was to counter the ills of his domain with profound measures rather than political or legal maneuvers. He wanted to transform (*kyohwa* 敎化) his people with upright values, instead of simply forcing them away from the looming moral depravity lurking in the books of fiction, vignettes, and popular literature, as well as Western Learning (*sŏhak* 西學, i.e., Christianity) from China.[8]

In the end, Yi Ok never succeeded in being selected in the examinations or in launching a career in the government.[9] The royal chiding certainly quashed any opportunity for him to move forward with a normal career as a literatus, but at some point his alternate path may have become his own choice. At any rate, it was likely his professional failures that ironically allowed him to compose such a rich corpus of sophisticated, unrepressed, yet elegant literature. He styled himself, as many free-spirited writers did, with numerous sobriquets, including Kyŏnggŭmja 絅錦子 (Light-Coated Master), Mumunja 文無子 (Master Angelica), Hwasŏkcha 花石子 (Master of Flowers and Stones), Maehwa oesa 梅花外史 (External Historian of Plum Blossoms), Mae'am 梅庵 (Plum Studio), Maegyeja 梅谿子 (Plum Valley Master), Ch'ŏnghwa oesa 靑花外史 (External Historian of Blue Flowers), Tohwayusugwan chuin 桃花流水館主人 (Host of the House of Peach Blossoms by Flowing Water), Hwasŏ oesa 花 溆 外史 (External Historian of Flowery Shore), Sŏkho chuin 石湖主人 (Host of Stone Lake), and Munyang sanin 汶陽散人 (Leisured Man in Munyang). But such a life without worldly success prevented him from being commemorated with an individual anthology (*munjip* 文集), and most of his extant writings were collected in the anthology of Kim Ryŏ 金鑢 (1766–1822)—Yi Ok's dear friend and admirer at the State Academy—*Tamjŏng ch'ongsŏ* 潭庭叢書 (Collected writings of Tamjŏng [Kim Ryŏ]). The *Iŏn* that I translate is not included in the *Tamjŏng ch'ongsŏ* but found scattered as manuscript copies.[10] A comprehensive collection of Yi Ok's writings came out in 2001 and again in 2009.[11]

2. The Folk Vernacular

Iŏn is a unique piece among Yi Ok's various writings, being the only essay in which he engaged in a critical discourse on poetry, followed by sixty-six poems exemplifying his conception. What is more interesting is the fact that all these poems are written serially and grouped according to four modes of emotion, in the voices of women. In other words, Yi Ok wrote these poems together deliberately with an overarching theme or authorial intention, not as an ex post facto collection of separately written poems. In many ways, therefore, the *Iŏn* demonstrates Yi Ok's ideas on poetry and poetry writing from theory to practice.

Yi Ok declares that it is "heaven and earth and the ten thousand things" (*ch'ŏnji manmul* 天地萬物), not the poet, who write poems. Poets' work is like that of painters and interpreters, who merely convey the reality (*chŏng* 情, also translated as "emotion")[12] of what is given by the "heaven and earth and the ten thousand things" ("First Criticism"). Since everything in the universe, as well as the universe itself, is changing constantly, only poets who are in tune with the changes at each moment can convey the reality they see, hear, and feel—the sensations and

feelings they get from it—in the most realistic language they use. The implication of this statement is significant. It negates the long-established classic dictum about poetry, "Poetry speaks of intent" (*Shi yan zhi* 詩言志). Intent is in the mind of the poet, not in the things themselves. He then proposes that the truest and most real emotion (*chŏng chi chin* 情之眞) of all is that of women. "Women are by nature eccentric," he says in the "Second Criticism," and women can voice what they see, hear, and feel candidly without being inhibited by lofty and abstract moral principles. This is why his poems are in women's voices, describing the "matters of rouge, powder, skirts, and hairpins" (*punji kunch'a chi sa* 粉脂裙釵之事). These matters have then to be called by the names they are given in the current everyday vernacular language (*iŏn*) of "here and now" rather than by those coined by people who lived in a world sometime and somewhere else ("Third Criticism").

Let us think more about the title, *Iŏn*. What did Yi Ok mean by "folk" (*i* 俚)? Why did he write in the vernacular (*ŏn* 諺) and what exactly is it that he refers to as the vernacular? Yi Ok does not define the morphemes in the title himself, but we may make some observations. As a word, *iŏn* 俚諺 (Ch. *liyan*) itself had been in use in LS as late as the Song dynasty (960–1279), meaning "folk sayings" such as common proverbs or unadorned (spoken) language. The core of it is that it is opposite to the written, LS language (*aŏn* 雅言, lit. "elegant language"), as we see in Chŏng Yagyong's 丁若鏞 (1762–1836) advice for local magistrates to replace *iŏn* names for inventory items (such as *t'ae* 太 "soybeans") with *aŏn* names (e.g., *taedu* 大豆) in their bureaucratic documents (Chŏng Yagyong 1936, 3:19a–b). The first morpheme, *i* (Ch. *li*) has a long history with a fairly stable designation for things "rural," "rustic," "unsophisticated," or "folk,"[13] as it appears in such words as *liyu/liyan* (俚語/俚言 "folk sayings"), *lisu* (俚俗 "[vulgar] folk custom"), *liru* (俚儒 "petty scholar"), and *lige* (俚歌 "folk song" [sometimes by itself without *-ge* "song"]). Early sources often paired it with *bi* (鄙 "border town"), which made a rhyming binome *bili* 鄙俚. This makes *i* a peripheral space contrasting with the center or capital; in the Sino-Korean cultural sphere in the minds of Chosŏn literati, this points to the Korean peninsula (the periphery) in contrast with China (Chunghwa 中華 "Central Efflorescence"). The same denotation extended to streets and alleyways (*lixiang* 俚巷) and people living in those areas (*limin* 俚民), suggesting domestic or residential spaces, with which women and commoners are associated, as opposed to public or official spaces. In Yi Ok's use of the word, *i* seems to evoke both spatial identities—peripheral (to the court and scholar-officials) and domestic/local (vis à vis China), that is, the common residential quarters of Chosŏn. But we also have to note that this space hardly spreads to the countryside of Chosŏn where local *yangban* had strongholds over their conservative culture and literary ideals. It was specifically scoped onto the urban space of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Hanyang, where mixed residents (not only the king and his officials but also unsuccessful political aspirants, concubinary descendants, middle-people professionals, commoners, servants, and more) lived together.[14] In other words, *i* was a space of cultural and literary modernity branching out of the tradition.

Ŏn, on the other hand, points to orality. As is well known, the word *ŏn* is used in the common byname for Han'gŭl, that is, *ŏnmun* 諺文. It is often assumed

to have been a pejorative name for Han'gŭl, intended in the sense of "vulgar script" in contrast to the established authority of sinographs, *hancha* 漢字, also called *chinsŏ* (眞書 "true writing"). This is largely due to the popular perceptions of the modern era, perhaps based on such late-Chosŏn associations as the aforementioned Chŏng Yagyong's account in which he paired *iŏn* and *aŏn*. But most Chosŏn use of *ŏn* does not suggest any pejorative sense.[15] *Ŏn* in fact finds its coinage in the classical Chinese *yanyu* (諺語 "[customary/local] saying [as opposed to the written]"). In Old Chinese, *yan* shares its etymon with *yan* (言 [Old Chinese **ngan*] "to speak"). Thus, the name *ŏnmun* itself should mean "speaking script," designating the writing of spoken sounds. Therefore, the word *ŏn* in the title should mean the language as spoken, rather than in literary form. We should also note here that Yi Ok did not write it in Han'gŭl or in any other phonographic script (e.g., *idu*), nor did he choose to adopt a variant syntax (such as the *chikhae* 直解 or *ŏrok* 語錄 style).[16] Rather, Yi Ok's writing of *Iŏn* consistently employs a highly literary style. Therefore, the *Iŏn* is about *writing*, or literarizing,[17] the language spoken in the spatiotemporal locale that Yi Ok himself pinpointed as "the city of Hanyang of Chosŏn during the reign years of Qianlong (1735–1795) of the Great Qing" 大淸乾隆之年, 朝鮮漢陽之城 in his "First Criticism."

In this regard, the language and literature that Yi Ok put forward in his *Folk Vernacular* is not a vernacular Korean literature in the usual sense. Rather, its prose and poetry evince a highly refined Sinitic whose norms and references are clearly rooted in classical Chinese literature. In the "First Criticism," Yi compared his writing of the poems in the *Iŏn* to such traditional Chinese genres as "Airs of the States" (*Guofeng* 國風) in the *Book of Poetry*, "Music Bureau" (*Yuefu* 樂府) ballads, and *ci* 詞 and *qu* 曲 lyrics. Just as the ancients wrote these songs about the matters of the world in which they lived, using the literary language with which their emotions could resonate, Yi Ok wrote about the matters of his time and space in the LS that was the most appropriate, or indeed the only, medium viable for him. In that, he was augmenting the LS tradition to Chosŏn Korea ("Qianlong-era Hanyang," to be exact), rather than the other way around. His choice of poetic form was the pentasyllabic quatrain, and his prose was typical neoclassical (*komun* 古文). To read *Iŏn* then requires a variety of linguistic and literary competences.

The breadth of linguistic and literary knowledge that Yi Ok reveals in the *Iŏn* is rich, ranging from philosophical, historical, and literary classics to contemporary Chinese writers, vernacular fiction, and more. But what makes it more interesting is Yi Ok's way of integrating vernacular Korean elements into his discourse, both spoken and literary, for these are in fact the subject matter of *Iŏn*. The complexity of Yi Ok's literary language is compounded by orthodox LS, the vernacular literature of late imperial China, and nineteenth-century vernacular Korean. His language roams from the elegant to the boorish, from the classical to the quotidian, and from the cosmopolitan to the local. His attention to the local vernacular was not unique among his contemporaries, for we often come across late-Chosŏn writers who showed interest in the local vernacular, but the way he takes on the issue of the linguistic difference between the literary and the vernacular is idiosyncratic in that he embraces the unrefined peculiarity of the local wholeheartedly

into the cosmopolitan tradition. As such, Yi Ok takes the side of the poor yamen officer who could not find the *pŏbyu* (法油 "lamp oil") that he was charged to buy in the market, and of the ignorant country bumpkin who was upset that his city friend served him measly *muk* "green-bean curd" instead of the *ch'ŏngp'o* 靑泡 he was promised ("Third Criticism"). This is because *pŏbyu* and *chŏngp'o* were indeed called *tŭlgirŭm* and *muk* in the everyday language of nineteenth-century Chosŏn. *Pŏbyu* and *ch'ŏngp'o* did not even exist as words in the canonical LS from China. Rather, they were more than likely coined sinographically and used by Korean literati, and thus not communicable to Chinese speakers, making it difficult for them to find a place in the larger corpus of LS. Yi Ok recognizes and challenges this specific layer of Korean LS, as well.[18]

3. The *Iŏn* and Its Translation

Although he was not memorialized with a posthumous anthology (until the Silsi haksa kojŏn munhak yŏn'guhoe compiled one in 2001 and expanded it in 2009), Yi Ok left a sizable amount of writing, scattered as manuscripts and fragmented pieces. As mentioned above, many of them survived in his friend Kim Ryŏ's anthology. Yi Ok's writings range widely in genre, from poetry to prose, essays, and a drama. For poems, he particularly favored rhapsodies (*pu* 賦, C. *fu*) and left eighteen long ones. The length and format of his prose compositions also vary greatly, but many are recordings of his thoughts and appreciations of things he saw, words he read, and stories he heard, similar to Qing-Chinese *xiaopin* 小品 vignettes that he was accused of following. He also wrote quite a few fragmentary, memo-like short pieces, which Kim Ryŏ collected under the title of "Munyŏ" 文餘 (Piecemeal writings) in *Tamjŏng ch'ongsŏ* .

Apart from these usual short and dispersed pieces, there are four independent titles: *Tongsang ki* (東廂記 "The eastern wing"), *Paegun p'il* (白雲筆 "Writings from White Cloud Studio"), *Yŏn kyŏng* (煙經 "Classic of tobacco"), and the *Iŏn*. *Tongsang ki* is a four-act play that follows the format and convention of Chinese drama as exemplified by *Xixiang ji* (西廂記 "The Western Wing"), which the former apparently attempts to parallel. It is one of the three Chinese-style drama texts composed in Chosŏn which have become known so far.[19] The *Paegun p'il* is a collection of essays about specific objects under ten categories (itemized under ten groups labeled with Heavenly Stems, i.e., *kap* 甲 through *kye* 癸)—birds, fish, beasts, critters, flowers, grains, fruits, vegetables, trees, and plants—each of which bears a title "Tam 談 . . ." ("Speaking of . . ."). Lastly, the *Yŏn kyŏng* is Yi Ok's encyclopedic writing on everything about tobacco, from how to plant, harvest, and process to smoking methods, occasions, and etiquette. Unlike the rest, each of these four pieces is joined with Yi Ok's own preface in which he explains why he wrote it, as we see in "Iŏn in," not to mention that he gives each its own title.[20] That is, Yi Ok intended these works to be individual titles like monographs and authored them as such in terms of length, organization, and internal construction and craftsmanship. I believe, therefore, that we have to treat them as books, rather than as sections of a book. The idea is partially supported by the fact that each of these titles was copied and made into an independent title at one time or another.

This is why I chose to translate the *Iŏn* into English. Other writings by Yi Ok are of course worthy of translation or study, but *Iŏn*, together with *Paegun p'il*, is the least studied of his works. Scholars have studied *Yŏn kyŏng* and *Tongsang ki* in some depth, mostly in Korean. An Taehoe (2008), in particular, conducted extensive research on *Yŏn kyŏng* and translated it into modern Korean with annotations. Quite a few studies have been published on *Tongsang ki*, because for many years it was the only Chinese-style drama text produced in Chosŏn (until the discovery of *Puksang ki* and *Paeksangnu ki*), and there are three modern Korean translations now.[21] There is also a recent study by Sixiang Wang (Wang 2019) available in English. Youme Kim's PhD dissertation (Kim 2014) is so far the only monograph-length study dedicated to Yi Ok in English. Compared to these two titles, however, less has been done on *Iŏn* and *Paegun p'il*, even though they are gradually attracting more scholarly interest in Korea.[22] Outside Korea, Evon (2014), though not entirely devoted to Yi Ok or *Iŏn*, provides a refreshing historical context for Yi Ok and *Iŏn*. There is also Serrano (2020), a chapter dedicated to Yi Ok and *Iŏn* in the context of world literature, in which a few poems from the *Iŏn* are translated into English, albeit with scarce references.[23] But the *Iŏn* deserves a careful study and slow close reading in its own right. It is not just because it encapsulates a Sinitic writer's thoughts on writing, poetry, and language, along with a series of poems contextualizing his ideas. Considering the time and space in which Yi Ok lived, the life he was compelled to lead, the environs of the society where he dwelt, and the breadth and flexibility of the literary corpora in his mind, the *Iŏn* opens up for the spectra of literary knowledge, linguistic sensivities, and cultural complexity looming in late Chosŏn society.

As is the case with other writings of Yi Ok, reading *Iŏn* requires substantial linguistic and extralinguistic knowledge. His words are filled with depictions of the vivid quotidian details specific to the time and space of his life—"Qianlong-era Hanyang of Chosŏn." His articulation is sophisticated, skilled, and often cynically witty. My translation thus aims to read this text carefully, supplying the information essential to decipher and appreciate Yi Ok's words, without having to rely on vague guesses and approximate imagination. In this sense, the translation presented here is a deliberately philological one, and I have attempted to reflect Yi Ok's voice as it reads, refraining from "polishing" his language unless necessary. I have also tried to identify literary precedents and cultural references as exhaustively as possible, for our ability to read texts of this kind is inevitably hobbled when we live in a world distant from the time and space in which they were written and read. If translation is an activity to make sense of texts written in different languages and cultures, and if philology is fundamentally the effort to make sense of texts (Pollock 2015: 116), a philological translation of *Iŏn* is a necessary one.

Note on Editions

There are four manuscript copies of *Iŏn* extant:

1. *Iŏn*, National Library of Korea (Call # 한古朝48-158);
2. "Iŏn" collected in the *Yerim chapp'ae* (藝林雜佩 "Miscellaneous jades in the forest of art"), National Library of Korea (Call # 한古朝93-43), 1–19;

3. "Iŏn" collected in the *Chapsi* (雜詩 "Miscellaneous poems"), Jon'gyeong'gak Archive of the Sungkyunkwan University (Call # 검여 D02B-0160 v.1);
4. *Iŏn chip* 俚諺集, Jangseogak Archive of the Academy of Korean Studies (Call # PD6B-37).

Note on Romanization

For words, names, and terms in modern Korean pronunciation, I use the revised McCune-Reischauer system of Romanization. When introducing Middle Korean or Korean linguistic forms that predate the orthographic reform of 1933, I use the Yale Romanization System for Middle Korean developed by Samuel Martin (*A Reference Grammar of Korean*, Tuttle, 1992, Part I, esp. 42 and following). For Chinese, I use the Hanyu Pinyin Romanization rules, and for Middle and Old Chinese, Baxter-Sagart's system (*Old Chinese: A New Reconstruction*, Oxford University Press, 2014).

NOTES

Abbreviations

C. Modern Standard Chinese pronunciation
K. Modern Korean
MR McCune-Reischauer
SK Sino-Korean pronunciation

1 I recognize *Iŏn* as an independent monograph, not a part or a section of a larger title, because I believe Yi Ok's intention was as such (hence the italicization of the title). This will be discussed toward the end of this introduction.

2 The term *panjŏng* "return to the right" usually applies to *coups* successfully staged to restore a rightful king to the throne. Throughout Chosŏn there were only two coups officially called *panjŏng*—the Chungjong panjŏng 中宗反正 (1506) and Injo panjŏng 仁祖反正 (1623). The term *munch'e panjŏng* was not an official contemporary designation, nor did it index any specific event. King Chŏngjo outspokenly maintained a stern stance in favor of reinvigorating Confucian classical learning, emulating the terse yet subtle orthodox LS written language and resisting what were considered frivolous styles in casual prose and fiction from China. This stance had instigated a few interactions with scholar-officials over his policy on book imports from China. It is modern literary historians who have often dubbed these actions of Chŏngjo the *munch'e panjŏng*, following the coinage of Takahashi Tōru 高橋亨 (1878–1967). The most discernable course of events labeled *munch'e panjŏng* started in 1791 when Chŏngjo officially prohibited the importation of books from China carried out mainly by envoy retinues. An excellent essay by Gregory Evon (2014) describes Chŏngjo's concerns and the eighteenth-century Chosŏn society behind this inquisition into heterodox literature, in which Yi Ok and his *Iŏn*—"Rustic Sayings" as Evon translates it—feature at length.

3 Most previous studies on Yi Ok are in Korean; some will be mentioned in this introduction when relevant.

4 Since Yi Ok's collected works were never compiled, there is no chronological biography (*yŏnbo* 年譜) left of him. I rely here on Kim Yŏngjin (2002) and Yi Hyŏnu (2009).

5 Yi Kich'uk was a military officer related to Yi Sŏ 李曙 (1580–1637) by concubinary connection. He helped Yi Sŏ in the coup d'état to move the throne from King Kwanghaegun 光海君 (r. 1608–1623) to Injo, for which he was bestowed the title of Chŏngsa kongsin 靖社功臣 (Merit Subject of Pacifying the State) and his descendants were allowed to serve in official positions. See *Injo sillok*, Injo 1 (1623)/10 [intercalary month]/18 (no. 3) and 19.

6 Four-six prose—also known as parallel prose, i.e., *piantiwen* 駢體文 and *pianliwen* 駢儷文—is a style of prose characterized by metrical and grammatical parallelism, ample allusions, and elegant literary diction. Four and six are the most frequently employed number of syllables in a line, creating and maintaining prosodic effects in prose. It was adopted prevalently in literary, philosophical, and political essays, especially from late Tang to Qing China, as well as in Koryŏ and Chosŏn Korea. For more on parallel prose, see Hightower (1959).

7 *Ch'oswae* 噍殺 (Ch. *jiaoshai*) is one of the words that Chŏngjo used to describe the Ming-Qing Chinese writings. Originally appearing in the "Yueji" 樂記 of the *Liji* 禮記, it denoted a fast and faltering musical style ("notes that quickly die away," according to James Legge's translation).

8 As for a relevant record in which we can read the king's state of mind behind his association of books from China with Catholicism, see "Chŏngjo taewang haengjang" 正祖大王行狀 [Biographical account of King Chŏngjo the Great], *Chŏngjo sillok*, Supplement, 41b.

9 Yi Ok described the unfolding of these events in his "Ch'ugi namjŏng simal" 追記南征始末 [Postscript to the account of my travels to the south], collected in Kim Ryŏ's *Tamjŏng ch'ongsŏ* under the heading of "Pongsŏng munyŏ" 鳳城文餘 [Piecemeal writings from Pongsŏng]. (Kim Ryŏ, *Tamjŏng ch'ongsŏ*, ms., 14: 37b–39a; photographically reproduced in Silsi haksa kojŏn munhak yŏn'guhoe 2009, 5: 272–74).

10 See note on editions at the end of this introduction.

11 The Silsi haksa kojŏn munhak yŏn'guhoe 實是學舍古典文學研究會 (Society for Classical Literature at Factuality Principle Workshop) collated Yi Ok's writings with modern Korean translations and published them as *Yŏkchu Yi Ok chŏnjip* 譯註李鈺全集 [Complete collection of Yi Ok's writings, annotated with translations] in three volumes (Silsi haksa kojŏn munhak yŏn'guhoe 2001). The same organization republished it, adding newly discovered writings of Yi Ok and photographic reproductions of all the original texts, as *Wanyŏk Yi Ok chŏnjip* 完譯李鈺全集 [Collected works of Yi OK, completely translated] in five volumes (Silsi haksa kojŏn munhak yŏn'guhoe 2009).

12 *Chŏng* is ordinarily translated into English as "emotion," and this rendering is serviceable in most cases. But it does not translate the full equivalence. Linguistically speaking, *chŏng* as a morpheme appears with two meanings in Sinitic words. It means "emotion" or "affect" in such words as *aejŏng* (愛情 "love, affection"), *chŏngsŏ* (情緖 "mood, affect"), *chŏnggam* (情感 "feeling, emotion"), and *tongjŏng* (同情 "sympathy"). However, the translation does not work in other words, e.g., *sajŏng* (事情 "state of the matter"), *chŏnghwang* (情況 "situation, circumstance"), *chŏngbo* (情報 "information"), and *chŏngse* (情勢 "[course of a] situation"). In the latter set of the words, *chŏng* does not provide any connotation of emotion (as opposed to reason) but more one of "what happens," which I translate as "reality." Yi Ok's use of the word *chŏng* evokes both senses—sometimes it means emotion, other times, reality.

13 Apart from two early usages, a possible phonetic loan for *lai* (賴 "to rely on") and a name for a southern non-Han tribe.

14 This coincides with the space An Taehoe saw in his interpretation of Yi Ok's vignette pieces. See An Taehoe (2018).

15 King Sejong, for example, established the Ŏnmun ch'ŏng 諺文廳 [Bureau of Speaking Script] in 1443 (abolished in 1506). Royal edicts announced in the vernacular in Hang'ŭl were called *ŏnji* 諺旨 and *ŏn'gyo* 諺敎 throughout Chosŏn.

16 *Chikhae* (direct expounder) style is a mode of Sinitic writing that rewrites LS texts into a more accessible register of Chinese as exemplified by the Yuan-Chinese *Xiaojing zhijie* 孝經直解 by Guan Yunshi 貫雲石 (1286–1324) and the Chosŏn-era *Tae Myŏngnyul chikhae* 大明律直解 (1395) by Ko Sagyŏng 高士褧 and Kim Chi 金祗, although the Chinese *zhijie* and Korean *chikhae* use different linguistic strategies. *Ŏrok* (recorded sayings) style writes discourses in the early vernacular Sinitic (*baihua* 白話) style epitomized by the *Zhuzi yulei* 朱子語類 [Categorized sayings of Master Zhu] (1270), which was read widely by Chosŏn literati.

17 Sheldon Pollock has distinguished between "literization" and "literarization" while describing the Sanskrit textualization of religious discourse in Southern Asia. If literization should refer to simple processes of transcribing or transliterating the local language into written texts, literarization takes off to a whole new level by weaving and crafting them within the context of the existing literary tradition that had accumulated cultural and political currency over a long period of time. Yi Ok's concern was not transcribing the local vernacular but forging literature (in LS, at that) from it. See Pollock (2006), esp. chap. 8.

18 Chang Yunhŭi (2015) shows that *iŏ* 俚語 and *iŏn* 俚言, lexical relatives comparable to *iŏn*, referred to vernacular Korean words that were transcribed with sinographs (e.g., *idu*-style writings) and did not belong to orthodox LS *wen* 文. If so, the linguistic world assumed in Yi Ok's *Iŏn* may have been much more complicated than we imagine.

19 The other two dramas written in Chosŏn are *Puksang ki* 北廂記 [The northern wing], written by one self-styled (but otherwise unknown) Tonggo ŏch'o 東皐漁樵 "Fisherman-Woodcutter of East Bank" around 1840, and *Paeksangnu ki* 百祥樓記 [Paeksang tower], written by Chŏng Sanghyŏn 鄭尙玄, also around the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century.

20 The other sectional titles were provided by Kim Ryŏ when he collated Yi Ok's writings, and the prefaces for these were also written by Kim Ryŏ.

21 This is of course in addition to the translation included in the *Yi Ok chŏnjip*. See Much'ŏn haksulbu (1990); Yŏ Seju (2005); Chŏng Yŏngsu (2008).

22 Such as Chŏng Hwan'guk (2013); Son Pyŏngguk (2014).

23 But its existence came to my attention too late, and I could not integrate it into my translation.

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