The Theory of Heroic Novels

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1. The Concept of Heroic Novels

A heroic novel is called a work in which the hero appears as the main character or a work in which heroic activities develop. Generally speaking, war novels such as So Tae-sŏng chŏn, Cho Ung chŏn, Yu Ch’ung-ryŏl chŏn etc. which appeared in the late Chosŏn dynasty and secured many readers fits into this category. In establishing the category of heroic novels the concept of the hero becomes a problem. There is a common belief that a hero must have superior abilities over the average man and that he must live a life different than others, one of repeated pain and struggle. From this point of view, the works in which the hero is a character who is born with prominent abilities, overcomes difficult trials and obtains glory, can be included in the category of heroic novels. The works which are based structurally on the biographical description type called the “life story of the hero” are seen as the heroic novels.¹ This, being an enlarged concept of heroic novels, causes the following problems. The root structure called the life story is a common characteristic of the Chosŏn dynasty Hangul novels and if this enlarged concept is used then all the novels, excluding the allegory novels and the Hanmun novels, could be classified as heroic novels. The Chosŏn dynasty Han’gŭl novels generally deal with the life of the main character in which the main character is not a normal person but an exceptional character in whose life is a life of struggling to overcome bitter trials. From the dream type

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novel *Kuun mong* etc to the *p’ansori* type novels *Suk-hyang chŏn*, *Shim Ch’ŏng chŏn* and *Ch’ŏn-hyang chŏn* etc are all included and in this case the development of the narrative type of the hero’s life might have merits in discussion but in establishing the sphere of Classic novels it has no meaning.

Next is the problem of the concept of the hero. Under the conditions for being a hero, just being an existence of superhuman ability or exhibiting superhuman powers is not enough. There are many heroes who are generally characters who exhibit superhuman abilities in war and establish meritorious service. Therefore the hero is easily recognized as a character who is skilled at fighting. However, a hero is a character who gives priority to group value over personal value. Since war is the conflict between two groups, participating in the war is definitely heroic. However, the character who successfully performs great works for his country or society regardless of going to war can become a hero. To reiterate, a hero is a character who realizes the value of the group and is respected by the group. Despite having superior abilities, if they are used for personal gain and not for the benefit of the group then he cannot be called a hero.

The dimension of the hero changes according to the scope of the group. There are racial heroes, tribal heroes and national heroes. But it is difficult for a hero to exist if the essence of the group is not clear.

From this point of view, if we establish the scope of the Chosŏn dynasty heroic novels, we can say that they are works in which the hero performs great meritorious service for the nation or society. These works are structured on the biographical descriptive type of the “life story of the hero” and develops heroic activity which overcomes the national crisis. Therewith, many of the Chŏn type novels fit into this category. However, upon entering the late Chosŏn dynasty as the popularity of heroic novels escalated among its readers, many imitation works were produced for commercial purposes. With the spread of moveable type printing many of the works which appeared were hastily created by printers who recognized the customary expectation of the already secured reading class. Accordingly, the novels historical meaning and the literary value of the works is difficult to find therefore, using them as an object of our discussion could be precarious. With this, I will choose and discuss those works which are either transcribed or carved.

The heroic novels which were published as wood engravings number 10 or more include *So Tae-sŏng chŏn*, *Chang P’ung-un chŏn*, *Chang Paek chŏn*, *Cho Ung chŏn*, *Yu Ch’ung-ryŏl chŏn*, *Yi Tae-pong chŏn*, *Kŭm Pang-ul chŏn*,
Hyŏn Su-mun chŏn, Chang Kyŏng chŏn, Hwang Un chŏn etc.

2. The Common Conclusion of Heroic Novels

Heroic novels, being novels which describes the life story of the hero, are based on the biographical type "life of the hero" and is formed and developed according the several variations of Epic unit. Here I will divide the life of the hero into the birth process, testing process, relationship process, tribute paying process and I will briefly compare the contents of each work and categorize the types based on their main differences.

1) Birth Process

(1) THE HERO’S FAMILY The hero is generally born as the only son of a noble family. The hero’s father is a character who is presently a person of high position or has retired from a high government post and whose forefathers performed meritorious deeds for the country. So Tae-sŏng is the son of So Ryang who was the former Minister of National Defence. Chang Paek is the son of Chang Hwan who is presently the Second minister Cho Ung is the posthumous son of the Second minister Cho Chŏng-in and Yu Ch’ung-ryŏl is the son of Yu Shim a powerful courtier Chŏngŏnju. There-with, the hero is born in a family of present or former high government position This is generally seen as the succession of the tradition of the myth that the hero inherits a noble bloodlineage

(2) SACRIFICIAL SERVICE FOR CONCEPTION. The hero is conceived as a result of his parents offering a sacrifice for conception. The parents who lament not being able to have children for a long period go to the temple and give an offering or go to a famous mountain to offer sacrificial service, after which they conceive the hero. The So Ryang couple after offering 500 nyang of yellow gold and 10000 nyang of white gold to Ch’ŏng ryong temple they conceived So Tae-sŏng. The Chang Hwan couple likewise offered 100 nyang to a Buddhist nun and then conceived Chang Paek. On one hand, the Yu Shim couple gave a sacrifice to the mountain god of Namak mountain and then conceived Ch’ung-ryŏl. Only Cho Ung chŏn does not show the sacrificial service for conception. The subject of sacrificial service being either Buddha or mountain god was a reflection of that periods folk belief.
(3) DREAM OF CONCEPTION. After sacrificial offering for conception the hero’s parents will receive an allusion that they have conceived an extraordinary person. In the dream of conception, the position of the hero in his previous life is introduced and directions about his predestined mate are also given and there are even times when the hero’s future is foretold. So Tae-sŏng, being the dragon of the East Sea was sent down to exist in the world of mortals as the price of the sin for accidentally sending down rain. Chang Paek was the shooting star of the heavens and Yu Ch’ung-ryŏl appeared as the descending Taechangsŏng of the heavens. The hero’s position in the previous life was generally a prince or princess of the Dragon, or the ruler of the stars. Establishing the lineage of the heroic character as the descendents of the God of the water or the God of the Heavens, is a reflection of our people’s belief in a protecting deity.

In Yu Ch’ung-ryŏl chŏn in the dream of conception the full story of Ch’ung-ryol and Chŏng Han-tam, the former Ikssŏng, fighting in the heavens is presented. This foreshadowing of the fight between Ch’ung-ryŏl and Chŏng Han-tam is seen as the underplot of the novel. In Yi Tae-pong chŏn in the conception dream, the appearing of a male phoenix and a female phoenix suggests the affinity between Yi Tae-pong and Chang Ae-hwang.

2) Process of Trial

(1) SEPERATION FROM FAMILY: The hero of the heroic novel is generally confronted with many trials while in his youth. When the hero encounters trials it is in the form of separation from his family. The reasons for separation is different according to the novel and the unfolding of the novel differs according to this.

In the situation where the parents accidentally die and the hero becomes an orphan are So Tae-sŏng chŏn and Chang Paek chŏn. For the situation where the hero is separated from his parents amidst war from the invasion of foreign enemies is Chang P’ung-un chŏn and Hyŏn Su-nun chŏn etc. On one hand, there is a situation when through suppression of a political hostile force, the father is either killed or is sent into exile. For this situation Cho Ung chŏn, Yu Ch’ung-ryŏl chŏn etc. fit into this category.

(2) PERSECUTION OF THE HERO: The hero’s trials are aggravated while receiving persecution from his enemies. We can divide this persecution into family persecution and political persecution according to the persecutor’s
character. Family persecution follows the accidental loss of his parents, where the hero is persecuted by his step mother or grandmother while living with them. So Tae-sŏng and Chang P’ung-un etc. fit into this category. Political persecution is when through suppression of a political hostile force it becomes the motive and contribution of the separation of the hero from his family. Yu Ch’ung-ryŏl chŏn and Cho Ung chŏn fit into this category.

3) Process of Marriage

The hero finds and achieves an engagement with his predestined mate. In the relationship process the hero himself either comes into direct contact with his mate or the bride’s father knows of the hero’s extraordinariness and chooses him as his son-in-law. There is also the situation when the hero follows a Buddhist teacher and searches for his mate. So Tae-sŏng was selected by the bride’s father Yi sŏngsug to be his son-in-law. Yu Ch’ung-ryŏl met Kang sŏngsug and became his son-in-law. However, in Yi Tae-pong chŏn, Hwang Un chŏn and others, the hero and heroine from their time of birth were previewed as predestined mates through a conception dream. Therewith, they become engaged. On one hand, in Cho Ung chŏn Cho Ung heard from his teacher that Chang sojŏ was his predestined mate and he himself came into contact with her and pressured her into marrying him.

4) Process of Achievement Success

In the promotion process the hero through taking heroic actions in the suppression of national disturbances by which he obtains a high government position.

(1) DISTURBANCES: The reasons for disturbances is either the invasion of foreign forces or a rebellion. According to the works there are also times when there is a conspiracy with the enemy which contributes to the national crisis. In addition there is also a hostility in the process of setting up a new Dynasty.

(2) THE HERO’S DEBUT: The hero appears when the country is confronted with a crisis. The circumstances of the hero’s appearance are divided into two parts. One, is when he passes the state examination and obtains power in the military. The second is when in the situation of eminent crisis the hero renders distinguished military service and receives recognition from the royal court. So Tae-sŏng, Cho Ung, Yu Ch’ung-ryŏl, Yi Tae-pong
etc., are characters who rescue the emperor from distress and advance into royalty. Chang P'ung-un, Hyŏn Su-mun etc. advance when they pass the state examination.

(3) THE HERO'S MERITIOUS SERVICE: The hero deploys heroic activity to suppress disturbances. However the contribution of the hero is different according to the character of the disturbance. So Tae-sŏng drove back the invasion of foreign Huns. Cho Ung overthrew the throne of rebelling subjects, Yi Tu-pyŏng and restores the already fallen Song Dynasty. Yu Ch'ung-ryŏl suppressed the rebelling war of Chŏng Han-tam who conspired with the enemy and he subjugated Hoguk who participated in the conspiracy.

Through these type of meritorious works the hero himself receives the premier position, the highest government post and enjoys wealth, fame and prosperity. When we separate the narrative form of the above heroic novels' formulary structure centered on the opposition process of the hero and the opposing character, we can divide it into the three following forms: So Tae-sŏng chŏn form, Yu Ch'ung-ryŏl chŏn form, and the Chang Paek chŏn form. So Tae-sŏng chŏn form has the characteristic of separating the personal enemy and the enemy force of the country. Namely, the hero loses his parents in his youth and being deprived by his father-in-law he turns to his wife's family and while living with them he is persecuted by his mother-in-law and brother-in-law. During which he drives back foreign invasion and takes possession of high government post and makes his wife's family ashamed, who maltreated him when he was a nobody. The works which fit into this form besides So Tae-sŏng chŏn are Chang P'ung-un chŏn and Hyŏn Su-mun chŏn etc.

The Yu Ch'ung-ryŏl chŏn type has the characteristic of developing and having consistency in conflict from the point of the hero's personal antagonist and the country's rebellious power. Through traitorous suppression the hero's family becomes destroyed and the traitors bring about a rebellion which promotes the country's crisis. The hero suppresses the rebellious war along with retaliating his personal grudge and reconstructs the country at the same time his destroyed family becomes restored. The works which fit into this type are Yu Ch'ung-ryŏl chŏn, Cho Ung chŏn and Yi Tae-pong chŏn etc.

The Chang Paek chŏn type has the characteristic of the hero helping the king of a newly established country and helps destroy the existing dynasty. In this type, the hero's identity is prominent in his consciousness or activity.
3. The Appearing Motive of Heroic Novels

The authors of heroic novels are not clear nor is the period Therefore the study of the presumed appearing time and motive of heroic novels is compiled for the chronicles of novel history. The various interpretations of the heroic novel appearing motive up to the present are condensed as follows.

1) Im-Pyōng Double War Period Consciousness

The subject matter heroic novels is usually war and the central contents are of heroic activities for national salvation. The sphere of these novels are linked with the experience of the historical Imjun Waeran and Pyōngja Horan and the double war period or national consciousness stimulated the appearing of the heroic novel. Namely while undergoing the double war the animosity toward foreign enemies reached a climax and amidst the difficulty the anecdote of the great active commanders became the subject matter and the national consciousness that yearned for the appearance of a hero who could break through the national crisis was formed through fiction in novels. This opinion is an assertion that rather than the true heroic novels, war novels such as Imjun rok, Pakssi chŏn coincide even more. However, this assertion carries conviction in heroic novels also. The spatial background of heroic novels is generally set in China and the chronological background is either the sung or Ming dynasty ruled by the Han race. There are also works with the Yuan dynasty background and in this situation it is established as a falling dynasty which deals with the establishment process of a new dynasty during the transformation period. The hostility of the emigrant race of the surrounding regions of the Han race sovereignty is regulated as a barbarian disturbance and the suppression activity of this disturbance by the hero is praised as a national salvation heroic activity. This glorification is a reflection of our peoples consciousness of the Chosŏn Dynasty soaked with this significance consciousness. Especially during the Imjun Waeran after receiving reinforcement from the Ming nation the loyalty to Ming became stronger and the animosity toward Qing nation after Pyōngja Horan became accelerated on one hand but after the fall of Ming the exterior resistance

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2 Kim T'ae-chun, Chosŏn Sosŏlsa (The history of Korean novels) Hagyesa 1939
toward Qing became blocked up and the animosity toward this type of emigrant nation is emanated in the fabricated style of the novel.

So Tae-sông was a skilled hero but at the wrong time and relying on his wife he was mistreated and led a life of misfortune until the Huns invaded and then he went to war and made a stately appearance by suppressing the foreign enemy, after he enjoyed prosperity in the high position of King of No. This story has the same characteristics as the activity of the loyal troops who achieved honor by attacking the foreign enemy during the Imjin Waeran. So Tae-sông was born in Haedong and he is the character who suppressed the war of Qing-Yuan. This is a contrasting establishment from the situation of the Chosŏn dynasty which was saved by Ming during the Imjin period. Namely, the saving of the Chinese crisis by a Chosŏn hero through affectionistic style can be interpreted as a reflection of the peoples consciousness to repay the debt to Ming nation during Imjin Waeran.\(^3\)

In Yu Ch'ŭng-ryŏl chŏn the foreign enemy invades and the confrontation between the pro-war advocates and the pro-peace advocates becomes acute. This confrontation between the pro-war and pro-peace is similar to the condition of Chosŏn royal court during the double war period. Also Yu Ch'ŭng-ryŏl helped Chŏng Han-tam and went on a military expedition for the fatherland and conquered Huland and helped Chŏng Han-tam two or more times. Huland is actually the Qing nation and the conquering has the meaning of psychological revenge in retaliation for the humiliation of the Chosŏn dynasty received during the Pyŏngja Horan. Also, King of Huland performed acts of capturing the King, prince, Queen, Crown prince, the royal family. and this can be seen as a reflection of the fact the during the Pyŏngja Horan the solidarity collapsed Kangwha Island and the monarch became barren and was taken to Qing dynasty.\(^4\)

From this aspect the people's consciousness enhanced after the double war and was reflected in novels. However this period consciousness is limited to the double war period therefore limiting the appearance period of heroic novels to this double war period is wrong. Loyalty to the Ming dynasty became more intense after the fall of the dynasty and the animosity of Qing dynasty being related to domestic political goals became enhanced to a

\(3\) Yi Su-cha, "So Tae-sông chŏn yŏn'gu"(A study of So Tae-sông chŏn) Ewha ŏmun nongil 1983
\(4\) Soo Dae-seok, Kumi mok sŏmol-ui kugo-ya poeγyŏng, (Structure and Background of Korean novels of war) Ewha Women's Univ Press 1985
higher level Accordingly, the appearing period of heroic novels the theme after the double war is proper for the upper most limit and for the lowest limit period it is necessary to examine other conditions and recognize them.

2) The Influence of Samguk Chi

One motive of the heroic novel appearance is the influence of *Samguk chi* which was introduced in King Sŏnjo period and was widely read. In heroic novels, when depicting the characters or describing the scenes, there are many cases in which the writers used historical facts originating in *Samguk chi* or borrowed the expressions of *Samguk chi*. Also the characters appearing in *Samguk chi* appear in heroic novels in the form of a dream. Moreover, heroic novels have many expressions like those of *Samguk chi* in the method of troops and strategy.

However, it is an unreasonable assertion that the appearance of the heroic novel was influenced by *Samguk chi* just on the basis of the common point of *Samguk chi* and the heroic novel as mentioned above. *Samguk chi* is an account of the national rise and fall which takes the form of chronicle description and is a novel focused on the nation. In *Samguk chi* the personal life of the character is of little concern, therefore the process of birth and marriage does not appear. Also, in *Samguk chi* the characteristic of war is strategic and not Taoist magic. Moreover, the dominating view of value in this story is different from the heroic novel.

The heroic novel is the form of literature describing the personal life focused on the home and puts relative importance on the process of birth and relationships. Also, the aspect of the war is that of Taoist magic and the triumph or defeat of the war depends on the intrepidity of the hero. The subject of this story is also the personal success story in which a skilled character overcomes adverse situations and accomplishes glorious deeds. Accordingly the contents of heroic novel doesn’t emphasize great justice which advocates collective value.

From this point, the influence of *Samguk chi* is recognized in part, but the style of the heroic novel itself did not appear because of the influence of *Samguk chi*.

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5 Ch'ŏng Kye-pok, "Han'guk kundamnyu sosŏl-ŭn ch'emye", (Several Problems in the Korean novels of war) *Kugŏkugmunhak*, vol 34,35 1967
3) Sŏl In-kwi Chŏngdong’s Influence

*Sŏl In-kwi chŏngdong* is a Chinese common novel which came to Korea and was translated into *Sŏl In-kwi chŏn* which became widely read. *Sŏl In-kwi chŏn* in contrast to *Samguk chi* is more similar to the heroic novel in respect of unfolding the story focused on the person and expressing strongly the war of Taoist magic. In comparing *Sŏl In-kwi chŏngdong* and *Sŏl Chŏng-san chŏngsŏ*, a second volume of *Sŏl In-kwi chŏngdong* with the heroic novel, we can find the following common points.

First, they are similar in aspect in the learning process of the military arts by a Taoist and in the appearance of the Taoist magic war. *Sŏl In-kwi* met Kuch’ŏn Hyŏnnyŏ, gaining the five magic things Paekho p’yŏn, Suhwa p’o, Chinch’ŏn kung, Ch’ŏnun chŏn, Mujach’ŏn so, and using them to gain victory over Hap So-mun. Sŏl Chŏng-san, the son of *Sŏl In-kwi*, was saved by Wango rojo, and learned the Taoist magic and the military arts and went to war with ten magic things. The wife of Sŏl Chŏng-san, Pŏn Yi-hwa, was a pupil of Yŏsan nōmo and fought with So Po-tong with the help and instruction of her teacher. This relationship of the Taoist and the hero is in accordance with the heroic novel.

The relationship of the master and the hero that appears in the heroic novel is very close. The Taoist master is the savior of the hero, the instructor of magic and a prophet. So Tae-sŏng relying on an old monk at Ch’ŏng-Ryong temple, studied the book on strategy and military arts for five years and fought with a precious sword driving back Hun and Sŏn Woo. Cho Ung was saved by Wolgyŏng Taesa and after learning magic from Ch’ŏlgwan Taesa he gained armor, a spear, a sword and a Ch’ŏnsa ma (heaven given horse) which he used to put down the rebel of Yi Tu-pyŏng. Yu Ch’ung-ryŏl also learned magic from an old monk at Hwang Ryong temple and fought with the armor (Yongin kap, Ilgwang chu, Changsŏng kŏm) to put down the rebels. Like this in the respect that the hero learned the military arts from the Taoist-monk and went to war with arms which have the function of sorcery and fought with the power of Taoist magic, the heroic novel is similar to *Sŏl In-kwi chŏngtong*.

Second, they are similar in the heroic activity of women. In *Sŏl Chŏng-san chŏngsŏ*, many women generals appear among which was Pŏn-Yi-hwa who was superior to her husband Sŏl Chŏng-san in military arts and leadership and acted as Chŏngsŏ Taewonsu. In addition to Pŏn Yi-hwa,
women generals such as Chin Kŭm-chŏng, Tu Sŏn-tong, Sŏl Kŭm-yŏn, Cho Wol-a who were also very active.

There are many works which distinguish the activity of woman generals in the heroic novel. In the works of Hwang Un chŏn, Hong Kye-wol chŏn, the heroine surpasses the hero in practical ingenuity and has a higher position than her husband.

This does not agree with the social custom and the ethical norm of the Chosŏn dynasty that women have the activity to be superior to man in the ability of executing war. This is due to the influence of Sŏl Chŏng-san chŏngsŏ.

Third, we can find a similar point in the process of forming a relationship and the scene of saving a sovereignty Sŏl In-kwi wasted his fortune and became a worker at Yu Won-oe's house. Yu Won-oe's daughter, mistress Kŭm Hwa, had the feeling of a tiger attacking the sleeping Sŏl In-kwi and covered him with a scarlet Taeŭi. This became their affinity causing them to be craven away and later to get married. So Tae-sŏng also, after his parents death wasted his fortune and led a life of begging, when Yi-Chun a former minister dreamed of a Bluedragon and selected So Tae-sŏng as his son-in-law, influencing him to live in his house. But after Yi Ch'un's death, So Tae-sŏng murdered his mother-in-law Wang, and estranged his wife's family. In Chang P'ung-un chŏn P'ung-un after living a life of wandering he lived as a worker in Wang Sangsŏ's. Pu-yong, a daughter of Wang sangsŏ had a dream of a blue dragon shivering under a pheony in the rear garden so she covered the sleeping P'ung-un with a silk coat, which later led to the two getting married. Though this process of affinity is episodic, we know that the situations accord with each other from the point that the unique character of the hero appears through a dream in which the hero lives at his wife's house under poor conditions receiving a cold reception eventually being driven away from his wife's house. Sŏl In-kwi chŏngdong also accords with the heroic novel in the scene of the hero saving sovereignty from a crisis. In Sŏl In-kwi chŏngdong T'ae jong of Dang dynasty is chased into Danki by Hap So-mun and is taken alive on the East Sea Coast. Hap So-mun makes T'ae jong kneel down and demands that he write a paper of surrender. When T'ae jong makes an excuse of having no paper and writing utensils, Hap So-mun commands that he should take off his royal robe and bite his finger to write with his blood. At that moment Sŏl In-kwi appears and repulses Hap So-mun and saves T'ae jong. In So Tae-sŏng chŏn, Hwang Un
chŏn, Yu Ch’ung-ryŏl chŏn, the sovereignty without any guards is chased into alone by the enemy and given and persecuted and forced to take off their royal robes and bite their fingers to write in their blood. At this moment the hero appears and repulses the enemy to save the sovereignty. It is sure that this accordance is from the influence of Sŏl In-kwŏn chŏngdong from the point that the description of the statements concretely accord with each other.

4) The Political Consciousness in The Period of Party Strife

The hero of the heroic novel is generally established as a descendant of nobility. The hero’s father was an influential courtier of large fame in the royal court, but by a false charge of a villainous subject he is removed from office and sent into exile. This process is briefly described in the beginning of the work and is presented in detail in the part of the hero’s ordeal. But they the same in the point that the hero’s father belongs to the class that must be removed from the seat of power by political counterforces in the political strife. Also, the works that belong in the Yu Ch’ung-ryŏl chŏn type, treat the confrontation between the loyal subject and the villainous courtier as the leading conflict of the work. It is established that the hero is the loyal subject and the antagonist is the villainous courtier. The process of the falling of the hero’s family by the political persecution of the counterforce in the first half is comparative realistic. On the other hand, in the later half of the work the process of paying tribute and the rise to power by the hero is somewhat unrealistic.

When we put these together, we can to some degree find a clue in assuming the character of the class that enjoys the heroic novels. Though we can’t say that the hero in the work is the writer himself, since imagination is based on experience we can say that the class that had political discontent is actual society were those who enjoyed heroic novels.

In heroic novel, the moment the fallen hero rises to power is the cause of large disturbances in the royal court. The situation then occurs in which the enemy invades or a villainous courtiers rise in revolt causing the present royal authority to face a decisive crisis in which the royal subjects are un-skilled and have no ability to control the difficult situation. It is said that the conception of this novel comes from the ignorance of political customs.

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6 Seo Dae-seok, op. cit
but it is seen as the possibility for a class, which has no moral duty of entering the royal court properly or has no hope of rising to power, to imagine.

Also retaliatory behavior in heroic novel is very thorough and cruel. This revenge especially appears in the punishment against hostile political forces. On one hand he generously handled the advancement of the temporary scorn during his distress and on the other the grudge relation is so strong in the struggle process. Therefore it is not feasible that the enjoying-class of the heroic novel would introduce the political strife into the work only for the consciousness of interest.

The party-strife in the Chosŏn dynasty was at its peak period under King Suk jong. In the process of the struggle for power between Sŏn and Namn, treason and rebellion occurred with the returning of the seat of power happening frequently. Through this political return of power, the reins of political power changed and many powerful subjects fell overnight. Also, while the famine year continued and while the people fell into extreme distress due to the extortion of corrupted officials, the amount of people demanding political reform increased. Like this, we can confirm the consciousness of regaining the predecessor’s prosperity in the politically fallen class is found in the words.7

4. The World-View and The Ideological Background of The Heroic Novel

The heroic novel develops the compounding dual world, the transcendental world and the real world. The hero in the heroic novel is the man who descended to the real world as the result of the sacrifice for conception and the activity of the hero is the exhibition of his superhuman ability that the ordinary man does not have. The action of plotting to harm and suppress the good person by the villain in man’s world and the wars caused by the desire to rule are the evil actions to disturb the life of man. The activity of the hero in the end is the rescuing activity of the transcendental existence to get rid of evil in order to protect the life of man. The hero restores order to man’s world, achieve a peaceful reign, enjoys happiness and pleasure and finishes his life in man’s world by returning to his transcendental existence.

7 ibid
Like this, if we understand that the structure of the heroic novel is the
descention, activity and return of a transcendental existence, we can see that
it has the same character as the descention, activity and return of god in the
ceremony of religious service. The god descends to the place of religious ser-
vice as requested by the supplicant, listens to man’s petition, eliminates the
various evils which obstructs man’s life, enjoys an offering with man and
returns his original place of residence. This process is accord with the
formalities of shaman religious service. However, the shaman religious service
consists of “Kut” and “Tokkyŏng” but the ceremony to exile the evil
tormenting man coincides more with the characteristics of “Tokkyŏng” than
“Kut”. Generally the suffering and illness in this world is from the anger of
god therefore “Kut” is a ceremony in which god is called to solve the prob-
lem by offering entertainment and apologizing for man’s wrongdoing. On
the contrary “Tokkyŏng” is based on the thought that the reason why the
obstacle appears in the human life is that the evil invades and causes violence
and that man can solve this problem by driving away evil with the help of
god. Therefore, the heroic novel is one level closer to the thought of
“Tokkyŏng”. Next, we will compare in more detail the contents of the he-
roic novel with the process of “Tokkyŏng”.

1) Supplication for Conception and The Soliciting God: Suppli-
cication for conception in the heroic novel is man’s petition for the gods to
send him the offspring. Though the object of the sacrificial service is Buddha
and there are many cases in which the sacrificial service is omitted and only
the offering is done, but they are not different in the point of man’s suppli-
cating his wish to the existence of god. In Yu Ch’ung-ryŏl chŏn, Yu mistress
and Mrs. Chang go into Namak hyŏngsan, set out an offering and pray for a
son before the divine spirit. This has the same appearance as the Shaman re-
ligious service.

In “Tokkyŏng”, after man arranges Kyŏng-tang and enshrine an ances-
tral tablet, they read “Ch’ŏngshin kyŏng” which calls for the coming of the
god. Before they request the descent of god, they tell him the reason of
“Tokkyŏng” and asks him to descend and solve the problem. “Ch’ŏngshin
kyŏng” consist of describing the process of god’s descent and the calling of
his name. In the heroic novel, when the hero’s mother conceives she has a
dream of conception in which the social position of the hero in the transcen-
dental world and the reason for descending into the human world is
disclosed. This has meaning of introducing the god descending to the place
of religious service.

2) The Hero's Birth and The Fall of God: The hero is a divine existence in the form of stars and fairy of the heavens of the Prince and Princess of the Dragon Palace who man holds sacred. These heros were generally born in the mystic atmosphere in which clouds shine brilliantly in various colors and the omen gather in the air. This closely resembles the sacred and pure place of religious service in which god descends.

However the question is whether or not we regard the establishing of the hero in the heroic novel as committing a sin in the transcendental world and going into exile man's world in the same light as the shaman entertaining god in order for him to descend and solve man's problems. This is because the god descending in the shaman religious service is not existence of committing a crime and being exiled. In the heroic novel not only the hero but the antagonist is described as an existence which descends from the transcendental world to the human world. We can find the hero's appearance of committing sin in the transcendental world and atoning for the sin in the human world in the process of the early years of life filled with hardship. However, the hero's appearance of heroic activity and the enjoyment of fame and fortune in the later half of the work is very different from life in exile. We can see that the hero in the heroic novel is a messenger of the gods sent in order to expel evil which has filled the human world. The god protecting the human world has the duty to expel the evil prevailing in the human world. Therefore, it is explained as a cast shadow of the shamanistic mind to pursue the tranquility and the happiness of the group by means of depending on the supernatural power of the protecting-god that they make a plan for the hero, the messenger of the god, to be sent to the human world to correct the confused order and protect the human life.

3) The Hero's Activity and The God's Activity: The hero in the heroic novel fights against evil, taking sides with the good. Enemy invasion and plots of treason by villainous courtiers are designated as evil and is the duty of the hero and the superhuman to protect the morals of Confucianism from the point of protecting the established sovereignty and promoting the loyalty between the king and his subjects. But through the crisis caused by war, the sovereignty is awakened and king establishes a proper political path. This is not simply the protection of Confucianism's ideology but it has positive meaning of protecting the life of the people. From the position of the
people, the war is the most awful enemy to man’s life and the rampancy of villainous courtiers is also an element which obstructs the life of the common people. Therefore, the hero’s activity is the struggle for a life of happiness for the people and to reprimand the diseased ruling class. This is seen as a projection of the protecting spirit of the common life which was formed before Confucian ideology was establish.

In “Tokkyŏng”, the god’s activity has a strong characteristic of protecting the private life. “Tokkyŏng” is generally a ritual performed in the home and it is given to remove diseases and the anxieties of the individual. However, the activity of the god to give diseases, raise disasters, and expel is similar to the feature of the hero in the heroic novel fighting against the enemy commander.

The sutras (Taoist classics) which are read in “Tokkyŏng” have the contents of a superhuman general commanding an invincible army and commences military activity and apprehends the evil and brings it to justice and isolates it from the human world forever. “P’almun taejin kyŏng” has the contents of an invincible general commanding an invincible army, “Ch’ŏlim-mang kyŏng” etc. has the contents of punishing the ghost. Like this we find that in shaman’s magic words the confrontation between the invincible general and evil resembles the war-scene which appears in the heroic novel. The hero in the heroic novel commands the invincible general and the invincible army and defeats the enemy or learning “P’ungun kyŏng” he makes the clouds and fog rise and learning “Haesu kyŏng” he makes the water flow in. This taoist war is the product of imagination not the reality of the confrontation be man nor of a war in man’s history. It only reflects the thought of “Tokkyŏng”.

4) The Hero’s Ascension and The God’s Homecoming. The hero in the heroic novel controlled difficult situations, and after living in fame and fortune his life ends. However, the hour of the hero’s death is described as a fantastic Ascension which is different from the death of a common character. It was alluded through a dream that the hero finishes his fate with the human world and returns to the heavens. From the human point of view this is a death but from the point of view of the heavens it is a return to his former position.

In “Tokkyŏng” also after the general of superhuman ability, who is called down at the request of the person performing the “Tokkyŏng”, finishes expelling evil he returns to his original place. Before the general
returns, the caller reads the Taoist classics to thank the generals for his efforts and gives entrainment as appreciation for his hard work. Next, they send him back to his home by reading "Shinjang hwanwi kyŏng". Like this, the development of expelling evil in man's world and the process of entertainment for meritorious service and the returning to the former place is the same for the hero of the heroic novel and the descending god in "Tokkyŏng".

This cannot be seen as mere coincidence, nor are the commons point deliberately made. It can be seen that the knowledge and the customs learned by the "Tokkŏng" are a natural reflection in the novel by the enjoying class of the heroic novel through practicing the ceremony and manners of "Tokkyŏng".  

5. The Chronological Order of The Heroic Novel

The writers of the heroic novels are not known, also the period of the work is not clear. Therefore, the works in which the writer and period are not clear cause difficulties in research. Above all, it is hard to record chronological history of the novel and the study of the writers consciousness focused on the refracted aspect or the period-spirit in comparison with the situation of a certain specific period in history. For this reason, the novel whose writer is not known attracts little attention from the literary circle as compared with Hong Kil-tong chŏn, Kuun mong, Yŏnam's novels which the writers are well known and the study of assuming the writing class and the period of work is one of the major questions in studying the heroic novel. The following possibilities for assuming the period of the heroic novel can be presented:

1. The examination of bibliographies
2. The examination of documentary records
3. The comparative examination of other works in which the period is known.
4. The examination of the introduction period and the influence of the Chinese novel.
5. The comparative examination between the world of works and the real world.

Summarizing the existing results of the study about the above
possibilities, we will rethink the problems

1) The Bibliography of The Heroic Novel

The heroic novel has three different forms as like other classic novels, p’ilsa pon. The copying period of p’ilsa pon is not certain, though the period of copying is known, a manuscript dating before the 18C cannot be found. P’angak pon was generally published from the mid-19 century to the early 20 century but we can’t find the wood carving book of the heroic novel before the 19 century Kuhwalja pon was published following the wood cutting book from the early 20 century. Like this, examining the existing bibliography of the heroic novel the upper most limit can be retraced back only to the mid-18 century.

2) Literary Records

The oldest recorded work of heroic novel is Sangsŏ kimun written by “Yamata” a Japanese. In this book the names of the heroic novels Chang ung-un chŏn, So Tae-sŏng chŏn, Chang Pak chŏn are recorded.

Next, in Cho Su-sam’s Ch’iyae chip, there are Suk-hyang chŏn So Tae-sŏng chŏn Shim Ch’ŏng chŏn, Sŏl In-kwi chŏn as recited folktales by “Professional story teller” As seen from these records we can find that So Tae-sŏng chŏn was already a popular work in the society before the mid-nineteenth century.

In addition, in the prelude of Hong Hŭi-pok’s Cheilgiŏn, the name of the Korean novels Yussa samdae rok, Miso myŏnghaeng, Chossi samdae rok, Ch’unghyo myŏnggam rok, Yimhwajŏngyŏn, Kwanhwagong ch’ungyŏl ki, Pyŏkhŏdam, Wanwol hoemaeng, Myŏngju powolbing, Suk-hyang chŏn, P’ung-un chŏn were recorded. Among these we can see that P’ung-un chŏn or Chang P’ung-un chŏn is heroic novels. However since this book was written between 1835—1848, we cannot use it as the writing-year of the heroic novel.

Though many records about the readers of the novel appeared from the mid-seventeenth century, it’s not sure that they specifically abot the heroic novel. This is because the novel, folkstatement and folktales as said by the noble class were already written in the 15th C in Kŭmo shinhw a and in the early 17th C in Hong Kil-tong chŏn.

9 Chŏng Kyu-pok, “Cheilgiŏn je tachayŏ” (On Cheilgiŏn), Chunggukhak nonch’ong, Vol 1 1984
What we see for sure from these literature records is that the heroic novel such as So Tae-sŏng chŏn, Chang P’ung-un chŏn, Chang Paek chŏn were written before the 1974 Sangsŏkimun. But the names of works such as Yu Chi’ung-ryŏl chŏn cannot be found in the literature records of the 18C. With this we can only set up the lowest limit year of the So Tae-sŏng chŏn type heroic novel at the end of the 18C.

3) The Comparison with Other Works

With the start of finding the writer period, Hŏ Kyun’s Hong Kil-tong chŏn, Kim Man-chung’s Kuun mong, Nam Yŏng-ro’s Ongun mong became a sphere of works which could be compared to the heroic novel Hong Kil-tong chŏn was written from the end of the 16th C to the end of the 17th C. Kuun mong was written as the end of the 17th C and Ongun mong was written in the mid 19th C. We can regard these works as the works belonging to the heroic novel by judging from what the description of the hero’s life story and the hero’s heroic activity during war. Also from the aspect of the story of the hero’s relationship with his mate, occupy a large percentage of the major interesting element of the work, they are no different from the heroic novels by anonymous writers.

First, when we compare Hong Kil-tong chŏn with So Tae-sŏng chŏn we can find the common points such as the family conflict and political social conflict do not develop on a consecutive line and the rival character is changed. Hong Kil-tong leaves home due to persecution at home and he challenged the national authority as the head of the Hwalbin Party to made the minister of defense by the King. After this, he went abroad and attacked Yuldoguk and became King. Kil-tong’s struggle intention gas the consistency from the point that he was dissatisfied at receiving poor treatment due to his social status despite his outstanding ability and that he gained self-realization through his own abilities. But the confrontation at home, society and abroad have confronting structures in that the rival characters are different.

So Tae-sŏng also escaped from his wife’s home on account of family persecution and fights against “Hyungno” in a state of national crisis. This is divided into two different confrontation structures, family conflict and society conflict. Like this Hong Kil-tong chŏn and So Tae-sŏng chŏn are in accordance from the aspects that this structure of confrontation does not develop progressively on the consecutive lines and the rival character is
changed.

Also So Tae-sŏng chŏn and Hong Kil-tong chŏn coincide from the point of the local scenes of subjugating the assassin. From this point So Tae-sŏng chŏn is the closest work to the heroic novel Hong Kil-tong chŏn.

However, Hong Kil-tong as an subjective character fights for himself and takes the glory of the victory himself. Also his ability is not learned by an instructor it is innate. Contrary to this, So Tae-sŏng conquers the enemy for the country and receives an office and a title from the sovereign and his ability is learned from an instructor. Therefore, we can find that Hong Kil-tong is a character who accedes the hero’s subjectivity of the heroic myth and So Tae-sŏng is a character who adapts himself to the medieval order of the royal authority. Accordingly, from the common idea of literary history, we must understand that So Tae-sŏng chŏn was written later than Hong Kil-tong chŏn. If so then the lowest period of So Tae-sŏng chŏn cannot be before the 16th C.

As in the Yu Ch'ung-ryŏl chŏn type, the family and the political persecutor coincide and the conflict of the hero and the antagonist is develop on a consecutive line, it shows a more developed novel technique than that of Hong Kil-tong chŏn or So Tae-sŏng chŏn. Besides, as it emphasizes the loyalty to the royal authority more than the hero’s subjective self-realization, it has a more hospitable character as compared with Hong Kil-tong chŏn. From this point, we can imagine that there are many differences in the period of writing between So Tae-sŏng chŏn and Yu Ch'ung-ryŏl chŏn.

The primary point of comparison between Kuun mong and the heroic novel is the aspect of political strife, war stories and the structure of the empty dream etc. In Kuun mong political strife is not present. On one hand, in the heroic novel So Tae-sŏng chŏn, there is little political strife but in Yu Ch'ung-ryŏl chŏn, the fight for power between loyal subjects and villainous courtiers is seriously developed.

If we define the concrete description of the war as a war story, the war is not embodied in Kuun mong therefore it loses interest quickly. In the other hand, war is embodied in the heroic novel and as the war story get richer it rises to the central element of interest. This expanding development of the war story reaches it’s peak in Ongnu mong, a 19th C. novel. From this aspect, the heroic novel gas a greater possibility of being written later than Kuun mong.

When we compare Kuun mong and Ongnu mong from an empty dream
structure we can discover a very interesting fact. The dream in Kuan mong is a man who is a Sŏng Jin in the real world. Therefore the world of the dream gas a strong unrealistic characteristic.

The world of works in the heroic novel also can be said to be the dream that the transcendental existence dreams. This is because the hero of the work, in other words a heavenly existence, is the character who descends to mans world for a short time and the events that happen in man’s world is like that in the dream. But the world of the heroic novel, is very real. That is because the existence having the dream is an unreal character. This characteristic shows the process of the world of dreams, which is the central part of the work, moving from unreality to the world of dreams, which is the central part of the work, moving from unreality to reality in the combined aspect of a dual outlook on the world, the transcendental world and the real world.

That is to say we can understand that it means the transitional stage in which the world of the novel veers from the world, laying stress on the god to the world laying stress on the man and changes from the dual world to the unitary world.

This transformation of the world of works can be clearly seen in the 19th C. Ongnu mong. The hero of Ongnu mong is Yang Ch’ang-kok and Yang Ch’ang-kok’s life in the real world decides the world of the work. Yang Ch’ang-kok is the existence of Munch’ang sŏng in heaven, therefore he is a character with strong reality in earth. Like this we can see that the later the work the more the transcendental world is pushed aside of the real world and the realistic incidents of man’s world has became the center of the work.

In this transformation of the world view, the heroic novel Kuan mong and Ongnu mong shows intermediate features.

4) The Examination of The Chinese Novel’s Influence

The Chinese novels that are thought to have influenced to the works of heroic novels are Samguk chi, Sŏyu ki, Sŏl In-kwi Chŏngdong. But Samguk chi and Sŏyu ki do not offer much help in condensing writing period of the heroic novel because they were introduced at a comparatively early time. But since Sŏl In-kwi Chŏngdong was the first novel published in China in 1730, the period that it was introduced to Korea is later than that. Therefore the appearance of So Tae-sŏng chŏn etc, in which the influence of Sŏl In-kwi Chŏngdong is seen must be after 1730 at the earliest time. If so, then
the period of the work So Tae-sǒng chŏn can be condensed to 1730-1794. Here we must bear in mind the required term for the Chinese novel to be transmitted and read and to be adapted again to the bibliographical novel like Hong Kil-tong chŏn. Also when looking at the name of works appearing in Sangsŏ kimun, we can see that So Tae-sǒng chŏn and Chang P'ung-un chŏn were already wide spread. And if we consider that the distribution of classical novels was done by copying one or two books at a time, we then can estimate that it would have taken a long time from the very first writing period. Therefore, heroic novels such as So Tae-sǒng chŏn and Chang P'ung-un chŏn generally have the work period around the middle 18th century.

5) An Examination of The Contrast between The Work World and The Real World

The thing that can be compared with the fictional world and the real world in heroic novels is the character of disturbances and the character of political strife.

The disturbances which appear in the heroic novels are the invasion of enemies or the rebellion of villainous countries and these type of external and internal disturbances can exist in any period when a nation is built and a royal authority exists. However the forces which lead the disturbances all in one accord spread rumors that the existing dynasty's fate was up and disturbed the peoples' mind strengthening their disturbances power and in the real was a Taoist who could predict the weather well and that the true master of the new dynasty existed. This becomes a good basis for a comparison with a particular period.

There were many actual conspiracies which appeared and the Mirŭk sinang incident and rebellion of Unbu incident, which happened during the Suk-cho Dynasty have many coincidences with the work world of the heroic novel.

The belief of Mirŭk is an incident which happened during Suk jong cho's 14th year (1688) in which a wicked Buddhist Yŏ hwan and 11 others planned an exorcism and were punished later dying. Yŏ hwan, while being a Buddhist monk, conspired with geomancer and female shaman and tempted the public mind by telling them that it is written in mysterious writings that if they enter the city during the heavy rains in July and when it became dissipated, they could sit in the royal palace. His followers believed this but when they infiltrated the palace the rains did not come and they failed. Yŏ hwan, the main character in this incident, originally being a T'ongchŏn
monk, said that the big dipper descended to Kūmhwa’s Mt.Ch’ŏnbul and
gave him samgok and he is the person who spread the rumor that if he paid
respect to Buddha that Suchung noin and Mirŭk samjon would deliver him
the country. This type of character is similar to the Taoist who looks at the
weather and tells the fortune of the nation. Also the simple thought that one
can obtain national power with the help of a heavy rain is similar to the con-
cept of the character in the heroic novel who with the help of rain and wind
saves the nation from a crisis.

The Rebellion of Unbu incident was an incident reported in the 23rd
year of Suk jong in which the leading character Unbu is exactly the same as
the Taoist appearing in the heroic novel. Unbu being a descendant of noble
family of Song Dynasty, came to Korea, going to Mt. Kŭmkang and became
a monk. His followers believed that to go through the Ch’ŏnmun up above
and to study the geography below and look at the people in between and
their abilities will be comparable to Kongmyŏng or Yu Kŭl. Unbu taught
many students the skill and knowledge and entered into a contract with eight
province monk and obtained two true men, Mr Chŏng and Mr. Ch’oi, and
intended to possess all of Korea and China and to become the king.10

Like this, from the point that believing in a Taoist foundation and
caused a disturbance, these incidents are in accordance with the wars in the
heroic novel. The Taoists who appear in the heroic novel are characters of
their own strong political consciousness from the point that they controlled
the national crisis. The Taoist only saves the hero and trains him in skill and
knowledge and through mobilizing him has him take hold of the sovereignty
and rescues all the people. However, according to the situation, he is also a
character who using the weather persuade the overthrow of the existing dy-

nasty. In this point, it is seen that during Suk jong for one year of severe
drought and extreme political strife the ideology of Taoist national salvation
consciousness gained the response from many people. There is a large possi-
bility that this appearance of the real world is projected in heroic novels.

Next is the feature of political strife and this is reflected especially well
in the Yu Ch’ung-ryŏl chŏn type. Loyalty confrontates with rebellion and by
the plot of the rebellion, loyalty collapses and the contents of the collapsed
loyalty which fell due to national revolt, being restored can be interpreted as

10 Chŏng Sŏk-chong, Chosŏn hugi sahoe pyŏndong yŏn’gu (A Study of Social change during
Late Chosŏn) Iljogak 1983
showing the exchange of the royal authority class through elite troops. The exchange of the authority class by factional government appeared often in the Sukjong dynasty. The west people and the south people, through Kyŏngsin hwanguk (Sukjong 6th year) and Kapsul hwanguk (Sukjong 20th year), repeatedly rose to and fell from power. If this appearance of actual society is said to be projected in works then the world of the heroic novel is seen as after Sukjong.

In the above examination we were able to somewhat condense the work period of the heroic novel. So Tae-sŏng chŏn and Chang P'ung-un chŏn etc. are novels generally appearing around the mid 18th century and Cho Ung chŏn, Yu Ch'ung-ryŏl chŏn, etc. is seen as appearing a little later around the 19th century. Also many of the heroic novel existing only as type printing manuscripts are seen as appearing it the 20th century with the industrial publishing goal were compiled of this element and that element of the existing works by the publishing companies for a standard of interest.

**GOLOSSARY**

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