Sŏkdokkugyŏl in the Koryŏ Period*

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1. Introduction

Sŏkdokkugyŏl(釋讀口訣)¹ is a method of reading Chinese texts in Korean by adding borrowed letters (借字),² and it can refer to both

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1 Kugyŏl (口訣) Grammatical elements inserted at the end of certain phrases of Chinese texts, which purport to help reading these texts. These elements were usually written with simplified Chinese characters. Also, the whole system or method for reading Chinese texts using Kugyŏl in the above sense Īndokkugyŏl (音讀口訣) Kugyŏl in the second sense in which each Chinese character is always read as its sound (音), and the original order of the sentence is preserved. For this reason, also called Sundokkugyŏl (訓讀口訣), i.e. Kugyŏl which is read in the original order Sŏkdokkugyŏl (釋讀口訣) Kugyŏl in the second sense in which each Chinese character is sometimes read as its sound (音), sometimes as its meaning (訓 or 韓), and the order of sentence is rearranged according to the word order of Korean.

2 A large number of scholars have studied the system of transcription with borrowed letters. A summary of the studies is as follows:

Transcription of words: Transcription of proper names and common nouns
Transcription of sentences: Hyangch'al (鄉札) (used in Hyangga 鄉歌)

Idu (吏讀) (for official and practical use)
Kugyŏl (口訣) Sŏkdokkugyŏl (for almost complete translation)
Īndokkugyŏl (for reading Chinese texts)

Idu, in most cases, was used in official documents, but was also used in translating Chinese texts. Taemyŏngnyulch'ae (大明律直解) and Yangjamgyŏngch'ŏnch'wallyo (黃齋經解) are Idu translations of Chinese texts. Though Hyangch'al, Idu, and Sŏkdokkugyŏl have common features in that they all used borrowed letters, there are certain differences in their usage. For
the translation method and the translation work itself. Though it is a complete translation work in itself, there is certain orthographic imperfections in the translation. Nevertheless Sŏdkokkyŏl is estimated as one of the most sophisticated forms of translation, fit to be termed epoch-making material for the study of the Korean language and its grammar in the Koryŏ Period. It is expected to play a crucial role in deciphering Hyangga (鄕歌) At present, including the two sentences in the Suk’waŏnggyobungi (釋華嚴敘分記) written by Kyunyŏ (均如), an eminent Koryŏ monk, there exist six Sŏdkokkyŏl materials.

This essay will first examine the characteristics and system of Sŏdkokkyŏl, and then its significance within the history of the Korean language Though short, the Sŏdkokkyŏl material in vol. 3 of Kyunyŏ’s Suk’waŏnggyobungi is the first of its kind, so its translation and a brief gloss are attempted in this essay.

2. Characteristics of Sŏdkokkyŏl

Sŏdkokkyŏl is a method of reading Chinese texts in Korean. In the materials of Sŏdkokkyŏl, t’o (呌), oral particles, are written in small characters between the lines of the original Chinese text. The t’o are written in kugyŏl letters,3 simplified Chinese characters to indicate example, Sŏdkokkyŏl and Hyangch’al show a close similarity in the pattern of transcription, whereas Idu shows quite a different pattern. In particular, there is a big difference between Idu and Ùndokkugyŏl, which can be identified by deleting all the t’o (呌) If the text, after deleting all the t’o, still constitutes a complete Chinese sentence, it is an Ùndokkugyŏl sentence. Otherwise, it is an Idu sentence.

3 The kugyŏl letters, simplified Chinese characters, belong to the syllabic writing system. Though rare, some kugyŏl letters preserve the original form of a Chinese character, not simplifying its form. More detailed remarks about this will be made in Section 3. Having
grammatical elements of Korean (Refer to the picture). Though most of the t'o were used to indicate particles or verbal endings as in Umékkugyun, there were other usages as well. For example, certain t'o indicate the pronunciation of a Chinese character. This usage is called Marímch'omgipop (音餘記法). As the Korean language has a different word order from the Chinese, yódkogjóm (逆讀點), periods indicating where to reverse the reading order, were put in so that the Chinese text could be read in the Korean word order.

The reading method of Sökdkuggyol is as follows. Begin with a Chinese character with a t'o on its right and read down. When you meet a yódkogjóm, a "reverse period", under a Chinese character or a t'o, go up again and read the Chinese character with a t'o on its left. By following this rule, the Chinese text reads in the Korean word order. If there are both a yódkogjóm and a t'o on the left of a letter, it indicates to go up again and finish reading the Chinese character with a t'o on its left, then go down and read the characters with a t'o on their right.

Now I will exemplify the reading method of Sökdkuggyol with the actual material. Line A in Examples 1 and 2 is a modification of the original vertical script into a horizontal form. The t'o which were originally written on the left, are here written as superscripts. Line B is the rearrangement of line A according to yódkogjóm, which corresponds to the Korean word order. In line B', kugyol letters are replaced by presumed original Chinese characters. As can be seen, when the kugyol letters are replaced by the presumed original
Chinese characters, the text becomes greatly similar to the pattern of Hyangga texts Line C has transliterated the kugyŏl letters into Ch'ŏng'um (正音), the 15th century Korean alphabet. Line D is a translation into present-day Korean. Modifications were made in case a literal translation was impossible.

<Example 1>

A : 復の 有(ピナ) 五道ヒ 一切衆生リ、復の 有(ピナ) 他方ヒ 不(フン)可(ヒョム)可(ヒョム)
    量ノハ、衆

B : 復の 五道ヒ 一切衆生リ 有ヒナカ 復の 他方ヒ 量ノハ 可セ
    ンヒ 不知ヒヒヒ 継 有ヒナカ <高仁02:01-2>

B' : 復為隱 五道叱 一切 衆生是 有叱在魧 繼為隱 他方叱 量乎音 可
    叱為隱 不知是飛叱 繼 有叱在魧 <高仁02:01-2>

C : 또혼 五道A 일제 종성이 잇거며 또혼 他方A 裨裨(혜아름) 짓훈
    안디어 못리 잇거며

D :  또 五道의 모든 종성이 있으며 또한 他方에, 혜아림 수 없이 많
    은 못리가 있으며

<Example 2>

A : 一一國土と 五と 一一佛と 及へ 大衆もノヲテリ 各へ各ヲテ 説
    ハニリ 般若波羅密し

B : 一一國土と 五と 一一佛と 及へ 大衆もノヲテリ 各へ各ヲテ 般若波羅密し 説ヲハニリ <高仁02:06-7>

B' : 一一國土叱 中良叱 一一佛亦 及只 大衆亦 乎ヲテ多 各衣各衣爾
    般若波羅密乙 說飛只示多 <高仁02:06-7>

C : 一一國土A 中御 一一佛與 民 大衆亦 好利於他 齡頼般若波羅
    密を 비로록시다

D : 각 國土 가운데 있는 각각 부처와 大衆이라고 하는 사람마다 제
    각각 般若波羅密을 말씀하시고 있다.
As can be seen in the above examples, Sŏdkokkugyŏl is a translation of Chinese texts by adding kugyŏl letters so that one can read them in the Korean word order. Line B is a translation of the original Chinese text by using the Sŏdkokkugyŏl method. As Sŏdkokkugyŏl uses t'o to translate Chinese into Korean, when the same sentence is repeated within one text and the following t'o are predictable, whole or parts of the t'o are abbreviated. This is also true of yŏdkokjŏms. These abbreviations follow a certain rule. Therefore it is necessary to be aware of the rules for abbreviation in order to get an accurate understanding of Korean grammar in the Koryŏ Period. There are some t'o which are hard to fully understand. It is important to determine whether these unintelligible t'o are the result of abbreviation rules, or are genuine hapax legomena which occur only once due to the lack of data, for not all unintelligible t'o result from abbreviation rules.

3. The Writing System of Sŏdkokkugyŏl

The writing system of the existing Sŏdkokkugyŏl materials is as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Presumed Pronunciation</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>Presumed Original Character</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) k/ki</td>
<td>八</td>
<td>八</td>
<td>八</td>
<td>八</td>
<td>八</td>
<td>只</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) kŏ</td>
<td>去</td>
<td>去</td>
<td>去</td>
<td>去</td>
<td>去</td>
<td>去</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) kyŏ</td>
<td>ナ</td>
<td>ナ</td>
<td>ナ</td>
<td>ナ</td>
<td>ナ</td>
<td>在</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) ko</td>
<td>ロ</td>
<td>ロ</td>
<td>ロ</td>
<td>ロ</td>
<td>ロ</td>
<td>古</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) kwa</td>
<td>去</td>
<td>去</td>
<td>去</td>
<td>去</td>
<td>去</td>
<td>果</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(6) kom</td>
<td>フ</td>
<td>フ</td>
<td>フ</td>
<td>フ</td>
<td>フ</td>
<td>父</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4 In Kōngwonyŏnggyŏng (金光明經) and Yugasjon (瑜伽師地論), the kugyŏl letter ‘ホ’ was occasionally written in the form of ‘ホ’, which is a result of different individual
handwritings. As there is no semantic distinction between the letters 'ㅏ' and 'ㅓ', they shall be unified into a singular form of 'ㅓ'.

The letter 'ㅐ' in Hwaom-gyöng (華巖經) vol 14, is found only once in the phrase 'ﾛロハハ' 在 Hwaom 07-18-20. In other cases, 'ㅐ' was used in phrases such as '新 ㅢ' and 'ㅢتوجه' in Yugasaipron. The phrases '新 ㅢ' and 'ㅢتوجه' appeared frequently in the Ōndokkugyööl materials of the late Koryo Dynasty. It is in this regard that we can assume that Yugasaipron dates later than other Sŏkddokkugyööl materials. Philological aspects as well as the writing system and grammar of Yugasaipron show that it was written later than other materials.

5 The letter 'ㅐ' is found only once in the phrase '로로라라'.
(30) ri 邉 / 邉 / 邉 / 邉 / 邉 利
(31) ryō 邱 吕
(32) m/ŭm ガ ガ ガ ガ ガ/立音
(33) ma マ マ マ マ マ
(34) myŏ 角 角 角 角 角
(35) mo? 毛 毛
(36) mŭl 勿 勿
(37) p/ŭp 甲 甲 甲 甲
(38) pā/pū 火 火 火 火 火
(39) s 七 七 七 七 七
(40) sa 木 木 木 木 木
(41) sam 三 三 三
(42) syŏ 立 立 立
(43) si 角 角 賜
(44) si 印 印 印 印
(45) sulp 白 白 白 白 白
(46) a 五 五 五 五 五
(47) ya 也
(48) yŏ : : : : : 亦
(49) 与
(50) ye 之 之 之 之 之
(51) o ろ ろ ろ ろ ろ
(52) o(ho) も も も も も/乎
(53) o 五 乎
(54) u(rì) 又
(55) u(rì) 又
(56) üi う う う う う う

6 In Hionun-kyŏngso (華信経説), the Kukyŏl letter 'ゆっくり' appears only in the form of 'ゆっくり' in examples such as 'ゆっくり相応' and 'ゆっくり相応 知ナ لهذه' The letter 'ゆっくり' in Umdokkugiyl materials since the 15th century was pronounced as 'mülü'.


(57) i ㅣ ㅣ ㅣ ㅣ ㅣ ㅣ
(58) chyŏ ㅢ ㅢ ㅢ ㅢ ㅢ ㅢ ㅢ ㅢ serialized
(59) ha ㅐ ㅐ ㅐ ㅐ ㅐ ㅐ serialized
(60) ho(e) ㄴ ㄴ ㄴ ㄴ ㄴ ㄴ
(61) hu ㅣ ㅣ ㅣ ㅣ ㅣ ㅣ
(62) h₅ ㄴ ㄴ ㄴ ㄴ ㄴ ㄴ serialized
(63) h₅n? serialization?
(64) h₅y(h₅i) ㅗ ㅗ ㅗ/ㅗ ㅗ .ordinal
(65) k₆i ㅏ ㅏ ㅏ ㅏ ㅏ 中
(66) ㄷ ㄷ 止
(67) ㄸ ㅓ ㅓ
(68) ㅆ ㅆ ㅆ
(69) ㅈ ㅈ ㅈ serialized
(70) ik? ㄱ ㄱ ㄱ serialized
(71) ㄲ
(72) k₅k₅/k₅s ㅐ ㅐ 印
(73) chiz ㅏ ㅏ 道
(74) il ㅗ ㅗ 成
(75) ㅏ 甲

(The above A is vol. 35 of Taebanggwangbul-hwaomkyöngso (大方廣佛華嚴經疏), B, vol. 14 of Taebanggwangbul-hwaomkyöng (大方廣佛華嚴經), C, vol. 1 of Kuyöng-unwanggyöng (舊譯仁王經), D, vol. 3 of Kôngwangmyöng-gyöng (金光明經), and E, vol 20 of Yugasajiron (瑜伽師地論)).

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7 The kugyol letter ‘ㅏ’ appears only in Sŏdokkugyo materials, and represents a noun in most cases.
8 The letter ‘ㄱ’ was used only as a nominative case marker in Sŏdokkugyo materials.
The kugyŏl letters are simplified Chinese characters. In other words, a new syllabic writing system was created by adopting parts of the Haeso (楷書) style, the Haengso (行書) style, or the Ch'osŏ (草書) style of Chinese characters. Though no record exists on exactly when and where the letters were created, it is assumed to have already been in use before the Koryŏ Period. As a matter of fact, simplified Chinese characters appear in some Koryŏ and Silla Idu texts as well. Generally, the kugyŏl letters were based on Chinese characters that were frequently used by Koreans, and in particular, those that have been long in use as borrowed letters. As can be seen in <Chart 1>, there are certain rules in the formation of kugyŏl letters. They are actually simplified parts of Chinese characters, i.e., the upper, lower, left or right part of a letter written in Haeso or Ch'osŏ style. However, some kugyŏl letters use the whole original letter instead of its abbreviated or modified form, although this was not a common case.

The kugyŏl writing system follows the syllabic system in general. Sometimes kugyŏl letters are used to indicate individual phonemes, most of which were used for Marumch'ŏngi (末音添記). Most kugyŏl letters are either Ŭmgaja (音假字) or Hungaja (訓假字).9

4. Sŏkdŏkkugyŏl Materials

Up until now, six Sŏkdŏkkugyŏl materials from the Koryŏ Dynasty

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9 Letters borrowed from Chinese characters can be classified into following four classes: Ŭmdokja (音讀字): Letters which are read as the sound of the original Chinese character, and preserve its original meaning. Hundokja (訓讀字): Letters which are read as the meaning of the original Chinese character, and preserve its original meaning. Ĭmgaja (音假字): Letters which are read as the sound of the original Chinese character, and do not preserve its original meaning. Hungaja (訓假字): Letters which are read as the meaning of the original Chinese character, and do not preserve its original meaning.
have been discovered.

1) Two Sŏkddokkugyŏl sentences from Kyunyŏ's Suk'waŏnggyŏngi (釋華彌敎分記)


4) Kŭnggwangmyŏng-gyŏng (金光明經), vol 3: Xylographic book, 권자본. Presumed to be a 13th century publication, and considered to have belonged to the same category as Yugasajiron. The first and the last two pages of the volume are assumed to have been written by a different writer from the rest of the text. Owned by Kim Byŏng-gu.

5) Kuyŏg-inwanggyŏng (舊譯仁王經) vol. 1: Xylographic book Only 5 pages remain. 25 lines per page, and 17 characters per line. Seemingly a 절첩본. Presumed to have been written in the 13th century. Possessed by the Dongguk University Museum

6) Yugasajiron (瑜伽師地論) vol. 20: Xylographic book, 권자본. Presumed to have been written in the late 13th century. This book shows the latest linguistic characteristics among the existing Sŏkddokkugyŏl materials. Owned by Professor Nam P'ung-hyŏn.

The above 3) - 6) were translated and treated in detail in Kugyŏngu [Kukyŏl Studies] vol. 3 under the title “Studies in the Writing System of Sŏkddokkugyŏl in the Koryŏ Period”.

Among the existing Sŏkddokkugyŏl materials, the two sentences in Sŏkhwaŏnggyŏngi vol. 3 are chronologically the earliest. The discovery of this material enabled the study of 10th century Sŏkddokkugyŏl. This material was previously examined by An, Byŏng-hi
The characters '有' in the above material can be read as 'is-ta (있다)'. The character '나' indicates '다 (ta)', the sentence-terminating ending. The character '곤' (-un) indicates the topic marker. This character is the original form of the simplified kugyol letter '나'. The '나유여 (-pyō)' part in '無如是法 (없다 흠하다)' in the above example is identical to '나유여' that appears in Sŏdokkugyoł materials of the Koryŏ Dynasty. '나유여' in '無如是法 (없다)' functions as a sentence-terminating ending. In view of grammatical rules in the Koryŏ Period, the '나유여' can be interpreted in two different ways, i.e. exclamatory or interrogative ending. The expression '나유여' resulted from the complex construction containing the bound noun '나유여(없다)', and in the long run, was reanalyzed as a single unit. This process can be diagramed as follows: [ [ [- 둘 ] # 을 ] + (어)여 ] > [- 둘 + (어)여 ] > -에 더 (-나유여). As the particle '나유여' can be interpreted as exclamatory (or possibly obligation) or interrogative, the construction containing this particle can also be interpreted in two ways. For a better understanding of this sentence, a more detailed examination of the expression '有주' should be required.¹⁰ Interestingly, the '디' in

¹⁰ An Byŏng-hu (1987) assumed that '豆亦' in '有주' was read as 'tu-i' or 'tu-hu', and equivalent to the medieval form '오여 (오아)' or '디', (주) According to An Byŏng-hu, though '디' is semantically more likely to have been the equivalent form since '豆亦' comes after the negative main clause, '豆亦' as borrowed letters is closer to '오여'. In Li Sŏng-jae (1993), he assumes that '디여 (디이)' in Pulsaŏsaebyeong-kyŏng (佛說四十二章經) in the Hoam Museum is equivalent to the 15th-century form '디마' (디마)', and deals with the relationship among '豆亦', '디여' and '디마' in Pŏp'o-kyŏng (法華經) owned by Nam P'ung-kyŏn.
the 15th century, which is equivalent to the connective ending ‘-豆亦 (duyö)’, tends to be followed by a rhetorical question.11 Such facts considered, it is possible to interpret the above sentence as follows:

Exist it does Pulsŏng (佛性, Buddhist nature). How can it be that it exists in Ch’ŏnje-in (闡提人)? though not in Sŏngŭn-in(善根人)?!2 Exist it does, Pulsŏng How can it be that it exists in Sŏngŭn-in, though not in Ch’ŏnje-in? So it is said

Among the existing materials, in some cases, kugyŏl letters were written in after the original script was printed, while in other cases they were carved in and printed together with the original script We will call the former ‘Kip-’о (記入吐)(written-in ‘о), and the latter ‘Insweae-’о(印刷吐)(printed ‘о) for convenience. While usually black ink was used to write in the kugyŏl letters, red ink was also used occasionally. Though rare, blue ink was used in some materials that were printed after the 17th century. The kugyŏl letters in all currently existing Sŏkdokkugyŏl materials were written with black ink.

5. The Historical Significance of Sŏkdokkugyŏl

With the exception of Idu of the Silla Dynasty and Idu and

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11 The connective ending ‘-디녀’ in 15th century Korean also appeared in the form of ‘-디 nil’ (niyl), ‘-디 독’ (duyö) and ‘-디 이’ (tuyö). Despite the time gap, it is important to notice that other related forms such as ‘-도에’ (tyoe) and ‘-도에’ (tayo) existed in 16th century materials. It is impossible to clarify the full relationship among these related forms. But ‘-도에’ and ‘-도에’ also appear in Samgganghaengghido (三綱行賞圖) published during the rule of Sŏnjo (宣祖, King Sŏn). Such facts being considered, it is possible to read ‘豆亦’ as “tuyö”. Generally, the character ‘豆’ has been read as “tu” in borrowed letters afterwards.

12 Ch’ŏnje-in (闡提人) a person that did so much killing that he lost all his goodness

13 Sŏngŭn-in (善根人) a person with three virtues that deserve reward not being greedy, not being angry, and not being foolish.
Hyangga of the Koryŏ Dynasty, there remain few written materials preceding the creation of Hunmin-Ch’ŏngǔm (訓民正音: original name of the Korean alphabet, Hangŭl). The discovery of Sŏdokkugyŏl holds a great value in that it provided a rich source for studying the Korean language of the Koryŏ Period. Its significance is as follows:

First, like Ŭndokkugyŏl materials of Koryŏ Dynasty, Sŏdokkugyŏl serves as an abundant source in the study of Korean historical grammar. As data of the Korean language before the creation of Hangŭl, it provides a more accurate and critical record of the Korean language in the Koryŏ period. Moreover, through a comparative study of Sŏdokkugyŏl with other 15th century Korean materials, more facts will be discovered on the history of Korean language.

Second, besides its significance in grammatical studies, it also provides a rich source of Koryŏ vocabulary. The vocabulary of Sŏdokkugyŏl includes adverbs, verbs, and nouns. As adverbials, in particular, are written in Marumch’ŏngip’op (木音添記法), Sŏdokkugyŏl is essential in studying Koryŏ vocabulary.

Third, Sŏdokkugyŏl can also be applied to studying the history of Korean phonology, but certain precautions are required in this case. In general, the borrowed letters do not reflect all phonological aspects and rules of the Korean language. Therefore, it is necessary to consider the limitations of the transcription system using borrowed letters in studying phonology. Such imperfections could be overcome afterwards thanks to the scientific and logical structure of Hunmin-Jŏngŭm, or Han’gŭl, the Korean alphabet.

Fourth, Sŏdokkugyŏl provided new possibilities in deciphering Hyanggas. When tracing the original characters of the kugyŏl letters in Sŏdokkugyŏl, as in above B’ in <Example 1> and <Example 2>, we can see the close similarity between kugyŏl letters and the transcription method of Hyanggas. It is assumed that some Sŏdokkugyŏl
materials were written before Hyanggas, and others during the same period. Many aspects of the vocabulary or the grammar of Sŏndokkugyŏl, in fact, show a close similarity to those of Hyanggas. Therefore, Sŏndokkugyŏl may help deciphering Hyanggas in a more accurate and logical way.

Lastly, the records of Sŏndokkugyŏl are also valuable within the history of Korean translation and transcription systems using borrowed letters, since the linguistic characteristics of Sŏndokkugyŏl reflect many aspects of Ancient Korean that preceded the period of Sŏndokkugyŏl.

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