

In Defense of the State: The Kabo Reforms, Education, and Legitimacy

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Introduction

By 1896, and in the span of a mere twenty years, Korea experienced the “opening” of the country, multiple regicide attempts, a political coup, a major peasant uprising, and war. The country was in a state of upheaval. King Kojong’s (r. 1863-1907) new Korean Empire embarked on a series of reforms known as the Kabo Reforms (1894-1896) that constituted the first phase of modernization and nation-building in Korean history.

Recent scholarship both in and outside of Korea examines the role of the Kabo Reforms in modern state formation. For example, in Hyōnjong Wang’s *The Formation of the Korean Modern State and the Kabo Reforms*, he argues that “the reform officials attempted to transform systematically the state of the Chosŏn dynasty into a modern state.”¹ Wang focuses on the political and economic aspects of the Kabo Reforms that contributed to the autonomous nature of the efforts to reorganize the political system and transform the feudal economy into a capitalist economy. Similarly, Kyung Moon Hwang examines the formation of the Korean state and posits that a re-conceptualization of the *kukka* (國家) among leading intellectuals of this time led to a collectivist notion “that included

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the monarch, government, and people and occupied a defined territory.”² This is in contrast to the traditional concept of the state that referred only to the dynastic government or to the monarchy itself. Both works demonstrate the Chosŏn government’s struggle to strengthen its rule over the people and to establish a modern state through reform of the political system. They also call attention to the blueprint the Kabo Reforms laid for modernization in Korea, with its influence seen in the Kwangmu Reforms and later into the early 20th century.

One of the important aspects of the Reforms was educational reform: Kojong’s government issued new textbooks that attempted to not only change the content of education but also its objective. Yoonmi Lee, in *Modern Education, Textbooks and the Image of the Nation*, examines modernization and nationalism in Korean education during the open ports period, but focuses on the construction of a modern nationhood as envisioned by the “modernizers,” a group of reform-minded intellectuals. Lee argues that the redefinition of civilization and education, the emphasis on the royal household, and the construction of heroes and foundation myths were instrumental to modern state formation and a part of Korea’s “cultural revolution.”³ As part of an effort “to construct a new society based on the Western model,”⁴ modern education promoted “pride and harmony of the nation”⁵ and the textbooks “carry messages serving the nationalist cause.”⁶ Lee concludes that through modern mass education, the modernizers “aspired to construct a modern nation based on their interpretations of ‘Western’ modernity,” rendering education a “major ‘cultural’ agent in the state formation and nation building process.”⁷

The above works emphasize the construction of a modern state and the development of modern Korean nationalism through political and economic reforms, with Lee specifically stressing the role of education in the modern nation-building process. Other historians of education have also pointed to the first modern textbooks as harbingers of modernity and a by-product of a cohesive modernization program, beginning with the Kabo Reforms.⁸ This paper, in contrast to these existing studies, focuses on the self-conscious need of the government to strengthen and re-fashion

itself on a pragmatic, rather than ideological or philosophical, level. In other words, I argue that the textbooks are primarily geared toward legitimizing Korea's rule itself rather than developing nationalism or capitalism as systematic objectives of its rule. By 1895, the Kojong government faced a legitimization crisis due to the problems they encountered with various foreign powers since the signing of its first international treaty in 1876. Beleaguered by social unrest (as manifested through the Tonghak Uprising), assassination attempts and successes on government officials and the monarchy, multiple shifts in power between the Taewŏn'gun, Queen Min and her supporters, and Kojong, not to mention a full-fledged war being waged on Korean soil, it was necessary for the government to defend its legitimacy to rule. Rather than concentrate on the government's concerted efforts in the construction of Korean nationalism, this article instead suggests that a lateral reading of the first official modern textbooks reveals a symptomatic expression of anxiety by the government, attempting to cast the existing state in a reinvigorated light while defending its program of reform. In 1894, in the midst of the Sino-Japanese War and due to the demonstrated weakness of the government and its ruling authority, there was an acute need for the discomfited and self-conscious Chosŏn government to (re-) establish its right to rule and to justify its actions since 1876. The official textbooks supplied this badly needed legitimacy and explanations of recent actions of the Chosŏn government.

Political Instability and Weakness: A Summary

The 1876 Kanghwa Treaty is a classic example of the use of the gun-boat policy. Under the threat of war, the Korean government reluctantly acquiesced to the signing of the unequal treaty, marking the "opening" of Korea. Opponents to the treaty, including the Taewŏn'gun and officials such as Ch'oe Ikhyŏn, were clamorous and quick to voice their criticism. The Taewŏn'gun blamed the government's weakness for submission to Japanese demands, and officials presented memorials expressing their

disapproval. Disagreement over policy-making and reciprocal criticism of official decisions would later become a severe impediment for the late 19th century ruling authority.

After 1876 and the opening of the first ports to trade, limited steps were taken to reorganize the government and to respond to the changing environment. The arrival and virtual domination of the Japanese and Chinese merchants in the ports led to the establishment of Korean mercantile associations and guilds, and lobbying the court for protection. By the late 1880's, the Foreign Office was occupied with matters of trade, such as the designation of areas of jurisdiction, the codification of collection procedures, and the coordination of cooperation between brokers and other merchants.⁹ The increase in guild activities and demands for legal action into the 1890's no doubt reflects a disruption in the socio-economic system of the port cities and their environs.

In addition to the introduction of large-scale trade and dramatic changes in the economy, the Korean government sent "sight-seeing" trips to Japan and China in the early 1880's (*Sinsayuramdán*: 신사유람단(神士遊覽團)). Upon receiving reports from members of these trips, military reform became an integral part of Korea's own program for reform. By May of 1881, Kojong had enlisted the assistance of a Japanese military officer, Horimoto Reizo, to form a Special Skills Force (Pyölgigun: 별기군(別技軍)) trained in modern Western warfare. The special favor, and unequal pay, the king bestowed on this group contributed to the discontent of the traditional army units and the eventual "Soldiers' Riot" in 1882 (Imo Kullan: 임오군란(壬午軍亂)). Unfortunately, the Imo Incident led to the destruction of property and the loss of lives. During the riots, several Japanese were killed, including Horimoto Reizo, and the Japanese legation was overtaken. As a result, the Taewön'gun seized control from his son Kojong, leading to confusion on the throne and in the bureaucracy, and increasing tensions between Japan and China.

Two and a half years later, a group of reformers with Japanese support staged a coup d'état to establish a new government and to implement rapid changes. The new government lasted a mere three days, until it was

suppressed by Qing troops. Again, the violence led to an attack on the Japanese legation, this time burning it to the ground and taking more Japanese lives in the process. The progressive reformers involved in the coup were captured and killed, or fled to Japan. Thus, there remained very few Korean intellectuals who advocated rapid and Western-style change, and those who remained did (and could) not speak or act forcefully.

In the ten years following the 1884 Kapsin Coup, Korea continued to undergo changes and followed an irregular path of reform. However, the government made little improvement in the area of social reforms. Nearly a century of steady and growing social unrest culminated in the 1894 Tonghak Peasant Uprising. The largest peasant uprising in Korean history, the government spent the better part of that year fighting back various attacks and negotiating with the leaders of the revolt. During this campaign, the Korean government again called upon Qing troops to suppress the rebellion, precipitating the Sino-Japanese War.

Shortly after the start of the Sino-Japanese War, Japanese troops seized Kyōngbok Palace, and the Kabo Reforms were enacted. The Kabo Reforms under no uncertain terms ended tribute relations with China and established Korea as a fully independent country. The termination of the traditional relationship between the Qing and Chosŏn was an important first step in the reform efforts to strengthen the government and to the formation of a modern state.

However, by 1894, it was clear that the Korean government was in a state of disarray and in dire need of a makeover. In fact, since 1876 the events of the ensuing eighteen years consistently demonstrated the government's grave and outright lack of strength. This was not for a lack of initiative. Particularly in terms of education, the government made various, although many of them aborted, attempts to incorporate new Western-style learning. For example, the *Tongmunhak* (同文學) was established in 1883 and was later changed to the *YugyōngKongwōn* (育英公院) or the "Royal College of English" in 1886. In 1888, and after five years of preparations, the government established a military school named the *YōnmuKongwōn* (鍊武公院), and an agricultural school called the

Nongmu Mokch'uk Sihumjang (農務牧畜試驗場).

Nonetheless, these schools enjoyed little popularity and even less staying power. Although I have discussed elsewhere the reasons for this and will not reiterate them here, it is also clear that by 1895 the government saw a distinct need to not only establish primary and normal schools, but to publish corresponding textbooks.¹⁰ A closer examination of these first textbooks will reveal a multi-pronged effort to incorporate new learning, to establish and define “Korea,” to justify the need for Korea’s particular form of government, and to defend the government’s recent actions.

Legitimization of the Government

The first textbooks the government published, the *People’s Primary School Reader* or PPSR (국민소학독본(國民小學讀本), 1895), *New Ordinary Primary Text* (신정심상소학(新訂尋常小學), 1896), and *History of Chosŏn* (조선력사(朝鮮歷史), 1895), point to the 500 years of history for the “Great Chosŏn” Dynasty and emphasize its survival, persistence, and durability. This paper focuses on these textbooks since they were the very first textbooks published for use in the new official schools that offered a modern education, and provide insight into the objectives of the government at this particular time. For example, the first chapter, “The Great Chosŏn,” of the PPSR began with a basic description of the country and then stated:

Of all the countries in the world, there are many independent countries, of which Chosŏn is one... It is an old country from Koguryŏ, Paekche, Silla, the Sam Han, and Koryŏ... T’aejo established (Chosŏn) and it has continued for five hundred years. We have been born in this kind of a country, and now we have entered into a time of friendly relations and trade, and competition for strength and wealth with all the countries of the world. Thus, the most urgent matter for the people of our country is scholarship. Also, a country’s strength/wealth or weak-

ness/poverty is related to the scholarship of its people.¹¹

The title alone of this chapter, “The Great Chosŏn,” was an obvious attempt to construct the image of a powerful state. Additionally, by establishing Chosŏn as an “old country” with a long history, Korea was presented as a stable political entity with a well-established civilization and culture. The implication was that unlike some other countries, Korea was independent and has maintained its sovereignty throughout history. Thus, despite recent threats to and questions over Korea’s right to rule, given its history of independence and stability there was no reason to doubt that Korea will continue along this same historical trajectory.

The text’s reference to strong and wealthy countries was clearly a direct result of the influence of the self-strengthening movement that focused on developing military strength and financial wealth to defend the country. Although far removed from Korea’s reality, why the need to describe the world in these terms? Perhaps it was precisely because the Korean government exposed its inability to defend itself, as illustrated by the “forced” opening of Korea and the signing of the unequal 1876 Kanghwa Treaty (in spite of vehement opposition to the opening of the country by numerous government officials), and the government’s inability to resist foreign military assistance during the 1884 Kapsin Coup and the 1895 Tonghak Uprising.

Korea’s membership in the international community as one of the independent countries was also empowering. As an equal member, Korea could not only claim equivalence with other countries, including the more militarily and economically powerful Western imperialist countries, but indicated a dramatic shift in Korea’s position vis-à-vis China. As a later chapter in the same text explains, “China, like our country, is one country in the Asian continent.”¹² This adjustment in Korea’s traditional relationship with China, and Korea’s subsequent elevation to equal status, indicated a conscious effort to boost its image and imbue the country with a healthy shot of perceived strength and independence.¹³

This text continued with an emphasis on the indispensable role of the

king as the symbolic figure of the country and as the individual the people can look to as their leader and role model. Similarly, the first chapter in *History of Chosŏn* dates Korea's history back to Kija, the originator of Korean civilization,¹⁴ thus establishing the king as being the last in a long and unbroken line of kings. As others have noted elsewhere, this crucial link between the present and mythical past played a central role in the modernization of the monarchy.¹⁵ Inventing the king as a symbol of the Korean nation and the locus of national power was necessary to the creation of a powerful state and national identity. Both official textbooks took great pains to do so. It was particularly pressing at this time with the multiple shifts in power between the Taewŏn'gun, Kojong, and Queen Min and her supporters (not to mention at the bureaucratic level among conservative, progressive, and other officials that fell somewhere betwixt the two camps) that signaled weakness and inconsistency among the ruling authorities. Perhaps this was an oblique attempt to prevent any future efforts to usurp or undermine royal power and to eliminate any further confusion at the highest levels of government. In any case, the text sent a clear message that Korea's ruling authority cannot exist without its king.

The texts were also careful to point out that although Korea's political system was unique, it was not alone in that England was a monarchy. The long and tedious discussion of Korea's history in the *History of Chosŏn* not only solidified its independent position in East Asia, but set itself apart from China, Japan, and the rest of the world as a unique culture possessing a unique history. Thus, although many Japanese, Western, and reform intellectuals preferred a constitutional monarchy (as in England), the Koreans justified their political system based on its long history and culture. Korea's government, although modern and strong, was special since over time it had adapted the distinctiveness of Korean culture, and the uniqueness of Korean culture demanded that this particular type of government exist. This in itself was what made it "Korean."

The Creation of New Standards for Officials

The texts also pointed out the indispensable role of the officials in actual administration, and their deserving of such a role since they were “learned and scholarly.”¹⁶ However, for centuries certain *yangban* families practically monopolized official positions based on their lineage rather than their scholarly achievements. With the abolition of the civil service examinations, the government now chose its officials based on one’s schooling and with less regard to one’s family background. Within the textbooks themselves were embedded explanations as to why and how this change occurred.

To guarantee that the best and the brightest would emerge, the government employed a system of passing through grades and the textbooks encouraged students to be diligent and study hard. The textbooks included examples of men and women who worked hard, studying into the night by the light of a single candle, or provided parables comparing students who work hard and prosper with students who are lazy and become burdens to their families and society. The lesson was clear: only the industrious would triumph and succeed. The PPSR even dedicated an entire chapter to diligent study. It stated, “Concentrate, and study for a few hours every day...If your heart is not into it, your work will not be good and you will later fall.”¹⁷

With the elimination of the civil service examination system, establishment of the new educational system, and Korea’s entrance into the international world system, it was necessary for Korean government officials to learn the rules of foreign diplomatic relations in order to participate in the system and defend Korean independence. Many of the functions the officials were now expected to perform included some formerly perceived “lowly” functions such as translating and interpreting, and the practice of law and medicine. The secondary status groups had historically monopolized these occupations, and suddenly their skills became necessary if not desirable. The need for a different set of skills required a different kind of education which the government now hoped to provide.

But the recruitment and employment of officials from these different status backgrounds most likely necessitated a sincere effort to erase any stigma associated with these “lowly” positions, thus the description of Korea’s officials as “learned and scholarly,” and as essential to government operations.

Justification for Recent Government Actions

Given that the government had suffered a series of embarrassments, abolished the Confucian civil service examination system, overhauled the educational system, implemented a new economic program, and made revolutionary changes in terms of social standards through the Kabo Reforms, it was not surprising that the government would feel the need to justify its series of decisions leading up to reform. For example, in the PPSR, chapter 12 was dedicated to the treaty powers. This chapter explained that like the emperors and presidents of other countries, the Korean king signed treaties for the benefit of the people, implying that Korea had now become an equal member of the international community. This chapter reads:

Our king and other country’s emperors and presidents have signed treaties for exchange so that people from their countries can trade. These are treaty powers. The countries send envoys who manage foreign affairs, and in trading areas each country sends and sets up a consul so that they can watch over them. At this time we have signed treaties with eight countries. First with Japan, and then after, different countries came asking to sign treaties. The Asian country is Japan, the European countries are England, France, Germany, Russia, Italy, Austria, and then America, all of which are independent countries... Other countries (at first) evaluated us as weak, poor, and small. However size does not matter. Russia is the biggest country in Europe, but Russia is not as powerful as England, a small country that subjugated In-

dia...What is important is the country's civilization, and the people's respect for their rulers and their love of their country. If the people do this and work hard with their whole heart, then it will not be difficult to struggle to become like other countries. Among the other treaty powers, England is a monarchy. Germany, Russia, Austria, Italy and Japan are empires. France and the U.S. are called different things, but in terms of their rights in dealing with each other there is no difference.¹⁸

Not only did this chapter justify the signing of treaties with Japan and other Western countries, but emphasized the equal footing Korea now stood on (as opposed to its previously inferior status in the Chinese tributary relationship) which was not even true given that the treaties Korea was forced to sign were unequal treaties. Many officials had questioned the decision to sign the unequal treaties, and no doubt many Koreans in the port cities who were exposed to the most change viewed the opening of the country negatively. However, this chapter presents the situation in a different light, insisting that Korea was a participant sharing equal privileges and refers to a previous chapter explaining the benefits of trade.¹⁹ Korea's active participation in the world market as an equal member of the international community again contributed to the elevation of its status to that of other (more powerful) countries, including England, the U.S., and Russia.

Interestingly, while this chapter stressed the unimportance of size—giving Russia and China as examples—in terms of recognition by other countries and national strength, “respect for their rulers” was vital to “become like other countries.” The implication was that this respect is in some way lying dormant on the domestic front, and explained why Korea did not quite yet meet up to standard. There was nothing absent in the Korean character or in its systems themselves; it was simply a matter of developing previously untapped areas for Korea to flourish.

Creating Loyalty and Patriotism

With the various Western and Japanese imperialist powers lying in wait, as well as the recent events surrounding the Tonghak peasant uprising, it was clear the government needed to implement measures that would resolve the underlying social problems, and also garner popular support for the government. Since it was apparent that the commoners were less than satisfied with the performance of the government and its officials, it was necessary to legitimize the current governmental system, and to cultivate a sense of pride and patriotism in the people.

Most of the official textbooks, with few exceptions, included chapters dedicated to Korea or its government. Particularly in the language and history textbooks, the focus was on foundation myths, Korean historical figures and heroes, and Korea's ability to ward off Chinese and Japanese invaders. In the PPSR, the chapter introducing Ulchi Mundök includes the following lesson:

“He was a great warrior—brave and intelligent, moral and loyal... (Koguryö) was very strong during this period, but we (Chosön) have been weakened by China. Today we aren't as patriotic as the people in older times. Therefore, we need to study and to work hard.”²⁰

Not only did this chapter emphasize his victory over China's Sui dynasty in the seventh century, but highlights his patriotism and love for his country.

Even in the textbooks for the youngest students, depictions of the Korean king as a benevolent father-figure, the significance of the Korean national flag, and the beauty of various areas around the country (cities, mountains, rivers) impressed upon its readers that which makes Korea unique and worthy of great pride. The chapter on King Sejong in the PPSR describes his paternal affection in the following manner:

“King Sejong was concerned about the farming for the people, so he

wrote a book on it and promulgated it widely...The official punishment for criminals was (too) cruel, and this made the king sad, so he had whipping laws abolished...He also composed songs praising the morals of former kings...King Sejong was very moral, civilized, and patriotic, and was active in preserving Chosŏn as an independent country.”²¹

The chapter also goes on to describe his greatest invention, *han'gŭl*, and compares him to two of China's most illustrious emperors, Yao and Shun.

Conclusion

It is apparent that after the government was able to carry out reform measures, there were specific goals its officials had in mind, namely, legitimization of the government, justification for recent government actions, creation of new standards for officials, and the cultivation of a loyal and patriotic citizenry. The officials involved in educational reform and textbook compilation had these objectives in mind, but they were also concerned with the perception of the government as weak or even illegitimate. Unable to prevent increasingly aggressive foreign encroachment, shifts in political power (including a coup d'état), the largest peasant uprising on record, and the inability to proscribe foreign military intervention contributed to the depiction of a feeble and ineffective government. At a time when the government was at its weakest point in history, it was critical to reinvigorate its image and to justify its right to rule. A government's first and foremost obligation was to protect its people, yet the Chosŏn government had failed to accomplish this in a remarkable way since 1876. The first official textbooks sought to correct this by presenting an established Chosŏn government, substantiated by over 500 years of history and an even longer heritage of an unbroken line of kings. According to these texts, the government in its current form was necessary to Korea because it had culturally and politically adapted to Korea's unique

circumstances. And because of its role as leader-guardian-advocate, the texts encouraged students to lend their support for the strength of the country. The Korean government may have actually suffered from a weakened condition, but as a part of its overall reform program to fortify itself and protect its sovereignty, it needed to change its effete perception, which is precisely what the official textbooks set out to accomplish.

Notes :

- 1 Wang Hyŏnjong, *Han'guk kŭndae kukka ūi hyŏngsŏng kwa Kabo Kaehyŏk* (Seoul: Yŏksa Pip'yŏngsa, 2003), 475.
- 2 Kyung Moon Hwang, "Country or State? Reconceptualizing *Kukka* in the Korean Enlightenment period, 1896-1910," *Korean Studies*, Volume 24 (2000), 4.
- 3 Yoonmi Lee, *Modern Education, Textbooks and the Image of the Nation: Politics of Modernization and Nationalism in Korean Education, 1880 – 1910* (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000), 110.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Ibid.,101.
- 6 Ibid.,92.
- 7 Ibid.,128-9.
- 8 Several Korean scholars have also focused on the role of education and modern textbooks in the construction of modern Korean nationalism. Please see Kim Hyejŏng, "Kŭndaejŏk teksŭtŭ ūi kujŏjŏk t'ŭksŏng kwa ham ūi Kungmin sohak tokbon," *KugŏKyoyuk* 113, 2004; ChŏnYongho, "Kŭndae chisikkaenyŏm ūi hyŏngsang kwa Kungmin sohak tokbon," *Uri Ŭmun Yŏn'gu*25, 2005; Song Myŏngjin "'Kukka' wa 'susin,' 1890 nyŏndae Tokbonŭi tugaji yangsang," *Han'guk Ŭnŭ Munhwa* 39, 2009; Kang Chinho, "'Kugŭ' kyogwasŏ ūi tansaeng kwa kŭndaeminjokchuŭi," *Sanghŏ Hakbo*36, 2012.
- 9 Dennis L. McNamara, *Trade and Transformation in Korea, 1876-1945* (Boulder: Westview press, 1996), 29.
- 10 For a fuller discussion on the lack of popularity of the government schools,

please see my dissertation: Leighanne Yuh, "Education, the Struggle for Power, and Identity Formation in Korea, 1876-1910," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California at Los Angeles, 2008).

- 11 *PPSR*, Chapter 1, in *Han'guk Kaehwagi Kyogwaso Ch'ongsŏ*, Volume 1 (Seoul: Asea Munhwasa, 1977), 9-10; and *Kungmin Sohak Tokbon*, 1. Hereafter *PPSR* will refer to citations of the *People's Primary School Reader* found in *Han'guk Kaehwagi Kyogwaso Ch'ongsŏ*.
- 12 *PPSR*, 56; *Kungmin Sohak Tokbon* 56.
- 13 In Chapter Two of *Korea Between Empires*, "Decentering the Middle Kingdom and Realigning the East," Andre Schmid describes the "de-centering of China" and the ramifications of this process. Most importantly, for the purposes of this paper, the shift in attitudes towards China coincided with the formal end of the tributary relationship where China traditionally occupied a superior position. Under the new modern nation-state system, Korea was no longer inferior to China from a diplomatic or cultural perspective. This opened up the possibility for Korea to surpass China in terms of enlightenment and civilization. See Andre Schmid, *Korea Between Empires* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).
- 14 The very first textbook, the *People's Primary School Reader*, begins with a chapter on the "Great Chosŏn Country" and the first chapter in *History of Chosŏn* covers Kija. The historiography is noteworthy since the new histories reflect early attempts to create a national history that places prominence on Korea and no longer centers on China. These initial endeavors focus on the myth of Tan'gun, as the progenitor and founder of Chosŏn, and a reinterpreted Kija, as indeterminately Korean or Chinese but nonetheless the leader of an independent Korean state. *Han'guk Kaehwagi Kyogwaso Ch'ongsŏ*, 9-10; *Kung'min Sohak Tokbon* 1.
- 15 See T. Fujitani's *Splendid Monarchy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998). In this work, he examines the role of the emperor, public ceremonials, and other symbols in the construction of national consciousness and identity in Japan. He argues that through rites and rituals, rulers hoped to unite Japan's territory under one rule and "one dominant memory"(11). Not only was the emperor the key figure in uniting its subjects, he also embodied modernity. His imperial coach (which was actually an English carriage) and cavalcade signified "the modernity and international prestige of the Japanese monarch"(110).
- 16 *PPSR*, 10; *Kungmin Sohak Tokbon* 1.

17 *PPSR*, Chapter 17, 51-52; *Kungmin Sohak Tokbon* 22.

18 *PPSR*, Chapter 12, 36-39; *Kungmin Sohak Tokbon*, 14-16.

19 To rationalize the need for commerce and trade, Chapter 6 of the *PPSR* explains that since the land and climate of all countries were different, what each country produced was also different, and whatever one country lacked the need could be filled through trade. Foreign trade strengthened the country and was necessary for its overall welfare.

20 *PPSR*, Chapter 22, 65-67; *Kungmin Sohak Tokbon*, 29-30.

21 *PPSR*, Chapter 5, 19-20; *KungminSohakTokbon* 6.

〈Abstract〉

In Defense of the State: The Kabo Reforms, Education, and Legitimacy

Leighanne Yuh

Kojong's government in the late nineteenth century initiated an aggressive program of reform, known as the Kabo Reforms, amidst one of the most turbulent times in Korean history. Previous scholarship focuses on modern state-building and the construction of Korean nationalism, as well as the role of education in this process. In contrast, through a lateral reading of the first official modern textbooks this paper focuses on the Kojong government's attempt to legitimize its rule itself rather than developing nationalism or capitalism as systematic objectives of its rule. Beleaguered by social unrest, political instability, and economic hardship, the government faced a legitimization crisis, and thus through education attempted to cast the existing state in a reinvigorated light while defending its program of reform.

Keywords: Korean history, Kabo Reforms, State Legitimization, Education, Intellectual history.

〈국문초록〉

국가 수호를 위해: 갑오개혁과 교육, 국가의 정당화

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한국 역사상 최고의 격동기라 할 수 있는 19세기 후반, 고종정권은 개혁을 위한 적극적인 계획에 착수했다. 이것이 바로 갑오개혁이다. 기존 연구는 이 과정에서 교육의 역할 뿐만 아니라 근대국가 건설과 한국 내셔널리즘의 구축 (construction)을 주목했다. 반면 본 논문은 최초의 공식 근대 교과서에 대한 다른 시각의 독해를 통해, 정권이 내셔널리즘이나 자본주의를 발전시키는 것을 그 지배의 체계적인 목표로 하기 보다는 지배 그 자체를 정당화하고자 했던 시도에 주목하고자 한다. 사회적 불안, 정치적 불안정, 경제적 곤경 가운데 사면초가에 내몰렸던 고종정권은 권력의 정당성, 위기를 맞게 되었다. 따라서 고종정권은 개혁 프로그램을 수호하는 한편 교육을 통하여 현존하는 국가에 활기를 불어 넣기를 꾀했던 것이다.

주제어: 한국 근대사, 갑오개혁, 국가의 정당화, 교육사, 사상사