

# A Long Journey from Premodern to Modern

**E**ven though Kim Söngsu's life was not long, it was an astonishing journey. Geographically, he ventured from the tiny village of Inch'on, in the southwestern corner of north Chölla province, to Tokyo, Japan. Over time, he made a journey from premodern to modern, experiencing the collapse of the last dynasty of Korea, enlightenment movements, Japanese colonization, eventual Korean independence, and the birth of a new republic modeled on Western liberal democracies. Indeed, Kim weathered the sweeping changes of modern Korean history.

## The Son of Enterprising Landlords

Kim Söngsu was born in Inch'on-ri (*figs. 1.1 & 1.8*) on October 11, 1891 (September 9 in the lunar calendar), as the first son of Kim Kyöngjung (1863–1945, Chisan in pen name) and Lady Ko.<sup>1</sup> The Kims belonged to the lineage of Pibyön-nanggong of the Ulsan Kim clan, a well-respected *yangban* (nobility) lineage that produced the noted neo-Confucian scholar Kim Inhu (1510–1560), a contemporary and disciple of Yi Hwang (1501–1570). Yi, better known by his pen name, T'oegye, was regarded as Korea's foremost neo-Confucian thinker.<sup>2</sup>

Despite being categorized as *yangban*, the Kim lineage was not wealthy.<sup>3</sup> Kim Sŏngsu's family fortune originated when Kim's great-grandfather, Myŏnghwan, who was a humble Confucian scholar, was able to arrange for his third son, Yohyŏp (1833–1909; *fig. 1.2*), to marry the daughter of a wealthy landlord, Chŏng Keryang, from Inch'on-ri of Kobu (now Koch'ang) county.

As the third son in a family that strictly followed primogeniture rule, whereby the firstborn son was given more of the parents' property than any other, Yohyŏp was free to choose his residence.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, Chŏng, the father of his intended, wanted his only daughter to live near her natal home. Thus, when he married Chŏng (1831–1911; *fig. 1.3*), Yohyŏp moved to Inch'on-ri, a village near the Gulf of Chulp'o.<sup>5</sup> Yohyŏp established a new nuclear family in this village that was dominated by members of the Yŏnil Chŏng clan. Yohyŏp's father-in-law, often called *mansŏkkun* (meaning a very large landowner, but its literal meaning is a person whose total annual rice harvest is 10,000 *sŏk* [1 *sŏk* equals 5.1 bushels]), allocated some rice paddies to the newlywed couple.

Although there are no known records regarding the exact amount of land, the allocation could have been the modest beginning of Yohyŏp's becoming a rich landowner, however, there is an indication that he acquired land and wealth largely because of his wife's exceptional frugality and strict household management. It is said that she was so parsimonious about heating the house in winter that a chamber pot (*yogang*) in her bedroom was frozen for most of the winter.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, Yohyŏp's accumulation of wealth was gradual, and was not noticeable until his middle years.

Meanwhile, children were born—Kijung (1859–1933, Wŏnp'a or Tongbok in pen name; *fig. 1.4*) in 1859 and Kyŏngjung (1863–1945, Chinsan in pen name; *fig. 1.5*) four years later. To accommodate the growing family, Yohyŏp undertook the project of expanding his living area; he became a landlord before he was thirty years of age.

When I saw Yohyŏp's first dwelling, a well-preserved, tiny, thatch-roofed house, I was incredulous, for how could someone who had started with a small plot of farmland and a simple home acquire such wealth in his lifetime. When he died, in 1909, Yohyŏp left his two sons a considerable inheritance. He willed Kijung land producing approximately 1,000 *sŏk* of rice per year and Kyŏngjung, his second son, about one-fifth that amount. The two brothers acquired more wealth after their relocation to Chulp'o by capitalizing on the opportunity to export rice. Owing largely to the rice exporting, they became very successful and enterprising landlords.

By 1861, the first building of the current Kim family compound had been built. Further construction included the addition of main reception quarters in

1879, minor living quarters in 1881, a gatehouse to the main reception quarters in 1893, and minor reception quarters in 1903. This expansion became a compound of connected domiciles that allowed Kijung's family and Kyōngjung's families to have its own *sarang* (detached reception area) and *an* (family quarters), storage buildings, servants' quarters, and private entrance.

Kim Sōngsu was born to Kyōngjung and his wife in this family compound and was adopted in 1893 by his heirless uncle, Kijung. In fact, in Korea, to uphold the patrilineal descent rule, when families were heirless, either having only daughters or no children at all, they sometimes tried polygynous arrangements, although such instances were limited. Most often they adopted a male, but the range of choices for the adopted male heirs from agnate (persons related by patrilineal descent) and the most preferred ones were nephews. (Despite a revision of the South Korean civil code in 1977 that permitted adoption of someone with a different surname and the entry of the husband's name into his wife's family register, Koreans still adhere to a strict agnatic principle.) In the case of Sōngsu, the adoption did not take Sōngsu far from his biological parents; Sōngsu simply moved to an adjacent building. The adoption gave Sōngsu access to the wealth of both families, allowing him later in life to undertake various modernization projects.

The Kim family compound dominates the countryside in Inch'on-ri region, yet it is surprisingly modest, considering their accumulated wealth. Although my family wealth is nowhere near that of the Kims, my own family estate in Haejō-ri, a village in northeast Kyōngsang province, seems larger, more grand, and more luxurious than that of the Kims. The Kims must indeed have been frugal when it came to housing.

In addition to becoming a landlord, Yohyōp became a ranking officer in the government. He occupied various government posts, including *ch'ambong* (royal tomb official), *ūigūmbu* (state tribunal), *kunsu* (county magistrate), *chungch'uwōn* (counsel of the minister without portfolio), and *pisōwōn* (royal secretary).

The real emergence of the Kims as landlords took place when Kijung relocated to Chulp'o in 1907, followed by Kyōngjung after Yohyōp's death in 1909. Several family tales concern the move, one of them a ghost story. The family compound in Inch'on-ri, they say, was haunted, and some burnt remnants of the ghost can still be seen under the overhang of the house. A fortune-teller advised the family members that, if they relocated across the bay, they would be free of the ghost.<sup>7</sup>

Their genuine motivations for relocating were, however, sociopolitical as well as economical.<sup>8</sup> It appeared to be that their primary concerns were safety and security. The most imminent threats were the "fire brigands" (*hwajōk*),

frustrated peasants who were tired of *yangban* misrule. Riding on horseback and armed with muskets, they roamed the countryside, attacking *yangban* landlords and shattering the public peace on all sides. The Kims had been attacked several times by the fire brigands, and because of the Japanese garrison, Chulp'o was safer than it was in Inch'on-ri from the fire brigands' attacks. Nevertheless, it was not absolutely safe from Ŭibyŏng attacks. In fact, on September 2, 1908, Ŭibyŏng came to Chulp'o, attacked a pro-Japanese organization of a branch of the Korea Association (Taehan Hyŏphoe Chihoe), and killed Kim Yŏngin, general affairs director of the organization.<sup>9</sup> At any event, the relocated Kims built a modest thatch-roofed house (*fig. 1.9*) for the two families.

Another reason for the Kims' relocation was economic. (Nowadays, due to the accumulation of eroded soil deposits, and because of the lowering sea level, Chulp'o is a small fishing village.) Until the ports of Mokp'o and Kunsan were built, however, Chulp'o was a major commercial port. From Chulp'o, rice harvested in the fields of the Honam Plain was exported to Japan, and many Japanese merchants came there to buy. Kijung and Kyŏngjung were able to capitalize on the locale of Chulp'o to expand their landholding and wealth. According to Carter J. Eckert, "About 5 percent of the Kunsan export trade in rice was passing through Chulp'o, and most of this rice was coming from Koch'ang County, where the Kims had their original holdings."<sup>10</sup>

After their relocation to Chulp'o, the Kims did not keep records of the capital increase. The only available records on Kijung's family were *tojobu* (estate records) from 1918 to 1924, and Kim Yongsŏp used these records to give us a detailed account of the Kijung family's landholding and yearly harvests for six years. By 1920, the Kims had become large landlords, harvesting an annual total of 20,000 *sŏk* of rice.<sup>11</sup> Of the two brothers, Kyŏngjung was the more business-oriented, just as Yŏnsu (*fig. 1.6*) was more business-minded than Sŏngsu. In 1918, for instance, Kijung owned 750 *chŏngbo* (about 1,800 acres) of land, while Kyŏngjung owned in the neighborhood of 1,300 *chŏngbo* (about 3,185 acres),<sup>12</sup> even though Kijung originally inherited five times more land than Kyŏngjung.

## The Son of Patriotic Enlightenment

Being born into a rich family was not Kim Sŏngsu's only privilege. He was also privileged to have two fathers, natural and adoptive, and a father-in-law, all of whom were, in addition to well-known landlords, scholars and leaders of the

enlightenment movement. Their roles in the movement made them different from most other landlords. By then, according to Kim Yongsöp, the Korean landlords were classified into three categories: first, those who wanted to retain their privileged economic status by maintaining the existing socioeconomic structure; second, those who would give away their land to their tenants or donate their land to various public organizations, recognizing the social injustice in land ownership (this class includes Yun Kisö, Pak Sökhön, and Yi Hüijik); and third, those who would not give up their landownership, but instead joined the patriotic enlightenment movement, which accepted the ideas of Western civilization concerning national self-strengthening and modernization, and those aimed for eventual independence from Japan. Kim Yongsöp characterizes Kijung and Kyöngjung as belonging to the third category.<sup>13</sup>

In addition to being landlords, Kijung and Kyöngjung served in the government. Kijung passed the civil service examination and in 1888 received a *chinsa* (literary licentiate) degree, which made him eligible for admission to the national academy and afforded him promising career opportunities in an official government post. Two years later, Kijung became the magistrate of Tongbok (now Chinsan) county. Both brothers served in several positions in the protectorate government, including royal tomb official (*ch'ambong*), and county magistrate (*kunsu*). When Japanese interference and arrogance reached their height, and as the protectorate period evolved toward annexation, Kyöngjung resigned his post as Chinsan (now Künsan) county magistrate in 1905.

After leaving the government, they returned to Chulp'o and joined other landlords of the region in playing leading roles in the patriotic enlightenment movement. Both Kijung and Kyöngjung were sympathetic to the goals of the Enlightenment Party (Kaehwadang), which looked to Meiji Japan as a model for Korean national development.<sup>14</sup> To both Kijung and Kyöngjung, the patriotic enlightenment movement meant national self-strengthening through education and economic growth, which was the theme of the Enlightenment Party in the 1880s.<sup>15</sup> The brothers joined the Chölla Educational Association (Honam Hakhoe), a provincial scholarly organization in the province of Chölla. In the period of deepening national crisis under Japanese domination, scholars made an effort to inform and educate the people, "to foster awareness of the meaning of independence and to disseminate the new Western learning broadly throughout the society."<sup>16</sup> Kyöngjung became a trustee and also a major financial backer of the vital learned society, which published the *Honam Hakpo*, a monthly journal. Then, in 1908, in order to further the goal of self-strengthening through education, Kijung founded Yöngsin Hakkyo (Yöngsin School) in Chulp'o.

Kyöngjung was an exceptional Confucian scholar, writer, and historian. His scholarly orientation and pattern of thought were reflected in his two major

works, an essay entitled "Odoimmun" (An introduction to our way), and the seventeen-volume *Chosŏnsa* (*History of Korea*), published in 1934. "Odoimmun," written in response to the increasing influence of Western thought (via Catholicism) on Korea, called for preserving and revitalizing neo-Confucianism. The essay introduced the neo-Confucian basic philosophy and way of study and related them to existing traditional Korean thought. *Chosŏnsa*, written in Chinese ideograms, was a voluminous and detailed Korean history that took many years to complete. Kyŏngjung's view of history was based on neo-Confucian ideology. He wrote the volumes in order to preserve the history of Korea under the Japanese occupation.

Despite the Kims' stand as faithful advocates of neo-Confucianism, they took an active role in Korean modernization on the eve of the collapse of the Chosŏn dynasty. While others raised or joined Righteous armies to fight against the Japanese directly, the Kims chose other means. They were active in education, establishing the Yŏngsin School as a means of strengthening the nation according to the major tenets of the Enlightenment Party. At the same time, they were active in scholarly organizations in order to promote awareness of the meaning of independence and to foster new learning throughout the society. Kim Yongsŏp characterized the Kims as the landlords, industrial capitalists, and reformists for modernization.<sup>17</sup> This view may be accurate in part, but it failed to note the strong influence of neo-Confucianism on the movement.

## To Enlighten Himself

Until he was seven years old, Sŏngsu's parents taught him the basic Chinese ideograms and the etiquette required of *yangban*; then they hired a teacher to school him at home, inviting Sŏngsu's peers in the village to study together with him. It was a de facto *sŏdang* (a traditional tutorial school). Sŏngsu was taught the Confucian classics and ethics and Oriental philosophy intensively in his most sensitive and formative years.<sup>18</sup>

Then, following traditional custom, in 1903, Sŏngsu married at the age of twelve (thirteen by Korean age-reckoning, because in Korea, at birth one is already one year old). He married Ko Kwangsŏk (1886–1919), who was five years older and the daughter of Ko Chŏngju (1863–1934), a member of the Changhŭng Ko clan, an enlightenment movement sympathizer and progressive landlord-bureaucrat of Ch'angp'ŏng county (currently Tamyang) in south Chŏlla province. Like Kijung and Kyŏngjung, Ko Chŏngju had passed the high civil service examination (*munkwa*), after which he had become an official in the prestigious Royal Library (*Kyujanggak*) in Seoul. Ko also resigned

his position at about the same time as Kijung and Kyŏngjung, for he, too, was an enlightenment movement sympathizer. When he returned to his hometown, he established Ch'anghŭng Ŭisuk (or Ch'angp'ŏng School) to teach a new kind of learning that included subjects, such as, English, Japanese, and math, in addition to Chinese.

The credentials, background, and opinions on the enlightenment movement of Sŏngsu's father-in-law were almost identical to those of his two fathers. Perhaps Sŏngsu's ideas on education were influenced first by his father-in-law, because Ko Chŏngju founded Ch'anghŭng Ŭisuk before Sŏngsu's father founded his school in Chulp'o. It is particularly noteworthy that Sŏngsu himself attended Ch'anghŭng Ŭisuk in 1906. His father-in-law invited a teacher from Seoul to teach English to his son-in-law and his own son, anticipating that English would be essential if they were to go to Shanghai or Tokyo for further study. During his stay in Ch'anghŭng Ŭisuk, Sŏngsu became acquainted with Song Chinu (*fig. 1.7*), who later was thought to be Sŏngsu's most intimate friend. Until his assassination in 1945, Song was Sŏngsu's most trustworthy comrade. When Sŏngsu returned from Ch'anghŭng Ŭisuk, Kijung asked him, "What was your accomplishment in Ch'angp'ŏng [Ch'anghŭng Ŭisuk]?" Sŏngsu answered that he made a friend, Song Chinu, from Tamyang county, and added that his indomitable spirit and ambition were too good to be left unnoticed in the countryside.<sup>19</sup> Sŏngsu was confident of Song's potential to be a great nationalist leader.

Song Chinu, however, was not satisfied with life at Ch'angp'yŏng School. He remarked that the place was like a small pond, an allusion to the saying that a frog in a small well was unaware of the gigantic ocean.<sup>20</sup> He returned to his hometown, and Kim Sŏngsu sorely missed him. A few months later, after Song's departure, Sŏngsu also returned home, where he confined himself to the house, doing nothing in particular. It was a very troubling and uncertain time for both Sŏngsu, at the age of fifteen, and for Korea, a country now under Japanese domination.

In 1907, when Sŏngsu was sixteen, he asked his father's permission to go to Naesosa, a Buddhist temple built in the early seventh century during the reign of Mu Wang (600–641 A.D.) of the Paekche dynasty (18 B.C.–660 A.D.), to study and enjoy the aesthetic scenery of the temple. The temple was located less than twelve kilometers from Chulp'o. His father approved, and Sŏngsu journeyed to Naesosa with Paek Kwansu, who was from the nearby town of Hŭngdŏk. After learning that Sŏngsu and Kwansu were in Naesosa, Song Chinu joined them. They studied together, and enjoyed talking about political topics of the time.

In the meantime, the Japanese protectorate was nearing annexation. In 1907, a new cabinet led by Yi Wanyong was formed under Japanese direction. Kojong lost the throne by a Japanese trick, and Sunjong became emperor in



July 1907, with the reign title of Yunghŭi (Abundant Prosperity). Nevertheless, Japan dissolved the remaining Korean army units by August 1, 1907. In response to the deeper Japanese penetration, resistance movements to preserve Korea's independence sprang up. The Righteous armies grew rapidly and confronted the Japanese forces militarily. Koch'ang, Chŏngŭp, and Changsŏng of Chŏlla province were their strongholds. The parents of Kim, Song, and Paek worried that Naesosa could be vulnerable to battles between the Righteous armies and the Japanese, and so ordered the boys to come home. Before their return, the teenagers discussed their future plans. Paek wanted to go to Seoul. Song insisted on studying in Japan. Kim broached a practical problem: whatever they wanted to do would require parental permission. They promised each other to stay together.

Sŏngsu told his parents about his wish to study in Japan, but permission was not granted. They worried about the uncertainty of Korea's future. The most vehement opposition came from his wife. She knew that her brother, Ko Kwangjun, who had once studied with Sŏngsu at Ch'angp'yŏng School for English Studies and who had gone to Shanghai to study, had not returned after several years. She threatened her husband that, if he went to Japan, she would go back to her natal home. In the meantime, no word came either from Song or Paek.

Wildly frustrated, Sŏngsu learned from a postal clerk in Hŭngdŏk that there was a place in Kunsan where one could learn English. With permission from his parents, Sŏngsu went there to a hospital run by a Christian missionary. When the hospital told Sŏngsu that in order to learn English he had to make a commitment to Christianity, Sŏngsu disappointed, returned home. He still kept his topknot. It would be unthinkable for anyone so indoctrinated in Confucianism to become a Christian. And, he knew that it would be almost impossible to obtain his parents' approval.

In April 1908, Sŏngsu learned that there would be a public lecture in Hup'o, near Chulp'o. The lecture would be sponsored by the Korea Association (Taehan Hyŏphoe), a political and social organization created to carry out the goals of the patriotic enlightenment movement, which sought to establish a foundation for the recovery of Korean sovereignty through the development of native industries and widely available educational opportunities.

From a lecture delivered by Han Sŭngi, who taught English and physics at Kŭmho Hakkyo (Kŭmho School) in Kunsan, Sŏngsu learned about civil rights, the concept of equality, and the idea that sovereign power should belong to the people, not the king. He also learned that all those concepts were included in the Reform of 1894. Sŏngsu paid a visit to Han and asked many questions regarding the contents of his lecture. Sŏngsu told Han that he wanted to learn



English. Han subsequently arranged for Sōngsu to enter at the Kūmho School, which offered a variety of subjects. Besides English instruction, the curriculum included Korean language, math, history, geography, physics, chemistry, music, and physical education. Evening classes taught Japanese and textile arts. In May 1908, when Sōngsu enrolled at Kūmho School, he was introduced to the world of modern education.<sup>21</sup>

The schooling at Kūmho was more intensive and extensive than he had previously experienced in the Ch'angp'yōng School for English Studies. While broadening his education at the Kūmho School, Sōngsu still wanted to study in Japan. At that time, the summer of 1908, he met Hong Myōnghŭi, who was three years older and a middle-school student in Tokyo. Hong told Sōngsu about the prosperity of Japan and its educational system and facilities; Sōngsu could not wait any longer. But then, Song Chinu visited Sōngsu and tried to convince Sōngsu to study with him at Hansōng Institute for Teacher Training (Hansōng Kyowōn Yangsōngso) in Seoul. Instead, Sōngsu induced Song to go with him to Tokyo.

While waiting for his official permit (*tohangjŭng*) to go overseas, Sōngsu asked Pak Ilbyōng, then a Japanese language teacher at Kūmho School, to seek in his behalf the necessary parental approval. Sōngsu's parents, although strong advocates of modern education and sympathizers with the enlightenment movement, failed to find merit in Sōngsu's request. Knowing of Sōngsu's plan in advance, his parents rushed a messenger to Kunsan with a letter telling Sōngsu that his mother was deathly ill; they asked him to return home at once. Sōngsu, however, found out from the messenger that it was not true. As soon as he received the official permit to sail to Japan, he cut off his long-kept topknot as a symbolic gesture that he had become a modern man. Instead of returning home as his parents wished, Sōngsu wrote a long letter, seeking an apology from his parents; he enclosed a photograph that showed him without his topknot. Sōngsu and Song Chinu invited Paek Kwansu to join them in going to Tokyo, but Paek declined; he could not obtain parental permission.

In October 1908, at the port of Kunsan, seventeen-year-old Kim Sōngsu and Song Chinu stepped aboard a steamship for Japan. Soon Sōngsu's parents changed their mind about his journey; they praised his courage. More than his parents, Sōngsu's wife was hurt by his departure, but apologetic letters from her husband helped Ko Kwangsōk to learn to live with his absence.

When Sōngsu arrived in Japan, the Japanese language that he had learned in Kunsan was not adequate for communication with the natives. So, from the Japanese port of Simonoseki to Tokyo, Sōngsu wrote Chinese ideograms (*kanji* in Japanese)<sup>22</sup> to communicate. With the help of Hong Myōnghŭi, Kim Sōngsu and Song Chinu settled in Tokyo. Both enrolled at Seisoku English School,

which served as a preparatory school for middle-school entrance. They learned English and math in school and Japanese from a private tutor. In April 1909, both transferred to Kinjō Middle School as fifth graders. Then, in April 1910, the year Korea was formally annexed to Japan, both entered Waseda University's preparatory program. When Korea became an official Japanese colony on August 29, 1910, Song decided to return to Korea, for he could not stay and study in the national capital of the invaders. Together with Ko Kwangjun, Sōngsu's brother-in-law, who had gone to Shanghai earlier and was then in Tokyo, Song left Tokyo, despite Sōngsu's efforts to dissuade him; Sōngsu argued that Song's actions would not help Korea's future.

Song's drastic departure revealed the remarkable difference between the two friends, although they were exceptionally close. Song, who was one year older than Kim, was more emotional, while Kim was rather calm and quiet.<sup>23</sup> Such differences were manifest in their works. While Kim worked behind the scenes as an intellectual in making plans and providing capital for various projects, Song led the people and carried out the projects. Kim might be called a "thinking elite" (or intellectual) in accordance with Yoshino's definition, and Song could be named an "intelligentsia," for he responded to certain ideas and ideals.<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, since both Kim and Song had been one and the same person intellectually, spiritually, and even physically in various projects, both were intellectuals as well as intelligentsia. Any analytical distinction between two is futile.

Kim Sōngsu remained in Tokyo while Song went back to Korea. Having completed his preparatory program, Kim went on to Waseda University's regular program and majored in political economy. Six months later, Song Chinu, deciding that Kim was right, returned to Tokyo, this time coming with Sōngsu's younger brother, Yōnsu. Song entered Meiji University instead of Waseda, and majored in law. Previously, during his stay in Tokyo before his return to Korea, Song was uncomfortable receiving financial help from Kim. This time, upon his return to Tokyo, Song had no uneasy feelings about his financial dependency. Sōngsu's parents knew that they were paying for Song Chinu's expenses as well. They felt the need to help because Song's family financial condition was deteriorating.

Yōnsu began his education in Japan as a fifteen-year-old teenager. He was brilliant enough to be admitted to the prestigious Asabu Middle School and later to one of the most selective high schools, the Third High School [Dai San Kōtō Gakkō]. He was accepted at Kyoto Imperial University, where he majored in economics. Sōngsu stayed in Japan six years, and, when he graduated from Waseda University in 1914, he was twenty-three. Yōnsu remained in Japan three years longer than Sōngsu—for a full decade.<sup>25</sup>

## The Impact of Japanese Education

Kim Söngsu's thoughts about Korean modernization were greatly influenced by his study in Japan. Kim's biography edited by Ko Chaeuk delineated Kim's first encounter with Japan vividly.<sup>26</sup> Kim was impressed by Japan from the first day. He was amazed by Japan's prosperity. As he traveled from Simonoseki to Tokyo, Kim viewed from the train window, Japan's thick forests, well-divided rice paddies, clean-looking countryside, and well-planned cities. His feelings were a mixture of amazement and dismay. He was astonished by Tokyo's skyline, its flourishing marketplaces, its school facilities, and public buildings. He was incredulous that Korean Righteous armies were able to fight against the Japanese with only knives and bamboo sticks. During his late adolescence, Kim was at a perceptive age, and it is not hard to understand why Kim used Japan as a model for Korean modernization.

Kim was not the only Korean who admired Japan and tended to emulate the Japanese model. In fact, although King Kojong was the most humiliated Chosön king by the Japanese in its 500 years dynastic era, he dispatched his delegates to Japan to study Japanese modernization. Despite his humiliation, in the mind of the king, Japan was still his frame of reference for modernization.

No one can assess exactly how and to what extent Kim was affected by his stay in Japan, but, without any doubt, it was the most significant period for Kim in preparing for his future modernization projects for Korea. Kim himself said that his education at Waseda was the most meaningful and memorable experience of his adolescence.<sup>27</sup> One of his major accomplishments was the cultivation of relationships with a new generation of prominent and capable Koreans. Besides maintaining his friendship with Song Chinu, Kim made friends with many promising young Korean intellectuals during his years in Japan.

Chang Töksu from Chaeryöng of Hwanghae province was one of these friends. Kim met him at the Waseda preparatory program. Chang possessed many talents required of a leader, and he was known as an eloquent orator. During his years at Waseda, he had won first place in the national Japanese oratorical contest, and he had played the role of prime minister at the moot national assembly at Waseda. Despite his capability and potential, Chang came from a poor family and had difficulty supporting himself. Knowing Chang's financial situation, Kim helped him, dealing with Chang as if he were his younger brother.<sup>28</sup> Later, Chang worked with Kim, as Song did.

In addition to these friends, Kim Söngsu's warmth touched many other Koreans who studied in Japan. The list resembles a *Who's Who* in prominent Korean society at the time. Among his acquaintances were: Hyön Sangyun, Ch'oe Tusön, and Yang Wönmo at Waseda University, Pak Yonghüi, Yu Ökkyöm, and Kim Uyöng at Tokyo Imperial University; Cho Mansik, Kim Pyöngno, Hyön Chunho, Cho Soang, and Chöng Nosik at Meiji University; and Kim Toyön at Keio University. Kim Söngsu's network of friends in Tokyo also included Yö Unhyöng, An Chaehong, Paek Namhun, Sin Ikhüi, Ch'oe Namsön, and Yi Kanghyön. Among all these comrades, Song Chinu, Chang Töksu, Hyön Sangyun, Kim Chunyön, Yang Wönmo, Ch'oe Tusön, and Yi Kanghyön would become lifelong friends and work closely with Kim in his schools, newspapers, and textile industries.<sup>29</sup> In more than one way, Kim Söngsu was a rich person. The support, dedication, and loyalty of Kim's friends were just as important as the financial backing from his family funds. Without such devoted and talented friends, Kim's projects would never have been successful.

In his final year in Waseda, Kim began to think about his future. He realized that, if he were to launch any project that promised to contribute to Korean modernization, most of the financing would have to come from his family wealth, which was controlled by his fathers. As enlightened thinkers, both of his fathers were keenly aware of the necessity for Korean modernization, but they had never witnessed the type of progress and modernization developed in Japan. Thus, Kim invited both of his fathers to see Japan for themselves.

In October 1913, a few months before Kim's graduation and during Waseda's thirtieth anniversary celebration, Kim's fathers spent twenty days in Tokyo. In addition to taking them to see the ancient Japanese ruins, Kim guided them through prosperous Japanese cities and educational institutions. Kim's fathers were particularly impressed by the grand anniversary events at Waseda. Dressed in their traditional Korean overcoats (*turumagi*) and hats (*kat*), which were in stark contrast to the Japanese traditional dress, they were truly impressed with Japan's modernization.<sup>30</sup>

The evening before his fathers were to depart for Korea, Söngsu talked to them about his aspirations to dedicate his time and energy to education in Korea. He explained to them that Japan's progress within such a short period of time stemmed from education, and added, "Not because we like the Japanese, if we want to be free from Japanese bondage, we have to catch up to the Japanese educational system." Kijung replied, "We have a long way to go."<sup>31</sup> Söngsu told him that it could be done, and Song Chinu agreed: "When we first came to Japan, we saw that the good components (cultural elements) came from either the Asian continent or the West, not from Japan's own invention or innovation. Then we came to understand that Japan's success was the result of its education

and solidarity as a nation.”<sup>32</sup> Sōngsu emphasized the importance of private school education.

The conversation eventually led to a discussion of Sōngsu’s plans after his graduation. Kijung, Sōngsu’s adoptive father, asked Sōngsu whether he would be interested in running an educational institution or not. Sōngsu replied that he wanted to devote his career for education, if he would be allowed to do so.<sup>33</sup> Doubting that Sōngsu would be interested in running Yōngsin School, the small country school that he had established, Kijung asked him what kind of school he wanted to run. Sōngsu replied that he wanted to start with a middle school in Seoul.<sup>34</sup>

Because he himself had founded a school, Kijung seemed pleased with his adopted son’s commitment to education; yet, he was worried about Sōngsu’s inexperience, particularly in Seoul. Kyōngjung, who was not satisfied with Sōngsu’s career plan, interrupted the conversation, and told his older brother not to take a young man’s words seriously.<sup>35</sup> In the eyes of a father, a son—even on the eve of college graduation—is an immature youngster. Although Kijung endorsed Sōngsu’s career plan, Kyōngjung rejected it. Kyōngjung spoke emphatically to both Kijung and Sōngsu: “It would not be easy even for a country to run an educational system.” Kyōngjung told Sōngsu, regardless of what his adoptive father had said, as long as he would live, he would not allow Sōngsu to run an educational institution.<sup>36</sup> In the face of Kyōngjung’s adamant opposition, Sōngsu had to relinquish his dream. Nevertheless, his commitment to education remained, and besides, Sōngsu sensed that at least he could get some support from his adopted father.

When Sōngsu left Korea for Japan in 1908, he was a teenager and Korea was a Japanese protectorate. When he returned to Korea in July 1914, as a mature gentleman with a university degree, Sōngsu found that his homeland had already become an official Japanese colony. When Sōngsu journeyed to Japan, he had been accompanied by Song Chinu, but when he returned to Korea, he was alone. Song Chinu had become sick and had come home early for treatment. It was a rather quiet homecoming for Sōngsu, but his ambitious project for fostering private education in Korea was about to materialize.



1.1. Scenes of Inch'on-ri



1.2. Kim Yohyöp

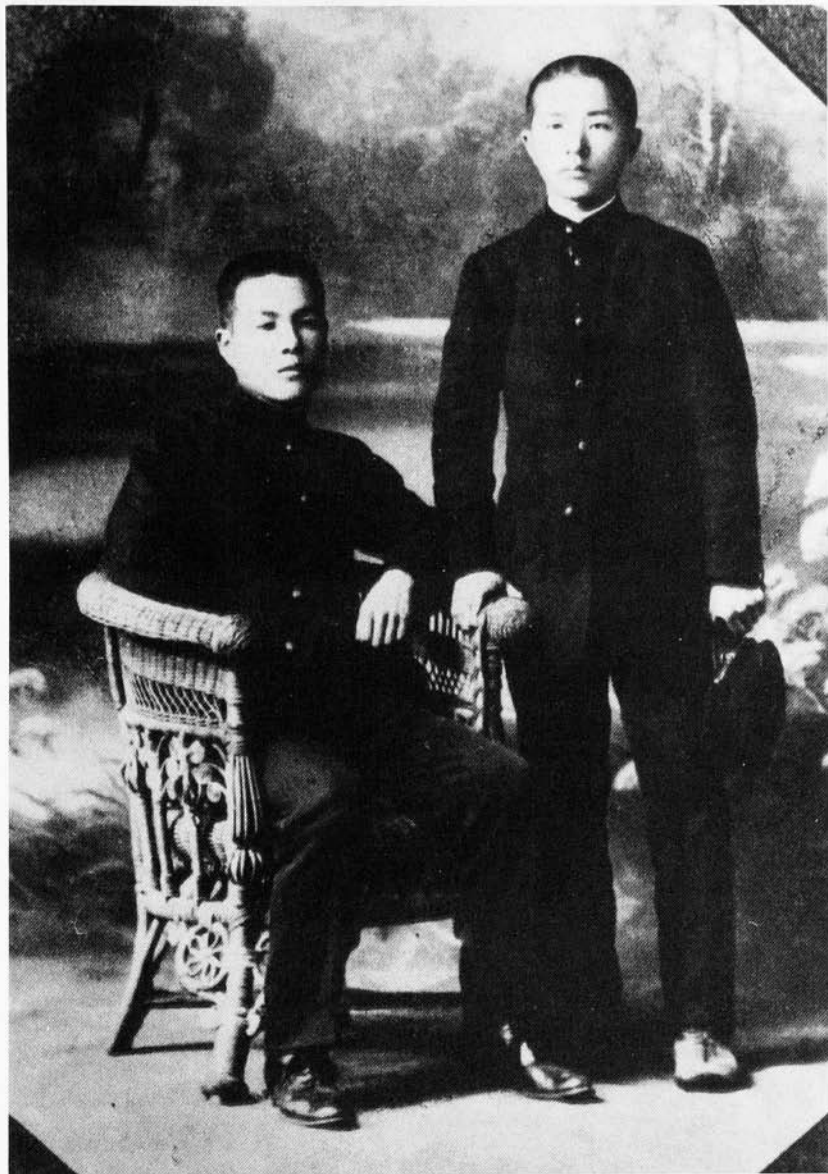


1.3. Kim Yohyöp's wife,  
Madam Chöng

1.4. Kim Kijung

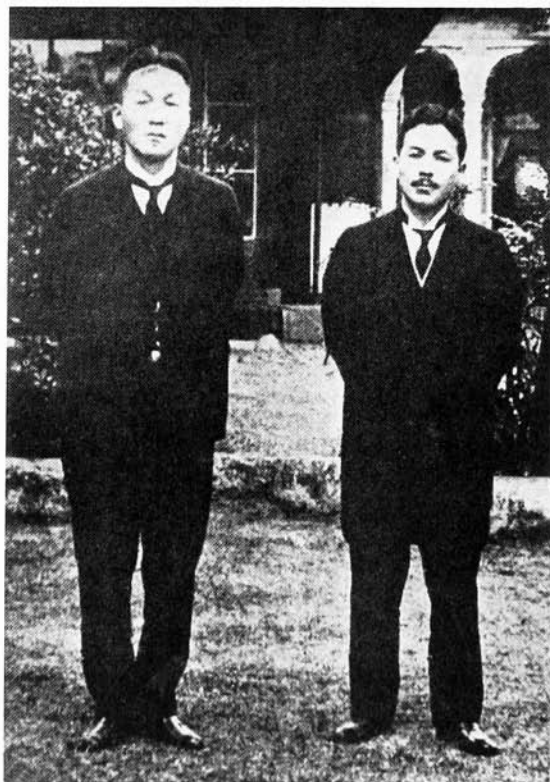


1.5. Kim Kyŏngjung



1.6. Kim Söngsu (*seated*) with his younger brother, Yönsu, in Tokyo

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1.7. Kim Söngsu  
(right) with Song  
Chinu



1.8. The Kim family compound in Inch'on-ri  
*(above and opposite, top)*



1.9. Part of the Kim family compound in Chulp'o