

Maternal Role Transition and Female Representation in Korea During Japanese Colonial Period



The feminist image of New Women (Sin yŏsŏng) appeared during the 1910s, which was the start of the Japanese colonial rule period, as a huge influence on Korean women's enlightenment and modernity.

Christianity and Western Modernization on the Rise of Women

Korea was regarded as “almost no educated Korean women” by the end of the nineteenth century, and Christianity, together with Catholic Churches, had been growing and popularised in Korea by the end of the Chosŏn dynasty (Cawley 1-2)

The Catholic Churches highlighted the teaching of equality for both men and women from all backgrounds at that time to educate them as the prime players in society (Cawley 2)

The idea of women's equality along with the opportunities for **women's education started to expose to the public** and the awareness of women to be educated for contributing to the society and nation was also raised among Korean since the late 1890s leading to the thoughtful change of women's identity afterward in colonial Korea.



The phenomenon of New Women (Sin yŏsŏng)

The most significant milestones for the modernity of Korea (Choi 145).

A newly emerging group of women refused to consist in the identity defined by men (Choi 145-146) Defined by **3 main Criteria:**

- 1) modern knowledge and education;
- 2) modern behavior with their body and consumption;
- 3) feminist consciousness, values, ideology, and practice (Kim 163)

Emphasizes “self” (cha), “self-awareness” (chagak), and “individual personality” (kaesŏng) (Yum 108)

Under the emergence of the ideology of New Women, more educated women, known as the elite women and women intellectuals, appeared in Korean society.



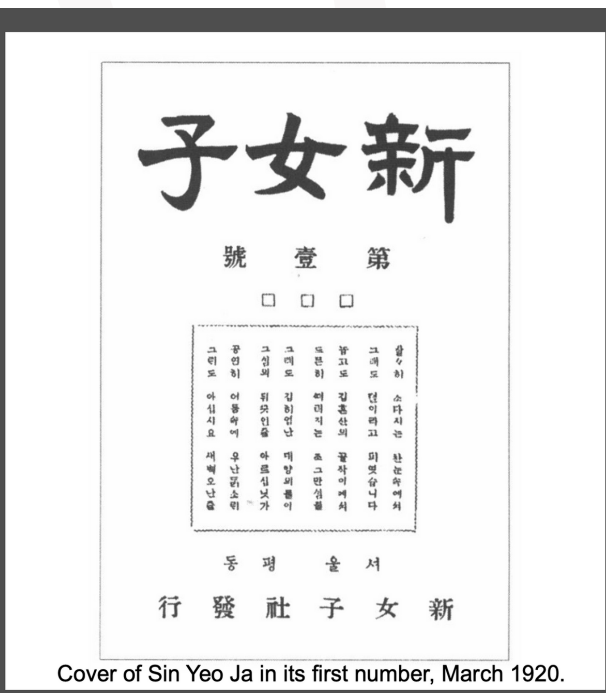
The first feminist journal: Sinyŏja Women's School: Ewha Haktang

Founded by **Kim WŏnJu** in 1920

- 1) Introduce new gender ideology
- 2) Staff was composed of women
- 3) Focus on the inner desire and voice the life experience of women (Choi 166-167)



Nam Hye Sok cartoon in Sinyŏja #4.



Cover of Sinyŏja in its first number, March 1920.



A **Methodist mission school** that emerged in 1885 (Hong 4) - Progressive educational visions, diverse curriculum, and highly educated faculty, as long as the wide-ranging extracurricular programs (Kim 47)

- The rise of women-oriented print culture increased the awareness of women's rights and voice in society while creating a specialized position for women as the maker of the magazine
- To promote its message to Korean women, with up to **2,000 copies** of sales per issue (Kim 55; Choi 168)
- Propagate the **idea of New Women** and modern women's values
- Gradually affecting the females' mindset in Korea of rethinking their perceived role and identity in society and family

- From the **late 1890s to the early 1900s**, widening women's education and learning had become the mainstream and important idea (Kim 167-168)
- Korean society started gaining more **awareness of women's education** rights and more women were given opportunities to receive an education
- Contributed to **women intellectuals group** in the Korean society and had driven them to participate in different fields and job opportunities
- i.e. **Founding members of Sinyŏja**, including Pak Indök, Sin Chullyö, and Kim Hwallan, were all graduates of Ewha Haktang

Educated Women as Mothers and Good Mothers



- In the **early 1900s**: “wise mother good wife” focus on family rather than participating in public affairs (Suh 17-18)
- In the **mid-1900s**: If mothers were educated and intellectuals, it is believed that children would grow to be smart, sincere, and socially conscious like their educated mothers, and if this way continues for the following generation, the nation would be full of good people, thus **women were the teachers of the whole nation** (Shin 242)
- By the **1920s**: The stressed ideal of **educated women** educating the next generation to women should contribute to the society and be **socially participated** and became the basis of the “new morality” (Shin 245)
- In the early **1930s**: **Japan's military** had expanded its influence and introduced new policies in Korea (Shin 248). Korean thought that the act of Japan was a way to erase Korean culture and national identity, thus this crisis superseded all other issues that were widely discussed, including the women's status and feminist issues, and in contrast, regarding them as selfish, unpatriotic and anti-nationalistic (Shin 248)
- “**Good mothers**”: Have a critical understanding of social issues, be able to **sacrifice themselves** and educate themselves to contribute to the well-being and for building a **better Korea** (Shin 249)