

One can argue about causation: did the availability of aquatint as a medium give rise to demand for a new kind of illustrated travel narrative? Or did the existence of a traveling population, interest in travel itself, create a demand for appropriate illustrative methods and manufacturing infrastructure? Or did a kind of feedback loop encourage both to develop at the same time?

*Aquatint Worlds* is a beautiful book, amply illustrated with over two hundred examples and counterexamples. One of the drawbacks of even the best-illustrated academic books is the tendency for all sources to seem of equal weight and size; happily, Fordham has provided the dimensions of the original images in his captions. A particularly charming choice is the employment, for the endpapers, of diagrams of different aquatint grounds from a contemporary manual.

It is worth noting that Fordham's specific focus on India, China, and Africa, while it serves his thesis, overlooks a great many similar aquatint books from Abbey's *Travel* catalog, which feature Europe, the new nations of South America, and even the polar regions. Such regions could be similarly exotic-yet-picturesque without the same intimations of empire. And this does not even account for the other half of Abbey's collection of illustrated books of the time, as cataloged in *Life in England in Aquatint and Lithography, 1770–1860* (London, 1953) and *Scenery of Great Britain and Ireland in Aquatint and Lithography, 1770–1860* (Storrington, 1952), where the power of aquatint remains firmly in the service of domestic pleasures—the “us” to be contrasted with the otherness of the *Travel* books.

Aimee Lee. *Hanji Unfurled: One Journey into Korean Papermaking*. Ann Arbor, MI: The Legacy Press, 2021. First published 2012 by The Legacy Press. 194 pp. Illus. Paperback (ISBN 9781953421050).

#### Reviewed by Hwisang Cho

Anyone interested in Korean written culture will have come across stories about splendid technological breakthroughs in printing, such as the discovery of the world's oldest xylographic imprint in southern Korea in 1966; the production of more than 80,000 woodblocks—which still remain intact in Haein Temple—for printing the Korean *Tripitaka* in the thirteenth century; and the usage of movable metal type much earlier than Gutenberg's printing revolution in the fifteenth century. However, you can find only a few scholarly works available in English that delve into more detail

about the material dimensions of textual production and its history, particularly about papermaking, essential for all the technological feats mentioned above. As a cultural historian of the Chosŏn dynasty (1392–1910), I have occasionally stumbled upon accounts of Korean papermaking in my reading of primary sources, which are mostly about the logistics of producing and handling the paper that diplomatic envoys presented to the Chinese court as tribute, or distributing paper garments (*chiŭi*, 紙衣) to soldiers who had to endure freezing winters along the

*Hwisang Cho is an associate professor of Korean studies at Emory University, specializing in the cultural, intellectual, and literary history of Korea, comparative textual media, and global written culture. His first book, The Power of the Brush: Epistolary Practices in Chosŏn Korea, was published by the University of Washington Press in 2020.*

northern borders. Some Confucian scholars also left notes about recycling used paper by soaking it in water to rinse the ink out. This practice, called *seji* (洗紙), was mostly assigned to Buddhist monks, who had expertise in producing and handling paper through the tradition of copying and creating sutras and other religious texts as well as using diverse paper paraphernalia for Buddhist rituals. All of these isolated records involving paper usage in pre-twentieth-century Korea attest that the quality of Korean paper was so superior that even the Chinese court demanded it; moreover, people used paper for purposes other than writing texts.

Aimee Lee's *Hanji Unfurled: One Journey into Korean Papermaking* recounts her journey to learn about this rich tradition of papermaking in Korea during her year there as a Fulbright scholar from 2008 to 2009. She, as an artist, was infatuated with the expressive possibilities that *hanji* (韓紙, Korean handmade paper) offers, about which almost nothing is known to people outside Korea. More interestingly, her journey to learn about *hanji* also comprised soul-searching about her identity as a second-generation Korean American. She unexpectedly encountered traditional Korean paper for the first time in a Chinese landscape painting that she was studying in a Chinese art history course as an undergraduate at Oberlin. This prompted her to ask, "What am I doing here studying Chinese art? I don't know anything about Korean art" (1). The unusual process by which Lee mastered Korean traditional papermaking thus transpired side by side with her gradual understanding of the culture of her parents' country beyond this specialized handicraft. Just as we can hardly find references on how traditional *hanji* making has weathered the transformation of South Korea into a hypermodern society during the last century, Lee had to start from scratch to identify artisans who continued handmade papermaking using authentic old methods. One Korean professor specializing in *hanji* suggested

that she simply "go to Japan" (159), where the curriculum for papermaking was already well-established in educational institutions. Although she would end up learning to make *washi* (和紙, Japanese handmade paper) instead of *hanji*, he said, she would not have to ride the emotional roller coaster in the so-called master-apprentice relationship. In fact, this book is captivating because the progress that Lee made in *hanji* making took place simultaneously with her cultivating emotional and psychological connections not only with her teachers but also with various people she met throughout the year in Korea and beyond.

With a narrative style that goes back and forth between memoirs of personal experiences and expository descriptions of *hanji* making, this book hardly aims to appeal to academics who want to learn about the history of papermaking in Korea. However, Lee's detailed explanations of each step will satisfy readers interested in the *hanji* production process.

First, this book offers a wonderful case study about how traditional handicrafts have been adapted in the modern period. Lee had a clear objective: "The purpose of my research on Korean traditional papermaking is to acknowledge and shed light on a craft and a tradition that has existed for over a thousand years. I want to make a case for *hanji* by exploring its history, techniques, and uses, with the goal of preventing its extinction" (148). However, the status of traditional handicrafts in South Korea, including papermaking, was generally lackluster due to both the decline in market demand and the difficulties of holding fast to traditional production methods. In the case of *hanji*, Lee shows how hard it was hit when Korean housing no longer used *hanji* for wallpaper and flooring because of adaptation to more Westernized lifestyles. Moreover, the importation of much cheaper *dak* fiber from China made *hanji* created from Korean materials, which are strengthened by enduring harsh winters, uncompetitive in the market. The

result was the specialization of traditional *hanji* for the very few people who seek high-quality paper for artwork or the preservation of antiquarian books or paintings. This also changed the role of master papermakers. Lee touches upon the South Korean government's designation of and support for some artisans as Intangible Cultural Property Holders. Despite the honor that came with the title, some appointees found the government's expectations for them to perform their skills at various state and local events disorienting and exhausting. All these accounts reveal how traditional handicrafts, including *hanji* making, shifted from supplying fine-quality goods to their users to feeding the public imaginaries about Korean tradition.

However, Lee's engagement in traditional papermaking led her to immerse herself in the exciting versatility of *hanji* and the community of artisan-teachers using *hanji* for various crafts. From chapter 6 to chapter 9, she introduces various crafts that use *hanji*, which include *ji-seung* (paper weaving), natural dyeing, *joomchi* (texturing paper), and calligraphy. All of these enterprises, although sharing the gloomy state of traditional handicrafts that *hanji* papermills suffer to some extent, also show the appeal that craft items using *hanji* have in both the market and the art field. Although *hanji* masters had to endure the diminished applicability of their paper in the industrialized modern world, the potential of *hanji* to bounce back in fact resides in its protean attributes as a material object. It does not just provide a surface for writing or painting; its resiliency and plasticity expand the ways that this traditional paper accommodates the desire to make useful artifacts with new materials as

well as the urge for artistic self-expression. In one part of chapter 10, titled "Hanji Today," Lee adumbrates some contemporary South Korean artists who experiment with *hanji* in their artwork. Paired with the adaptation mentioned earlier, the manifestation of these many constructive capacities of *hanji* will encourage readers to reconsider the place of traditional handicrafts in the present age defined by digital technologies.

The epilogue shows how Lee ended up setting up Korean papermaking facilities in the Morgan Art of Papermaking Conservatory and Educational Foundation in Cleveland, Ohio, after she came back to the United States. From the Morgan website, I discovered that Lee is no longer affiliated with them; it is a pity that all these facilities do not fulfill their mission as intended.

Despite the rare opportunity that this book offers for a glimpse into traditional papermaking in contemporary South Korea, one element could have served readers better. This book includes a very elaborate glossary that will be a great reference for any reader who would like to know more about *hanji* making. The inconsistent romanization (Revised Romanization of Korean, modified by Lee), however, sometimes confused this reviewer, who reads mostly transliterations of Korean following the McCune-Reischauer system that is widely used in US academia. It would have been helpful if Lee had added original Korean and Classical Chinese words along with their romanizations. This slight stylistic downside, however, can never overshadow the contribution that this book makes to various fields, including papermaking, paper arts, craft studies, and Korean studies.