UNIVERZITA PALACKÉHO V OLOMOUCI
Filozofická fakulta
Katedra asijských studií

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Korean calligraphy

Korejská kaligrafie

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Vedoucí diplomové práce: Dr. Andreas Schirmer

Prohlašuji, že jsem diplomovou práci vypracovala samostatně a uvedla veškeré použité prameny a literaturu.

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Abstract

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Author: Vendula Hulíková
Supervisor: Dr. Andreas Schirmer
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This bachelor thesis focuses on Hangul calligraphy in South Korea. Firstly, this thesis provides a historical background on the development of Hangul calligraphy and its importance in past society. Secondly, it examines relevant sources to achieve the goal of this thesis, which is to assess the usage, image, and importance of Hangul calligraphy in contemporary South Korea.

Abstrakt

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Tato bakalářská práce se zaměřuje na Hangul kaligrafii v Jižní Koreji. Tato práce nejdříve poskytuje pohled na historický vývoj Hangul kaligrafie a její význam pro minulou společnost. Poté tato práce zkoumá relevantní prameny tak, aby došlo k naplnění cíle práce, což je posouzení použití, image a důležitosti Hangul kaligrafie v současné Jižní Koreji.

In this place I would like to profusely thank my supervisor Dr. Andreas Schirmer for his help, patience, and kindness during the process of writing this thesis.

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Transcription

This thesis uses the McCune – Reischauer romanization of the Korean alphabet. The romanized terms are in italic.

1 Introduction

There is some form of beautiful writing in every culture which employs a writing system. The name for this art of beautiful writing in English is calligraphy, which originates from Greek words *kallos* for “beauty” and *graphein* for “to write” (Nornes 2021: 17). In Western cultures handwriting has tended to become an art that anyone can practice, thanks to the simpler Greek and Latin-derived alphabets and the widespread adoption of reading. While the invention of printing in Europe formed a distinction between handwriting and more sophisticated scripts and lettering, in the Middle East and East Asia calligraphy is regarded as a major art form, comparable to sculpture or painting, because of its extensive history (Encyclopedia Britannica [online], s.v. "Calligraphy" [18 August 2022]).

East Asian calligraphy originated in China and uses ink and brushes to write characters, which are each made up of a number of strokes with a distinct shape and are arranged in an imaginary square to communicate a certain message (Brown, Brown 2006: 103). Calligraphy (*shu* 書) together with the strategy game of Go (*qi* 棋), painting (*hua* 畫), and a seven string instrument (*qin* 琴) formed the four arts (*siyi* 四藝) which were major intellectual and artistic achievements expected of ancient Chinese scholars (China Online Museum 2016). Calligraphy was seen as a vital form of mental discipline for an educated gentleman. Furthermore, painting has affected calligraphy in terms of vitality, rhythm, and stroke economy. The individual talent and inventiveness of the calligrapher are required to create interesting shape and structure to their brush strokes. This can be done thanks to well-balanced intervals between strokes and without any altering, touch-ups, or additions to the written characters. The philosophical implications connected to the skill of executing calligraphy frequently overshadowed the practical purpose of calligraphy as a medium for handwriting and communication (Brown, Brown 2006: 103).

Although Chinese characters have had a longer history in Korean calligraphy, this thesis focuses on calligraphy written in Hangul characters. For most of its history vernacular calligraphy has not been considered as genuine artform and mental practice in the same way as Chinese calligraphy has. Despite this fact vernacular calligraphy has had a bountiful history since the creation of *Hunminjŏngŭm,* or as it is called today — Hangul.

The first part of this thesis focuses on general introduction of the differences in East Asian calligraphy, brief history of Chinese calligraphy in Korea, calligraphy styles, and the tools used for calligraphy. The following part describes the history of Hangul calligraphy and observes women's role during the early days of vernacular calligraphy. Lastly, this thesis analyzes several relevant studies and Korean English online newspaper articles published in the last ten years with the goal of learning how and which specific issues do these sources covers when it comes to calligraphy. What is the image that these sources paint of calligraphy in contemporary South Korea?

2 Calligraphy in East Asia

2.1 The differences between *shufa*, *shodo* and *sŏye*[1]

The writing system that spread from China to Japan and Korea allowed for communication within and between the territories. However, each of these countries used Chinese characters in their own distinct ways and this can be seen the different terms they have for the word "calligraphy". The word for "write" remains the same, however there is a difference in the second attached character. Chinese uses the term *shufa* (書法), Japanese uses *shodo* (書道), and Korean uses *sŏye* (書藝). The disparities in attitudes, aesthetic values, and practices implied by these three combinations are important to artists and scholars throughout the region and serve as key identifiers (at least in showing the particularities the linguistic and cultural context of these names) in comparing their work to that of their colleagues.

Shufa (書法) is the Chinese name for calligraphy and is comprised of the character 書, which means "to write" or "writing" (true for all three countries), while the second character fa has a more complicated meaning of law, principle, model, and system. The word fa in the name for calligraphy in China stems from the fact that mastery of the writing of Chinese characters is difficult and it brings prestige and class to the people who write these characters well. That is also why just the presence of a set of brushes on a writing table suggests that its owner is wealthy and well-educated. However, if a person is not skilled in calligraphy it can mean the opposite. Most Chinese calligraphers are fastidious when it comes to the method of writing with a brush. They have devoted to mastering all the rules of calligraphic writing including everything from the stroke order and directionality to brush pressure and ink loads. The common aspect of Chinese calligraphers is that before they attempt at bringing individuality into their writing, they have to first master these orthodoxies.

Shodo (書道) is the Japanese name for calligraphy. The meaning of the second character is again a bit complicated as it can mean street, journey, method, teachings, and way, while the combination of the two characters literally means the "way of writing." Asian calligraphers argue that this has built somewhat of a flexibility into Japanese calligraphy that is different from China, however "The Law" of writing still matters in

[1] This section is based on Nornes (2021: 23–30).

Japan even though the connection to this model is intricate. In Japanese the practice of copying the historical model is called *rinsho*, this practice has three categories and those are *keirin* (copying calligraphy from a model), *irin* (copying freely without a model), and *hairin* (writing with the model absorbed into the writer through rigorous copying), with *hairin* being the goal of Japanese calligraphers.

Sŏye (書藝) is the Korean name for calligraphy, which combines the character for "writing" with character for "art". This name however is quite new as until the Japanese colonial rule, calligraphy in Korea was referred to by the Chinese name *shufa* (*sŏbŏp* in Korean) and during the Japanese rule with *shodo* due to assimilationist policies. While the most distinct aspect of Korean calligraphy is the writing system Hangul, the Korean term for calligraphy when examined closely is also distinct from the other names in China and Japan. During the Korean War, an influential art critic started a debate in an art journal about the new name for calligraphy should be. For obvious reasons they loathed the name *shodo*, however they also did not want to return to the Chinese term *shufa* as China adopted the communist regime. At last, they decided to combine the words "writing" and "art". This emphasis of Korean calligraphy on "art" is interesting, because while historically calligraphy could be simple writing, aesthetically beautiful or both, in modern times it took a utilitarian position. Similarly in history calligraphy was included by Chinese intellectuals in the "three perfections" (calligraphy, painting, poetry combined into one art piece), but in modern times was excluded from art museums and academies. While capitalism introduced the concept of lettering that was easily manipulated and legible and allowed both scientific descriptions and commodification, Koreans new term for calligraphy *sŏye* emphasized a certain nonpractical artfulness and anti-capitalistic view, which is in complex opposition to Japan, China, and the United States.

2.2 Brief overview of all calligraphy in Korea[2]

Even though this thesis is focused on Hangul calligraphy, I believe that describing at least briefly the history of Chinese calligraphy is necessary to provide background on this topic.

Although the exact date of introduction of Chinese characters in Korea is yet unknown, it is believed to be around 2nd or 3rd century CE. And it is also believed that

[2] This section is based on Kim Won-yong (2009) and Yi Ki-baek (1984).

the history of calligraphy in Korea is as old as this introduction of Chinese characters into Korean culture.

There are few remaining stone monuments inscriptions from the Three Kingdoms (57 BCE–668 CE), but in the Silla dynasty (668–935) there is proof of the devotion and reverence that ancient Koreans had for the art of calligraphy, as there are many known master calligraphers from that period of time, such as Kim Saeng, who is regarded as the most renowned calligrapher of the Silla dynasty and even though there is no surviving example of his work, we can glimpse his style in the text of the stele for Silla monk Nanggong Taesa, as this text modeled its characters after Kim Saeng's calligraphy style. It is agreed that art in the later period of Silla was in decline, however many stupas and monuments were built in honor of Sŏn masters and thanks to these we have at least some extant historical sources for the study of calligraphic styles during this time period. The most famous one of these was created by another master of this time Ch'oe Ch'iwŏn called the "four mountain inscriptions." These Korean calligraphy masters modeled their writing style after Chinese calligraphers Ouyang Xun and Yu Shinan.

While the aristocracy of earlier Koryo preferred Ouyang Xun's style of calligraphy, in late Koryŏ their interest migrated to a style called *sung-hsueh* after painter-calligrapher Zhao Mengfu. This style continued to dominate the art of calligraphy during the Yi dynasty. Prince Anp'yŏng, son of King Sejong, is this style's recognized master, other famous calligraphers of that day include Yang Sa-ŏn and Han Ho. Although calligraphic brushwork was essential in yangban education, the style of these works remained formal, and few calligraphic creations ventured into uncharted territory.

In the late Yi dynasty new styles of calligraphy brushwork appeared and the formal and conservative way of calligraphic writing was on the decline. A master of this time is Kim Chŏng-hŭi, who was a painter and an epigraphy scholar and created the so called *ch'usa* style, in which he combined different qualities of past calligrapher's work and blended them into a bold calligraphy style.

2.3 Styles of Korean calligraphy

As Korea first adopted the Chinese style of calligraphy, the styles of writing were the same as were used in China. The five primary styles were seal (*chŏnsŏ*), official or clerical

(*yesŏ*), semi-cursive (*haengsŏ*), cursive (*ch'osŏ*), and standard or block script (*haesŏ*) (Hammer, Smith 2001, Brown, Brown 2006: 103).

Even though the styles of Hangul calligraphy are less diverse than Chinese calligraphy, the classification of the Hangul styles is not unified, as many styles have seemingly multiple names. Generally, the styles are classified into block/print (*p'anbonch'e*) and cursive styles (*p'ilsach'e*). This categorization stems from the beginnings of Hangul calligraphy, as *p'anbonch'e* was woodblock or metal printed, while *p'ilsach'e* was written with a brush.

In Figure 1, Chinese calligraphy scripts can be seen in the upper row of the picture (from left to right as mentioned above). On the lower row, example of a few Hangul calligraphy script styles is showed.

From left to right: *p'anbonch'e, honsŏch'e, kunch'e chŏngja, and kunch'e hŭllim. Honsŏch'e* uses a mixture of Chinese and Korean characters, *kunch'e chŏngja* was used for writing official palace documents, and *kunch'e hŭllim* was used for letter writing, since it allowed faster speed when writing (dramasROK).

Figure 1: An example of calligraphy styles

2.4 Tools used for calligraphy

The items that are used in East Asian calligraphy are called "four treasures" of the scholar's studio (*munbangsau*). These so called four treasures are a brush, ink stick, paper, and ink stone.[3]

2.4.1 Brush (*put*)

Brushes used in East Asian calligraphy are made of various types of animal hair such as fox, weasel, horse, with rabbit hair being recognized as the best material. These hairs are formed into a sharp point, which can produce a fine or thick line on paper. Underneath these hairs there is another tuft of shorter animal hair with a purpose of holding the ink while writing. The handle of a brush is usually made of bamboo or wood, however other materials such as gold, silver and ivory were used in special cases (Hammer and Smith 2001: 71, Kim et al. 2011: 374–375).

2.4.2 Ink Stick (*mŏk*)

Ink used for calligraphy and painting was traditionally made from carbon-based material, such as pine soot[4], that was then mixed with glue or other adhesive substance. This ink was then pressed into a stick, which produced ink when rubbed against an inkstone with small amount of water (Hammer, Smith 2001: 71).

Nowadays, ink used in calligraphy is mainly made from carbon and an adhesive, such as gelatin. The reason for this is that creating ink from pine soot is difficult and expensive (Ch'u 27 Feb. 2011).

2.4.3 Paper (*chongi*)

Most of the paper made in Korea was from mulberry pulp, however hemp and rice straw were also used in papermaking. Even though the technology for producing paper came

[3] In addition, other items are needed for calligraphy, such as a container for the water that is used to grind the ink stone (*yŏnjŏk*), paperweight that holds the paper while writing (*munjin*), container that holds the brushes (*putt'ong*), and a bowl used to wash the brush (*p'ilsae*) (90 Day Korean 7 July 2022; Korean Calligraphy).

[4] Ink made with pine soot is called *songyŏn*. This type of ink was later outgrown in popularity by another traditional type of ink called *yuyŏn*. This ink was made from vegetable oils, such as sesame oil and rapeseed oil (Kim et al. 2011: 387).

from China, Koreans were able to develop an ability of producing such superior paper that was widely respected throughout Asia (Hammer and Smith 2001: 71).

2.4.4 Ink Stone (*pyŏru*)

As the ink stone is used for grinding the ink stick and holding the ink, a firm stone or jade is used to produce this ink stone, since it does not absorb any water. The ink stone is made in many shapes, however the most common is rectangular (Antique Alive 2015).

3 History of Hangul (vernacular) calligraphy in Korea[5]

To properly understand the history of Hangul calligraphy, it is important to distinguish each period of its usage. History of Hangul calligraphy is generally divided into four periods: the period of proper sounds (*chŏngŭm shigi*), the early vernacular script period (*ŏnmun chŏn'gi*), the late vernacular script period (*ŏnmun hugi*) and the period of national script Hangul (*kungmun, han'gŭl sigi*).

3.1 The period of proper sounds (1443–1499)

The original name of Hangul is *Hunminjŏngŭm* (The Proper Sounds for the Instruction of People), which is also the name of the document that documents the creation of Hangul characters. This document was first created in 1443 by commissioned eight scholars together with King Sejong (r. 1418–1450) himself as major contributor and personally participated in its creation. It was distributed three years later in 1446 in a woodblock print book called *Hunminjŏngŭm Haerye*[6] (Explanations and Examples of the Proper Sounds for the Instruction of the People).

Although the reverence of Chinese script was dominant, the court under King Sejong's and Kind Sejo's (r. 1455–1468) rule published and promoted several documents related to Hangul in the first half of 15th century. One example of this is the publication of *Yongbiŏch'ŏnga* (Songs of Dragons Flying in Heaven) in 1447, which is a musical text that commemorates the establishment of the Joseon dynasty and is the first text ever that was written in Hangul. Another example of such musical text is *Wŏrinch'ŏn'gangjigok* (Songs of the Moon's Reflection on a Thousand Rivers). Books published immediately after the creation of Hangul kept similar typeface as the *Hunminjŏngŭm Haerye*, however in late 15th century the block script gradually changed into a softer look.

Although there are many surviving examples of block script books, there are very few existing examples of cursive script from this time period. The only remaining one is *Odaesan Sangwŏnsa Chungch'anggwŏnsŏnmun* (Epistle commemorating the renovation of Sangwŏn Temple at Mount Odae), which was written personally by King Sejo to celebrate the rebuilding of the temple Sangwŏn (Life in Korea 2005).

[5] Sections 3.1 to 3.4 are based on Kim et al. (2011: 295–298, 326–357), additional information to books and documents was found in the Encyclopedia of Korean Culture.

[6] This version is thought to be the original version of Hunminjŏngŭm and was discovered in 1940 after 500 years of its existence.

3.2 The early vernacular script period (1500–1699)

In the early 16th century, many books that changed how the block script was written were published. Manuscripts that were published during this period were mostly for learning Chinese characters. One such example is the *Hunmongjahoe*, which was written by a translation officer Choe Sejin in 1527 as a critique of *Ch'ŏnjamun* (The Thousand Character Classic) and *Yuhap*, which were popular books for teaching Chinese characters to children at that time, which he deemed to include abstract Chinese characters, which were difficult for children to understand (National Hangeul Museum). This book was also unique, because the order of consonants and vowels was presented in the same order as is used in today's Korean writing.

In the 17th century, we can see an example of the font transformation in *Tuch'ang kyŏnghŏmbang*, a medical book written in the late Chosŏn dynasty on the causes, symptoms, and treatments of smallpox. While the typeface in 15th century had a geometric shape with thick lines, the typeface found in this medical book is almost cursive-like with curved strokes and thinner lines (Yuk 1995).

It is still rare to find surviving examples of cursive script from 16th century. Although not a manuscript, there are some instances found such as inscriptions on stone monuments and letters written by kings and scholars. The first surviving inscription written in Korean *Yŏngbi* was erected in 1536 in front of King Chungjong's (r. 1488–1544) parents' grave. This monument is significant as it was built less than 100 years after the creation of Hangul. As for surviving manuscripts, an example is a letter sent to a poet Songgang Chŏngch'ŏl by his mother in 1571 and another letter sent to a scholar Chomok written by philoshoper T'oegye Yi Hwang.

In the 17th century, there are two letters written in Hangul by King Sŏnjo to his daughter Princess Chŏngsuk in 1603 and 1604, another letter written to his mother-in-law in 1641, and a letter written by King Sukchong to console his granddaughter in 1685. There are also many extant letters written by Queen Inseon, wife of King Hyojong, which she sent to Princess Sukkyŏng in 1650 and 1960 and to Princess Sukhwi in 1662. There are also letters written by Queen Myŏngsŏng and Queen Inhyŏn, which were sent to Princess Sukhwi in 1662. Some letters written by ordinary people include a letter written

by Kwak Chu to his wife Ha in 1602, a letter written by his mother-in-law in 1612, and a letter written by Song Si-yŏl to a woman named Min in 1679.

3.3 The late vernacular script period (1700–1899)

As the block typeface of Hangul changed from early vernacular script to late vernacular script many books were published. Literature published in 18th century includes *Ŏjesanghunŏnhae*, which was published in 1745 and was a translation of *Ŏjesanghun*, which was an instruction book written by King Yŏngjo (r. 1724–1776) to help future kings. Another example includes the textbook *P'alsea* published in 1777, which was compiled to help teach Ch'ŏnghak scholars the Manchurian language. Another book that was translated into Hangul was *Chŭngsumuwŏnnok*, this translation was ordered by King Chŏngjo (r. 1776–1800) in 1792 to inform prosecutors about the knowledge of forensic inspection. In 1797, a book called *Oryun Haengsilto* (An Illustrated Guide to the Five Moral Imperatives) was published, which contains good acts of 150 people and was created to make the essential ethical Confucian principles more accessible to ordinary people (National Museum of Korea).

During the 19th century, in 1839 a woodblock edition of *Ch'ŏksa Yunŭm* was published, in this message to common people King Hŏnjong (r. 1834–1849) criticized Catholicism in order to prevent its evils. In 1880 by order of King Kojong (r. 1864–1907), a woodblock print of a Taoist book was published, which contained a collection of translated scriptures on the three sages Guan Yu, Jangah, and Yeoam called *Samsŏng Hun'gyŏng*. During this period state-led books were published, however privately led regional publishing of novels, history books, textbooks, and Buddhist scriptures known as *panggak* novels (commercially printed woodblock or metal-print editions) became popular (Ko, Jung, and Jung 2016). Example of such books is *Shipku Saryag Ŏnhae*, which was printed with woodblock in Daegu in 1804, *Ch'ŏnjamun* printed in Seoul the same year and *Samsŏ Samgyŏng* published in Jeonju in 1810. In the 19th century the block typeface transformed even more into a softer manuscript appearance. The typeface in *panggak* novels is generally characterized by an awl-shaped vertical line with the shape of the letters uneven and their thickness not constant.

There are many surviving handwritten manuscripts from the 18th and 19th century, including a letter sent by King Chŏngjo to his aunt in 1759, a letter from Queen Kyŏngsun

to Princess Hwasun. *Kungch'e* typeface prospered during the 19th century as it was used by court ladies to write letters, manuscripts, and copy novels. Many of these records of the royal court are currently housed in Kyujanggak at the Seoul National University, Jangsŏgak at Academy of Korean Studies, National Museum of Korea, and National Palace Museum of Korea. These palace records are usually written on a paper made of mulberry. Some of the extant manuscripts written in *kungch'e* typeface are *Namgyeyŏndam*, *Yŏktaeginyŏn* and *Ogwŏnjunghoeyŏn*. There was a wealth of *kungch'e* styles utilized for different writing purposes. One of them was *pongsŏ*, which was used by *sanggung* to ghostwrite the letters of the queen. One of the representative *sanggung* who wrote font the best was *ssangung* Ch'ŏn and Sŏ Kiissi during the reign of King Sunjo and his son Ikchong, another was *sanggung* Hyŏn, who wrote letters of Empress Myŏngsŏng during Hŏnjong's reign (1834–1849), and *sanggung* Sŏ Hŭisun and *sanggung* Ha who wrote also wrote letter of Empress Myŏngsŏng, but during Kojong's reign (1852–1907). Among the queens, especially Queen Inmok is praised for her Hangul writing. Another thing that has been revealed is that the famous calligrapher Kim Chŏnghŭi, famous for creating the Chinese calligraphy writing style ch'usa, was also excellent at writing Hangul. So far there are around 40 letters found written by him to his wife and daughter-in-law.

3.4 The period of the national script Hangul（1900–present)

During this period the editions of books that were printed and published in Hangul used smaller font size than in the past. An example of a published book during this period was *Kugŏ munbŏp* (Korean grammar) which was written by Chu Si-kyŏng in 1898, it was later reprinted under a new name *Kugŏ munjŏn ŭmhak* in 1908 with a more modern typeface. The *panggak* novels also flourished during this time, a few examples are the woodblock print of *Yuch'ungnyŏlchŏn* from 1904, a woodblock print of *Hwayongdo* from 1907 and a woodblock print of *Ch'ohanjŏn* from 1907. An instance of a stone printed book is *Shinch'an ch'odŭngsohak* from 1909 and there is also an example of a lead printed book called *Ch'ŏlloyŏkchŏng* from 1910.

As for manuscripts during this period, representative example includes an eloquent letter from Empress Sunmyŏnghyo (r. 1882–1897), who was the concubine of Sunjong and also the works and epistles of a famous calligrapher Yun Pae-kyŏng (1888–1986),

who was the granddaughter of King Sunjo's daughter Princess Tŏgon. In the early 20th century, Nam Kung-ŏk, who was a president of *Hwangsŏng Sinmun*, published a calligraphy textbook called *Shinp'yŏn Ŏnmun Ch'ebŏp*, which he transcribed himself in the *kungch'e* typeface. Similarly, Kim Ch'ung-hyŏn published *Uri kŭlssi ssŭnŭn pŏp* that he wrote with a brush.

Thanks to the books *Pot'ong hakkyo sŭpchach'ŏp* (written by Yu Han-ik) and *Sŏbangsubon* being published in 1936 by the Governor-General of Chosŏn Korean calligraphy could be taught in ordinary schools. Through this learning process, Hangul calligraphy was at least somewhat maintained by calligraphers even under the Japanese colonial rule, which tried to suppress Korean spirit and culture. The first attempt at Hangul calligraphy work of art began in 1921 when Yun Paekyŏng presented her personal work written in *kungch'e* called *Songinjong hwangje gwŏnhaksŏ*. She was also recognized as the first female professional calligrapher by winning the 8th and 10th *Chosŏn misul chŏllamhoe* (Joseon Art Exhibition). Her works together with works by other calligraphers like I Ch'ŏlkyŏng and Kim Nyŏngchin helped revive Hangul as calligraphy even in the difficult environment under the Japanese colonial rule. Additionally, research on Hangul was further deepened by the already mentioned Kim Ch'unghyŏn, however the publishing of his work was delayed.

During the Japanese colonial rule the number of calligraphers gradually decreased and in the period after the liberation calligraphers were a rare sight. However, in the early 1960s interest in calligraphy gradually increased, because people felt that calligraphy contained the national spirit, which was suppressed during the Japanese rule. This was also because the media reported on the winners of the calligraphy national contests, which awoke an interest in calligraphy in ordinary citizens. This gave rise to a new wave of calligraphers and from the 1970s the enthusiasm in calligraphy grew until it reached its peak in the 1980s. As a result of this the number of calligraphers and calligraphy academies rapidly increased reaching thousands, and even teachers, government employees and businesspeople were often also full-time calligraphers. This led to an acceptance and transformation of many styles of calligraphy and many unique typefaces appeared.

However, in the 2000s, the interest in calligraphy and its need for the calm mentality of a writer is being pushed out of the attention of modern people due to the rise in value of pragmatic thinking and the arrival of digitalization.

3.5 The role of women in vernacular Korean calligraphy

With the downfall of Koryŏ (918–1392) and establishment of Chosŏn dynasty (1392–1910) Korean society underwent a gradual transformation from Buddhism and matrilineal structure to Neo-Confucian patriarchy and patrilineality. This change resulted in a loss of women's legal and economic privilege due to Confucian norms, however at the same time during this period women started to write more than before[7], which was made possible thanks to the creation of Hangul, the Korean alphabet, in 1443. With the spread of Hangul women actively participated in the written culture for the first time, as they had not participated in classical Chinese[8] written culture like men (Haboush 2002: 220–226). However, Chizhova (2018: 63) writes that women were well proficient in literary Chinese before beginning to write exclusively in vernacular Korean script, but references to women's writing in literary Chinese gradually faded after the seventeenth century—with the exception of a few nonconformist women who wrote poetry and even Confucian treatises in literary Chinese.

Since only members of the ruling class were permitted to learn classical Chinese writing (as this was a gateway to higher society and also the opportunity to gain political power or economic benefits), majority of them were against an easier to learn alphabet as it could diminish their power in society (National Institute of Korean Language 2003). For this reason, male members of the ruling class continued to practice writing in classical Chinese[9].

Despite the fact that men's references to women's writing in vernacular Korean never refer to it as "calligraphy" (*sŏ* 書), as it was thought to be a male-only art form, articles of women's elaborate brushwork indicate that in late Chosŏn Korea, this practice

[7] This was true only for women from ruling class (*yangban*) as they could receive education from their family. Literate women made up only 4 % as late as 19th century (Wikipedia 2022).
[8] Also known in Korean as *hanmun,* another name in English is literary Chinese (Wikipedia 2022).
[9] Before the creation of Hangul, Korean was used orally by everyone, while all texts were written in classical Chinese. After the invention of Hangul written culture became diglossic, classical Chinese used by men and in public sphere and vernacular Korean used by women and in domestic sphere. Official histories were always written in classical Chinese, with entries in vernacular Korean translated into classical Chinese (Haboush 2002: 220–226).

was highly aestheticized, had a recognized social importance and a rigorous training process. Writing in vernacular Korean gained similar status in women's fields as the practice of men's writing in classical Chinese, as women's vernacular handwriting was filled with the same standards as men's writing study: bodily discipline, productive work, and exquisite brushwork (Chizhova 2018: 59).

3.5.1 Yangban women[10]

Even to this day vernacular Korean writing is connected mostly with the unsophisticated popular literature and everyday writings practices like note-taking and correspondence. Because Hangul was intimately linked to women's literacy and private culture from the time of its establishment, novels published in vernacular Korean were shunned, and Korean handwriting had little importance in public life. In women's quarters vernacular lineage novels and vernacular Korean writing grew in popularity, and despite the fact that it was excluded from the high aesthetic canon of male culture in literary Chinese, in women's circles the practice of writing in Korean gained similar prestige to men's writing practice in Chinese.

Although men did not participate in elite vernacular writing as women did, this does not mean that men did not use vernacular Korean writing at all. Despite the fact that men saw writing in colloquial Korean as having no cultural value, and literary collections compiled after their deaths never featured vernacular Korean texts, they would turn to writing in Korean when exchanging letters with women in their families, and in certain cases, men also wrote manuals of conduct in Korean to benefit their daughter's marriage. On the other hand, women employed vernacular Korean in writing readily to write letters, poems, as well as rewriting and duplicating works of fiction.

Similarly, while learning literary Chinese was not a priority for women in the same way it was for men, in the early phases of their education boys and girls were taught to write in settings that were mixed in both gender and script. Male members of family frequently taught their younger female members and vice versa. However, the goal in teaching script was different for men and women. For women learning to write elegantly in vernacular script was a bodily discipline and had useful social value, while for men

[10] This section is based on Chizhova (2018: 60–76).

learning calligraphy in literary Chinese was a way of moral self-cultivation and the pinnacle of aesthetic achievement.

As mentioned above, in the late Chosŏn dynasty women's writing in vernacular Korean was not acknowledged and understood as calligraphy, as this term was reserved only for men's practice of writing in literary Chinese. Because much of what we know about women's lives in Chosŏn dynasty is from male-authored sources the information is often contradictory. While they recognize the aesthetic and social significance of women's writing, they fail to consider that vernacular Korean culture has developed a wide aesthetic canon with unmistakable cultural status.

The skill of writing in vernacular script was part of many other practical skills and productive work called "womanly work" (*yŏgong*), it could function as a physical manifestation of filial piety (*hyo*) by copying borrowed books for the benefit of a woman's family and also as an expression of care for her immediate social circle by sending gifts together with notes with beautiful calligraphy.

However, Chizhova (2018) argues that based on three aspects (aesthetic dimension, social value, meticulous training procedures) we can discuss women's practice of writing not only as simple handwriting, but as vernacular calligraphy.

Family instruction and intellectual networks were important resources for both men and women. While men relied on the guidance of skilled calligraphers, women used their domestic networks to develop their vernacular Korean calligraphy, relying primarily on books and letters used as calligraphy style guidelines. Women also used to copy books of fiction to learn calligraphy. A surviving notebook which contains haphazardly copied parts of fiction and practical advice, such as a calendar listing the best days for burying placenta. What can be seen in this notebook are varying levels of skill, which points to the concept of communal learning, where many scribes would use one notebook. The topic of texts also points to female scribers. With this example we can see that women also had aesthetic circles similar to men (albeit not as extensive), where they practiced their artistry and admired each other's writing.

Lineage novels (kinship novels)

Within the space of literary production, female calligraphers served a key part in establishing the cultural value of a particular genre of fiction. Lineage novels (*kamun*

sosŏl) were lengthy stories, with tens to hundreds of manuscript volumes, that center on family relationships and the problems that arise from the patrilineal system (Tony's Reading List 28 June 2021). The prestige of this works and the role of women in the growth of this prestige stems from the fact, that the authors of these lineage novels are unknown[11], however on the margins of the pages of lineage novels were names of female calligraphers together with admiration for their skill and work. Lineage novels relied on the presence of kinship networks and women's scribal activity, since they were too extensive and complex to be printed in woodblock editions. As these manuscripts were exclusively circulated in family circles for much of their history, they became displays of a family's refinement as well as sentimental items that recorded the excellent brushstrokes of the departed scribers thanks to women's skilled labor. This further emphasizes the significant importance of women as calligraphers and readers in late Chosŏn dynasty.

3.5.2 Palace women[12]

Palace women (*kungnyŏ*) were servants in specific departments of a specific royal establishment[13]. Until the 19th century there were at least five hundred service women at court, however their individual existence is erased, as these women remain nameless and faceless. They entered the service as children from age three years old until their early teens, based on what department they were selected for. All girls started training when they were around seven years old, even if they entered the palace at an earlier age. They were trained in mannerisms, court language, basic reading and writing of the Korean script, and also received specific training based on their future role and department. Training for girls chosen for the secretariat was special because in addition to their basic teachings they also studied an academic curriculum that involved history, biographies of exceptional women, and essential Confucian morality texts (Kim Haboush 2008: 293).

[11] It is completely possible that the authors of these novels were men, as it was not uncommon for men to write fiction both in literary Chinese and vernacular Korean (Chizhova 2018: 72).
[12] This section is based on Kim Haboush (2008: 284–293).
[13] Kim Haboush (2008: 293) writes: "Several royal establishments coexisted in the palace in a vertical hierarchy by generation: that of the past reign (represented by the queen dowager), that of the present king, and that of future king. Each establishment consisted of seven departments—a secretariat, a haberdashery, and divisions of embroidery and decoration, bath and toilet, snacks, food and meals, and laundry."

The social position of the households from whom apprentices were chosen is a subject of much debate. It was forbidden to choose servants from noble (*yangban*) or commoner (*sangmin*) families; however, this rule was regularly broken. Most of the servant girls were chosen from middle class families (*chungin*), these girls usually filled positions in the secretariat, the haberdashery, and the embroidery department. For the remaining departments girls from commoner or even lower families were selected. Palace women also often recommended girls from their own families.

What is interesting about palace women is the character of their existence in the palace. Even though they were available for their master's sexual pleasure, it was not their main role. On the contrary, they were selected for a specific role in the palace, and they played an important role in the daily management duties of each royal establishment. Kim Haboush (2008) mentions that there was a certain ritual in the palace, both in the day-to-day life and on special occasions and that this ritual bound together all of the inhabitants of the palace, even though they were in different establishments. The bond that held together all the different establishments was the want of strengthening the Chosŏn monarchy and refining Confucian culture. She argues that palace women were not just passive observers of the daily ritual, moreover they were active contributors to the ritual. Furthermore, they created new genres of writing that contributed to Chosŏn society's scriptural and material culture, which is contrasted by the women's individual erasure.

Inner palace registries (*palgi*)

There are 721 surviving inner palace registries, which date mostly from the 19th century and they can be divided into two types. The first type was used to record daily occurrences in the palace, like articles of clothing that had to be prepared for the royal family members each season. The second type was used to record items needed for special occasion. In general, the registries comprise of brief and simple descriptions of items used for different purposes with no interjections, interpretations, or personal opinions. For special occasions, such as a wedding ceremonies and funerals, a temporary office was established to supervise these events, however all these official records created by the temporary office are in literary Chinese. Not to mention, some of the surviving record produced by this temporary office date back to the 17th century. Kim Haboush (2008) raises two questions: What is the relationship between the registries produced by palace women and the official

records? Why are all the extant inner palace registries all recent (19th century) and the official records much older (17th century and on)?

She guesses that even though there are not any remaining registries that date before 19th century, it is probable that they were produced and used as sources by official offices to compile the records of events. Then, why were the later inner palace registries preserved? She believes that it was because of the anesthetization of the Korean script, as before 19th century these inner palace registries were only thought to be documents that served a utilitarian purpose, however with the development of palace-style calligraphy (*kungch'e*) these registries were seen as items of beauty and value. This rise in value of palace-style script and the subsequent the anesthetization of this style of calligraphy marked the beginning of a new independent area for women in visual scriptural culture. Furthermore, palace-style calligraphy was popular among the female society at court, including royal family members and by the late 18th century this style of writing was elevated into the aesthetic realm.

Although there are few records concerning the life and work of palace women, the letters they wrote in palace-style script swiftly spread outside of the palace and became a crucial component in the education of girls in the noble class (*yangban*).

4 Calligraphy in contemporary South Korea

For this part of the thesis, I examine various sources from journal articles, studies, and Korean English newspaper articles to observe the usage of calligraphy in modern Korean society. This part demonstrates the importance of calligraphy in modern day South Korea and showcases the changes in the practice of calligraphy compared to the past.

As mentioned in the chapter 2.1 historically the name for Korean calligraphy underwent many changes. After the peak of calligraphy's popularity in the 1980s, it fell into stagnation in the 1990s with the start of digital age. Additionally, because of this digitalization the culture of written letters was slowly replaced by the culture of typing.

The meaning of calligraphy (*sŏye*) also transforms during this period due to the new possibilities that computers offer to artists and that allow them to change the rules of handwritten calligraphy.

4.1 Product design

The intellectual rights of calligraphy as a creation were not acknowledged until 1996, when a design company used disassembled Hangul calligraphy letters written by university professor Yŏ T'ae-myŏng for a film poster for the movie Festival (*Ch'ukchae*, 1996). In this case the court decided to rule in favor of the artist and the agency had to pay out twenty million won for the copyright rights. The 2002 Korea-Japan World Cup is agreed by artists to have brought calligraphy into the mainstream of graphic design in Korea. Calligraphy artist had a difficult time getting paid when their work was featured in advertising, before calligrapher Pak Yong-ch'ul, who produced the "Be the Reds" logo that was used on shirts during this event, won copyright in trial in 2003. Although using Hangul calligraphy for design has become more popular over the last twenty years, the calligraphy market is argued to still be in the making and issues with the cost and licensing of Hangul calligraphy remain (*The Korea Herald* 2 December 2016).

One of the most notable calligraphy artists is Kang Pyŏng-in, an owner of Korean calligraphy institute called Sooltong. Kang's designs rose to popularity when he wrote calligraphy for a soju line Chamisul in 2006. His works can be found on other bottles, such as Baesangmyun Brewery and a premium soju brand Hwayo by Kwangjuyo. Kang notes that while he is glad for the achievement Hangul calligraphy reached in the last two

decades as a design genre, he finds Hangul calligraphy in product design overused. Although Kang was one of the first calligraphers to use Hangul calligraphy on packaging for CJ Cheil Jedang's traditional pastes and sauces, he states that this type of product design is now overdone as you can now see calligraphy on most products while walking down a supermarket aisle. In his opinion, it is important to distinguish product packaging from others, but that is now difficult since every product now has some type of Hangul calligraphy (*The Korean Herald* 1 August 2014).

The jump in popularity of Hangul calligraphy designs has been felt also by Yi Ka-ram, manager at design company Kkotsbom. Some of their clients request for calligraphy to be put into their advertisement, however the studio also takes calligraphy into account while designing posters. Many freelance designers and tattoo artists have also used the rise in popularity of Hangul in their designs. Yi Ch'ŏn-su, a Hongdae tattoo artist, mentions that before this year (2016), he did not have clients, who were interested in Hangul tattoos, so when a young woman asked for a Hangul tattoo he had to refuse her since he was not familiar with the concept of calligraphy writing. Many new designers however fear the trend of Hangul calligraphy as it could pose another requirement or qualification during job searching. This is however refuted by Yi from Kkotsbom saying that calligraphy is not a requirement for a job application (*The Korean Herald* 2 December 2016).

4.2 Film and TV Shows

Calligraphy is oftentimes used in movie poster design. A study from 2014 reveals that calligraphy tends to be used more in the designs of historical and war movies, as calligraphy can invoke a historical feel superior to typography, since it has a longer cultural history to Korean viewers. Similarly, the number of posters, which utilize calligraphy is also higher in the drama genre. The reason for this is that calligraphy can showcase the emotion of the movie to the viewer better than mechanical typography (Ahn, Shin, and Chung 2014: 69–70).

The world of design flourished with the arrival of personal computers. Korean designers however encountered a different problem than their Western colleagues. Although Hangul appears simple, there is however astounding number of variations one has to include to create a font. This is why in the early days of font design only massive

corporations could afford to create a font. For this reason, designers turned to calligraphy, whose usage brush and ink allowed them more freedom than font creation despite the lack of formal training. Designers wrote out individual letters with a brush, which they then scanned to a computer, where they could be edited further. This practice received the name *k'aelligŭraep'i*, which although being a simple transcription of the word "calligraphy" is translated as "handwriting derived from calligraphy (Nornes 2021: 47–48)."

The crucial moment for calligraphy in film came with the poster design for Die Bad (*Chukkŏna hokŭn nappŭgŏna*, 2000). Before the poster gained its success, calligraphers were not paid for their designs by filmmakers as it was believed that a simple meal or a drink was enough of a reward. The poster was designed by Kim Hye-jin from the Kkotsbam design studio. She reveals that she first intended to use typography, but it did not fit the mood of the poster, which features three men in various dynamic positions, one of them spitting blood. She tried to express the mood of the poster and wrote the name of the film with disposable chopsticks to showcase the boldness of the poster and subsequently the film. Since the calligraphy is purposefully illegible, the design was rejected at first, however the public reaction was overwhelmingly positive, and this popularity inspired other designers to use calligraphy for their designs. One of these designers was Kim Chong-kŏn, who established his position in the industry with the design of the poster for Pak Ch'an-uk's Sympathy for Mr. Vengeance (*Poksu nŭn na ŭi kŏt*, 2002), which was important in establishing the usage of calligraphy in Korean film culture (Nornes 2021: 48–49).

Some other examples of movie posters with calligraphy include Silenced (*Togani,* 2011), The Chaser (*Ch'ugyŏkja*, 2008), and Masquerade (*Kwanghae: Wangi toen namja,* 2012). Calligraphy is also used in TV series posters, the already mentioned calligrapher Kang Pyŏng-in is well known for his design for the show Misaeng: Incomplete Life (*Misaeng*, 2014).

4.3 Exhibitions

There are multiple museums which showcase calligraphy works permanently. The oldest named Seoul Calligraphy Art Museum opened in 1988 and is the first museum worldwide to be dedicated only to calligraphy, with both traditional and contemporary works being

displayed in the museum's five exhibition halls (Seoul Arts Center 2020). Other museums that display calligraphy works are Suwon Museum and Gangam Calligraphy Museum located in Chŏnju Hanok Village.

A Korea Times article (9 April 2020) reports a new exhibition "The Modern and Contemporary Korean Writing" hosted at the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art (MMCA) in Seoul's Tŏksugung. This is the first calligraphy exhibition to ever be presented at this museum, MMCA's director Yun Pŏm-mo says that the exhibition's goal is to "bring neglected art genres to the museum." Around three hundred pieces of art including calligraphy, paintings, engravings, sculptures, media arts, and ceramics are displayed to explore the connection between calligraphy and other art forms. The curator Pae Wŏn-chŏng says that the exhibition studies the age-old Korean tradition of poetry, calligraphy, and painting called "si-sŏ-hwa." She mentions that "While Kim Hwan-gi's paintings fetch billions of won, these calligraphy works are sold for less than one million won. However, the artistry of Korean calligraphy should be rated much higher than it is now."

This exhibition was originally scheduled to be opened on March 12, 2020, however due to the outbreak of COVID-19, the museum had to be temporarily closed on February 24, 2020. Instead of delaying the exhibition further MMCA decided to film a video of the exhibit, guided by the already mentioned curator Pae Wŏn-chŏng. The video has amassed almost 130 thousand views since its posting on YouTube. The exhibition later ran from May 6 to August 23, 2020.

The exhibitions are sectioned into four parts, with the first one "Calligraphy in Painting and Painting in Calligraphy" focused on the already mentioned relationship between calligraphy and contemporary art. This section also explores the influence calligraphy has had on other artforms in Korea. It features artworks such as Kim Yong-jun's *Suhwasonoin kabujwasang* (A Young Old Man, Kim Hwan-gi, Sitting in a Lotus Position) a portrayal of Kim Hwan-gi, who is currently the most expensive Korean artist, with the title of the painting written with Chinese characters in Clerical Script. Another work displayed is by Kim Hwan-gi called "A Jar and Poetry" from 1954, which showcases a Hangul calligraphy and painting in the Western style (*The Korea Times* 9 May 2020).

The second section “Calligraphy Mirrors the Calligrapher: The First Generation of Korean Modern and Contemporary Calligraphers,” connects traditional Korean calligraphy and contemporary calligraphy by showcasing artworks by twelve first-generation modern Korean calligraphers. One of the artists displayed is Son Chae-hyŏng, who is a calligraphy master of both Chinese and Korean characters, and it was also him who coined the term “*sŏye,*” which is the Korean name for calligraphy. Furthermore, he is the creator of a new calligraphy style called *Sojŏn* script, which combined seal and clerical script from Chinese calligraphy and applied it to Hangul calligraphy. The only female artist, who is on display in this section, is called Yi Ch’ŏl-gyŏng, she is also known as Kalmul. Bae says that her influence on Hangul calligraphy is so immense that she believes that there is no female Hangul calligrapher who is not inspired by her work. The spirit of her work is carried on by the *Kalmul han’gŭl sahoe* (Kalmul Hangul Calligraphy Association). Another displayed calligrapher, who helped make strides in the Hangul calligraphy genre, was Sŏ Hŭi-hwan, also named P’yŏngbo. His calligraphy style is reinterpreted from *Hunminjŏngŭm*, Bae states that compared to Kalmul’s refined calligraphy, P’yŏngbo’s calligraphy style rather unsophisticated but energetic (MMCA 2020).

The third section called “Calligraphy Revisited: Experimental and Unconventional Contemporary Calligraphy” showcases artworks of second-generation calligraphers, who were trained by the first-generation calligraphers. Artworks in this category focus less on legibility and content, but more on image. Bae mentions that these artworks do not represent contemporary calligraphy as a whole, but they help to push the boundaries of the genre. Hangul calligraphers in this section are Yŏ T’ae-myŏng, whose work interprets Chosŏn commoners’ calligraphic style (*minch’e*), and Ch’oe Min-ryŏl, also known as Milmul, who studied the epistolary scripts of royal families and reinterpreted them into Hangul calligraphy, which makes his Hangul letters look elegant and vibrant, due to different letter sizes and variousness in the speed of his brushwork. This results in his Hangul calligraphy style almost resembling Chinese letters (MMCA 2020).

The fourth section “Designed Calligraphy in Everyday Life” explores calligraphy in daily life as a new genre and its usage in design in advertising, film, product logos, and so on. Many artists in this section do not require the so-called *munbangsau* as they broadened the restrictions on tools in calligraphy. Some displayed artworks use masking

tape instead of a brush. Calligrapher Yi Sang-hyŏn[14] utilizes spring onion to write one of his works. Lastly, typography[15] artworks by artist An Sang-su are exhibited. Bae explaines that the combination of calligraphy and typography have great potential in the future, since *Hunminjŏngŭm Haerye* would not exist without the development of movable type either (MMCA 2020).

4.4 Education

Historically, training in calligraphy had been crucial in Korea's ruling class education, in contemporary South Korea however this importance is diminishing with the rising influence of computers and mobile phones. During the peak of calligraphy's popularity in the 1980s, the first department of calligraphy was established in 1989 at Wŏn'gwang University, followed by Kyemyŏng University in 1992, Taegu University of Arts in 1995, Taejŏn University in 1998, Honam University in 2000, and Kyŏnggi University in 2003. However, in recent years, many Korean universities had to close down their calligraphy departments with only Kyŏnggi University, Taejŏn University, and Honam University sustaining their departments (Kim and Chang 2018: 212).

Regrettably, a *Korea JoongAng Daily* article (18 June 2014) reports that due to the lack of enrolling students Wŏn'gwang University decided to close down their department of calligraphy, which was originally the school's pride. In recent years, many Korean universities had to shut down their calligraphy departments with only Kyŏnggi University, Daejeon University and Honam University persevering. Even these universities however have difficulties sustaining their departments of calligraphy. The renouncing of the Wŏn'gwang University calligraphy department was met with anger and despair, not only by the department head Yŏ T'ae-myŏng, but also by a number of Chinese universities, which sent letters to the University with a request to reconsider the decision. It is also important to mention that although China is the birthplace of calligraphy, the country began to establish calligraphy departments in universities from 1999, after being influenced by the establishment of department of calligraphy at Wŏn'gwang University.

[14] Shown in the MMCA (2020) YouTube video at 1:16:13.
[15] Pae (MMCA 2020) mentioned: "…typography is used to make type more legible and appealing to readers. As calligraphy is an art of letter writing, typography is an art of letter designing and arranging."

While in China, it is mandatory to learn calligraphy in many elementary, middle, and high schools, in South Korea calligraphy classes are rarely taught at schools. In the past calligraphy academies (*hagwŏn*) were once as popular as taekwondo programs, these days however the number of calligraphy academies is diminishing due to lack of participants. This lack of interest is fortunately combated by South Korean calligraphers who began to voice their concerns about the fall of Korean calligraphy culture. Representative of the New Politics Alliance for Democracy, Ch'oe Chae-ch'ŏn, operates the "Calligraphy Promotion Policy Forum." Since the establishment of this forum many achievements have been reached, such as the funding of the renovation of the Calligraphy Museum at Seoul Arts Center (*Korea JoongAng Daily* 18 June 2014).

4.5 Foreigners and calligraphy

Kang Pyŏng-in said that he conceives the 19th century calligrapher Kim Chŏng-hŭi as a "hallyu star" for showcasing the beauty of Hangul (*The Korea Times* 31 May 2014).
Despite Western calligraphy lacking the same culture as Korean calligraphy, it could serve as another way to further hallyu in the West. Many foreigners are now interested in Hangul, which can be seen in the comment by a tattoo artist in, where he speculates that "uniquely designed Hangul tattoos could become a breakthrough market, especially if it was aimed at foreigners who wanted something distinctly Korean," (*The Korea Herald* 2 December 2016).

Furthermore, Kang was invited by the Corea Image Communication Institute (CICI) to give a speech and a lesson on Korean calligraphy to foreign ambassadors, where after his spoken presentation, he wrote the word flower in Korean (*kkot*) with some of the writing taking on a pictogram-like quality. Many of the ambassadors report that they enjoyed the lesson and although they knew different forms of calligraphy from their home countries, they found the more artistic way of writing Korean characters into picture impressive and interesting (*The Korea Times* 25 February 2016).

Although, Kang has been entertaining the idea of showcasing his calligraphy works overseas, he believes that the Western perception of Korean calligraphy still has ways to go. He mentions a story an exhibition that was held at a certain French diplomat's residence, where a calligraphy piece was met with enthusiasm, but was not sold as the guests found the price of the art piece (3 million won) to be too expensive for a work that

is done in one sitting. Kang says that it shocked him as he realized that Westerners do not realize the years of hard work and arduous practice that calligraphy study involves (*The Korea Herald* 1 August 2014).

Conclusion

Calligraphy in South Korea has a long standing history both as an artform and as a medium for practicing mental discipline. The aim of this thesis was to examine the importance of Hangul calligraphy in past Korea and contemporary South Korea. This was achieved through the summarization of available reputable sources regarding the meaning of East Asian calligraphy as a whole and the history of vernacular calligraphy in Korea. Although Hangul calligraphy has in the past not been accepted in men's calligraphic cultural circles, vernacular calligraphy bloomed under the hands of female calligraphers. After the end of Japanese colonization, the rising interest in Hangul calligraphy helped Korean people to participate in an activity that offered them a sense of a national spirit. This interest however decreased with the arrival of 21st century and the era of digitalization as writing was slowly replaced by typing and the art of calligraphy became too slow for the fast-paced new age.

Another goal of this thesis was to examine recent studies and newspaper articles to examine how Hangul calligraphy is perceived in the contemporary South Korea.

To conclude the included articles, although the interest in calligraphy has been diminishing and departments of calligraphy in universities have problems to sustain themselves, Hangul calligraphy is frequently used in today's South Korea, in areas such as product design and marketing. There are also groups that are fighting to revive the interest in Korean calligraphy and the abstract movement that is currently happening in calligraphy could possibly awaken South Korea's interest in calligraphy through new and original means. Many articles also mentioned foreigners in combination with calligraphic art. Despite the fact that usually Westerners perceive calligraphy as lesser than paintings, some artists state that if nurtured the interest of foreigners in Hangul could grow. Based on my personal experience during study abroad in South Korea, my interest in calligraphy started when our university offered calligraphy classes, where we tried both block and cursive script under the guidance of our teacher.

In conclusion, although Korean calligraphy seems to have lost the importance it had throughout the Korea's history, calligraphy in South Korea is omnipresent and there are movements to help restore its significance.

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