

ISSN 1598-2661

# SUNGKYUN JOURNAL OF EAST ASIAN STUDIES

---

Vol.16 No.2

OCT. 2016



Academy of East Asian Studies  
Sungkyunkwan University

# The Practice and Recording of Censorship in Colonial Korea: A Critical Review of the *Chosŏn Publication Monthly Police Report*\*

Minju LEE\*\*

*Far East University*

Keunsik JUNG\*\*\*

*Seoul National University*

## ABSTRACT

Recent studies on media censorship in colonial Korea have converged on the newly discovered *Chosŏn Publication Monthly Police Report*, published from 1928 to 1938 by the colonial government's censorship bureau. These new studies do not explicitly problematize the issue of whether the *Monthly Report* is an accurate and comprehensive record of censorship activity or not. However, the record's official stature does not necessarily guarantee accurate representation of the actual practice of censorship in that period. We found that the numbers of seized or erased articles recorded in the *Monthly Report* do not correspond with the numbers of articles actually expunged from newspaper pages. This study begins by problematizing the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the *Monthly Report* censorship records. In addition, it undertakes a comparative analysis of the *Monthly Report* and contemporary newspapers, employing both record-centric and page-centric approaches. This research also examines how the presence of censorship traces served as tangible evidence of colonial power.

**Keywords:** Colonial censorship, *Chosun Ilbo* (朝鮮日報), *Chosŏn Publication Monthly Police Report* (朝鮮出版警察月報), *Dong-A Ilbo* (東亞日報), effacement policy.

## Introduction

Recent years have witnessed increasing scholarly attention to the topic of media censorship in colonial Korea (1910-1945). Whereas earlier research focused primarily on newspapers, these studies have extended to magazines, books, films, music, and other media, and have produced diverse findings on themes such as the colonial censorship system, anti-censorship, and the practical operation of censorship during this period.<sup>1</sup> Current research has focused on the recently discovered text of the colonial Police Bureau's *Chosŏn Publication Monthly Police Report* (朝鮮出版警察月報, hereafter the *Monthly Report*) (Chŏng and Ch'oe 2006).<sup>2</sup> Such studies have yielded detailed statistical analyses of its data and sparked lively debate over its accuracy and scope.

Much of the existing work on the *Monthly Report* does not explicitly question whether its records are accurate and comprehensive. However, the *Monthly Report's* official stature does not necessarily guarantee that it fully reflects the actual practice of censorship in the period it covers. If the *Monthly Report*

features any omissions, exaggerations, and other distortions, then this will have clear implications for the research based on it. Our reading of the *Monthly Report*, in comparison with censored newspaper pages, has raised many questions in this regard; this is where our research began. Since newspaper censorship tends to require a quick turnaround, and because each paper can have multiple versions (such as the morning and evening editions), this problem of accuracy becomes even more significant.

In order to properly grasp the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the censorship records, it was necessary to examine what has been recorded as being censored, on the one hand, and to check whether erased portions in the published texts correspond to records, on the other hand. Put differently, the former involves verification of the record, while the latter involves verification of the text. Notably, a pilot set of comparisons yielded clear disparities between the number of censored objects in the *Monthly Report* and the number of actual erasures. This study examines these differences, broken down into three time periods. On the basis of these findings, it discusses the accuracy and coverage of the *Monthly Report* itself. In this process, we also discuss how empty spaces—traces of censorship—in Korean newspapers exposed the intervention of colonial power in media production.

In short, this study begins by problematizing the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the *Monthly Report* censorship records and undertakes a comparative analysis of the *Monthly Report* and contemporary newspapers. In doing so, it attempts to identify the censors' recording tendencies specific to the *Monthly Report*, and how these records compare to the actual product of censorship.

### **Issues in the *Monthly Report* Studies**

The *Monthly Report* was first introduced as scholarly evidence in an article from 2006 by Chŏng Künsik and Ch'oe Kyŏnghŭi (Kyeong-Hee Choi) and since then has been the subject of many studies. The existing literature exhibits a diverse set of concerns and approaches, ranging from statistical analyses to comparisons with similar records from other nations.

Yi Hyeryŏng (2010a) focuses on the *Monthly Report's* categorizations of the publications it censored, showing how the bulk of censorship efforts were focused on imported material. Pak Hŏnho and Son Sŏngjun (2010) ran statistical analyses on the corpus to identify any patterns in censorship activity. They argue

\* A version of this paper was first presented at the biannual conference of the Korean Society for Journalism and Communication Studies in 2011. After this presentation, we refined the research method and further developed several points raised during the discussion. The research for this article was partly supported by an Academy of Korean Studies grant #AKS-2010-DZZ-3103.

\*\* First Author.

\*\*\* Corresponding Author.

<sup>1</sup> A recently released edited volume (Kŏmyŏl Yŏn'guhoe 2011) has brought many of these findings together.

<sup>2</sup> Serving the role of what we would today recognize as a censor, the publication police were part of a wider range of police forces maintained by imperial Japan in spheres ranging from "hygiene" to "firefighting."

that the proportion of various categories of submitted publications reflects the censorship practices used to suppress Chosŏn's publishing capacity, and also, that a disproportionate number of items written in Korean were targeted. In contrast, Yu Chinhŭi (2010) focused on the large proportion of Chinese publications among the imported material, and examined the role of specific publications, such as the *Minsŏngbo* 民聲報 (Voice of the People) published in China by Koreans.

Meanwhile, some studies have also examined the censorship of literary works published in various forms on the basis of the data presented in the *Monthly Report*. Yi Sangkyŏng (2008) found comparatively little evidence of confiscation or erasure in the case of literary works published in magazines. However, he suggested that the Japanese regime used censorship to influence and shape the literary canon of the time. Similarly, Yi Hyeryŏng (2010b) examined Yŏm Sangsŏp's novel, *Madness* (Kwangbun), in tandem with records in the *Monthly Report*. This analysis suggests that censorship radically altered the plot.

In addition to these studies, others have focused on additional publications from the colonial police. Han Kihyŏng (2009, 2010), for instance, examined reports titled *Poetry in Korean Newspapers* (諺文新聞の詩歌) and *Newspaper Survey* (新聞紙要覽). Chŏng Kŭnsik (2009) analyzed the text of censorship records in colonial Korea in comparison with such records in another Japanese colony, Taiwan.

As shown above, the existing literature on the *Monthly Report* provides a great deal of detail, and as a whole, conveys a good sense of colonial Korea's censorship system. However, what this discussion currently lacks is a detailed examination of the *Monthly Report* itself in tandem with the censored output of the colonial media—that is, a determination of how exact and comprehensive the *Monthly Report* is. This study will go beyond the simple assumption that the *Monthly Report* is accurate and covered all censored media in order to assess this record as historical evidence.

### **The Meaning of the “Effacement Policy” in Colonial Censorship**

The “effacement policy”—the censorship authority's instructions to eliminate any visible traces of censorship from the reviewed material—provides an important indicator for the changing nature of Japanese colonial power vis-à-vis censorship. Whereas the regime in the 1920s favored visible traces of censorship as a display of its authority, the year 1930 marked a clear shift toward erasure, which sought to remove such signs of state intervention.

Pak Hŏnho (2005) has examined the mindset of the Korean intelligentsia in their struggle against censorship in the 1920s, with a special emphasis on privately owned newspapers. Persecution by the colonial regime had given these papers some measure of recognition, leading to their self-identification as organs of nationalistic resistance. Ironically, this led to more centralized organization of Japanese colonial power, and ultimately, to the perpetuation of centralized colonial rule. Pak argues that “newspapers that were delivered with the omission of editorials and other articles are already more than just paper; they are powerful symbols of the presence and violence of colonial power.” He adds that “censorship confirms the enduring authority of colonial power and contributes to blocking

decentralization of power. . . . Chosŏn's colonial population gazed at the censorship of its print media and thereby internalized the reality of colonial power" (222-24).

Such dramatic and exhibitionist forms of censorship were deliberately phased out in the 1930s in favor of effacement. Ch'oe Kyŏnghŭi's (2005) analysis of poet Shim Hun's censored, but unpublished *Collected Poems* shows that effacement was closely connected with the "warning system," according to which publishers were admonished to change or delete particular expressions before publication without administrative sanctions. Most relevant for this study, Ch'oe shows how techniques such as the use of brick letters, *fuseji* (concealment),<sup>3</sup> dotted lines, blackened lines, and blank spaces were replaced in the mid-1930s by the complete erasure of censorship traces.

In a similar vein, Han Mansu (2007) stresses that censorship in colonial Korea made a significant transition, from self-revealing to self-concealing. According to Han, by the 1930s censors were confident that Chosŏn's writers, publishers, and readers had become more accepting of censorship, and explicit displays of it were no longer necessary. Therefore, the censors, by releasing previously secret censorship standards, sought to "create the appearance that the censored were producing discourse which adhered to publicly available guidelines and therefore voluntarily allowed themselves to be co-opted by colonial power" (203-4). Han's argument is derived from existing studies and the general political context, foregoing a detailed examination of specific texts and records. Nevertheless, his work is useful as a departure point for opening our discussion of the historical emergence of the effacement policy.

Existing work on effacement has primarily dealt with literary works or circumstantial evidence, not with newspapers. Yet, the specific manifestation of censorship authority may have differed based on the type of media. Consequently, it is necessary to look more closely at how traces of censorship appeared and disappeared in the case of newspapers. If effacement was normalized in the 1930s, the precise ways to obliterate empty space differed over time; such changes in the censored material directly testify to the changing nature of colonial censorship authority.

### Methodology

Japanese censorship in colonial Korea lasted for several decades and underwent significant changes during this period. Focusing on Korean-language private newspapers, we examine the years between 1920 and 1936,<sup>4</sup> dividing them into three distinct periods of censorship: 1920-1927, when there was no systematic recording of censorship; 1928-1931, the first years covered by the *Monthly Report*; and 1931-1936, when the *Monthly Report* was more established, and the policy of

<sup>3</sup> Brick letters are the rectangles that appear when pieces of type are flipped in the printing racks so that their blank faces are printed instead of letters. *Fuseji* means to conceal a letter by using specific characters such as X.

<sup>4</sup> Korean private newspapers were first allowed in 1920, but faced severe restrictions following the publishing of a newspaper with a photo of a Korean athlete who had won a gold medal in the 1936 Berlin Olympics with the Japanese flag on his shirt erased.

effacement became widespread.<sup>5</sup> This chronological division of the years 1920 to 1936 into three eras covers the entire period of Korean private newspapers that were censored during the colonial period.

A range of auxiliary documentation is available for analysis besides the *Monthly Report*; indeed, many such records have been classified in detail by Chŏng Kŭnsik (2009). He divides texts for the study of censorship into materials that discuss censorship, and materials that show it. The former are predominantly found in records created by censorship authorities; the latter include primary traces of censorship in published texts, as well as secondary traces, decontextualized from their original publication.

Chŏng Kŭnsik's classification, designed for all censored media, requires some adaptation for the medium of the newspaper. Surviving evidence features very little primary evidence—that is, original copies where the censor has struck out offending material with a red pen. It must also be remembered that newspapers, unlike magazines or books, often had numerous editions. On this basis, we have classified primary texts into the following categories: (1) Original primary texts, such as a galley proof, prior to deletion by censorship; (2) Censored primary texts where parts of the text have been deleted due to censorship; and (3) Detached primary text, which is the actual content removed by censorship sans the remainder of the newspaper text. To give concrete examples, if an article featured a photograph that was removed by the censors for anti-colonial sentiment, the copy of the newspaper page with the photograph intact would constitute the original primary text; the final published page missing the photograph, the censored primary text; and the photograph itself would be the detached primary text. Respectively, the data we use are (1) archives maintained by the newspaper companies themselves; (2) microfilm archives held by Seoul National University; and (3) collected publications, such as the *Compilation of Articles from Seized Korean Newspapers* (諺文新聞差押記事輯錄) published by the Book Department of the Police Bureau. In addition, we have also collected secondary texts in the form of monthly and annual reports published by the censorship authority, above all the *Monthly Report*.

An initial review of censored newspaper texts found that there were discrepancies between the numbers of recorded cases of censorship and the numbers of actual instances of censorship. If censorship practices and records were perfect, and if newspaper censorship policy was consistent, these numbers should

<sup>5</sup> The censorship bureau made no official mention of the “effacement policy,” but on March 12, 1931, *Dong-A Ilbo* ran an article indicating that they were instructed to ensure that censored passages did not yield any “blank space.” The article discussed negotiations between prominent magazines and the colonial government over relaxing various restrictions on publication. Objections were raised against three main sets of restrictions, as seen in the following quote from that article:

“Lift the ban on substitutions:

Erased areas cannot currently be left as ‘blank space,’ struck out or substituted with symbols, leading to discrepancies in the text; this should be addressed. Furthermore, the rule that text of which parts have been censored in one particular month must be run that month virtually renders the running of magazines impossible; this rule too should be abolished, and censorship should be completed as quickly as possible” (*Dong-A Ilbo*, March 12, 1931).

be equal, or at least the difference between them should also be consistent; but this was not the case. We will explore the possible reasons behind this discrepancy through our analysis.

In cases where the original primary texts survived, it is possible to identify precisely what was actually censored, with or without records. Given that this is generally not the case, the study takes two approaches to identify discrepancies. The first is to begin from the *Monthly Report*, and examine the newspaper texts corresponding to the recorded instances of censorship. The second is to check newspaper texts for instances of censorship that were not recorded in the *Monthly Report*. In the case of the former, we exclude the first period (1920-1927), given the lack of a *Monthly Report* to act as a comparison. For cases of “effacement,” the key question is whether and how the effacement of censorship traces actually occurred in the corresponding newspaper page. In the second approach, we examined cases of actual censorship from all three periods. Altogether, this process shows how comprehensive the records of censorship actually were.

In terms of the individual pages and texts, we selected a sample of one to two years from each period, and then reviewed all of the *Monthly Report*'s records and all of the newspaper pages for those years. The sampled years were selected in consideration of factors such as the presence of (recorded) censored items and the current availability of the text (such as the original primary text). For the first period, we focused on the two major newspapers, *Chosun Ilbo* (朝鮮日報) and *Dong-A Ilbo* (東亞日報), which were licensed in 1920. However, in 1920 and 1921, these newspapers were not regularly published because of frequent suspensions and logistical problems. Therefore, the analysis considered copies printed in 1922 and 1923. Since only a few pages of *Chosun Ilbo* remain intact from October 1921 to November 1922, we pay more attention to 1923, while consulting pages published in 1922 as a reference. As a result, we have identified two exemplary pages that we review here in relation to the existing original primary text.

As for the second era, we examined how articles labeled as targets for “erasure” and “seizure” in the *Monthly Report*'s records were presented in the actual newspapers. “Erasure” and “seizure” were two major administrative sanctions imposed on Korean newspapers. An article that suffered “erasure” was deleted but the rest of the issue could be published. On the other hand, the entire issue was confiscated when an article was the target of “seizure.” The newspaper company then expunged the suppressed article, leaving the space blank, and then submitted the issue to be censored again. In this paper, a “seized article” indicates an article that caused confiscation of a particular issue.

A review of 25 extant issues of the *Monthly Report* from September 1928 to December 1930 found that 34% of the recorded sanctions—that is, 28 out of 81 seizures and 20 out of 62 erasures—were implemented by the newspapers. We have selected one illustrative example to discuss in greater detail in this study. Combining record-centric and page-centric approaches, we also examined the entirety of *Donga-Ilbo* and *Chosun-Ilbo* papers in December 1928, December 1929, and December 1930. Within this sample, we discovered 45 cases where some form of censorship could be discerned; but just 10 of those instances, or 22%, had

**Table 1.** Specific Pages Selected for Detailed Analysis

Period	Case	Date & Page No.	Record in the <i>Monthly Report</i>	Record in the <i>Compilation of Seized Articles</i>	Original Primary Text Availability	Censored Primary Text	Verification of Pre-Censorship Original
First (1920-1927)	1	Jan. 19, 1922. <i>Dong-A</i> no. 1	N/A	No	No	Partially Erased Article	Impossible
	2	Dec. 7, 1922 <i>Dong-A</i> no. 3.	N/A	No	Yes	Erased Editorial	Possible
Second (1928-1931)	3	Dec. 14, 1929. <i>Dong-A</i> no. 2	“Seizure”	Yes	Yes	Erased Article	Possible
	4	Dec. 23, 1929 <i>Dong-A</i> no. 1.	None	No	Yes	Two Erased Articles	Possible
Third (1931-1936)	5	Oct. 31, 1934 <i>Dong-A</i> no. 1 (Possibly Oct. 16, 1934).	“Erasure”	No	Yes	Evening First Edition: Erased Article / Second Edition: Traces of Erasure Disappear	Possible
	6	Dec. 28, 1934 <i>Dong-A</i> no. 2.	None	No	No	Morning First Edition: Erased Article / Second Edition: Traces of Erasure Disappear	Impossible

corresponding records in the *Monthly Report*. Again, we have selected an example of a case to examine what was erased in the paper but was not recorded in the *Monthly Report*. In addition, for reviewing newspaper pages, we applied a triangulation of evidence, using original, censored, and detached primary texts, as described above.

Since the number of seized articles decreased sharply in the third period, we focus primarily on erased articles and examine the *Monthly Report* and newspaper pages published from October 1934 to December 1935. We excluded the preceding months, as the *Monthly Report* did not record detailed information about newspapers to which erasure orders were given until October 1934. Here, we selected two examples, which again, demonstrate the record-centric and page-centric approaches. The above table details the selected examples.

In the next section, we explore the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the *Monthly Report* by comparing censorship records and corresponding newspaper pages.

### **The Beginning of Censorship Practice: The Absence of Systemic Recording**

There was no official record for censorship before 1928, when the *Monthly Report* was first published, with the exception of the *Newspaper Survey* (新聞紙要覽, 1927) and the *Newspaper and Publication Essentials* (新聞紙出版物要項, 1928). These annual reports did provide an overview of the regulation environment, but do not provide any information about deleted or confiscated items. The *Compilation of Articles from Seized Korean Newspapers* (created in the 1930s, hereafter *Compilation*) contains some details about articles that caused impoundment of Korean newspapers from 1920 to 1927, including the date of confiscation, the title of the newspaper running the confiscated article, and the content, in part or in whole, of the censored article. However, we cannot approach censorship-recording practices with this record alone, because seizure was only one of the many sanctions that were imposed on Korean newspapers. In short, there is no systematic and official

record of censorship in colonial Korea during the early to mid-1920s; we must therefore rely on traces of censorship in the newspapers themselves.

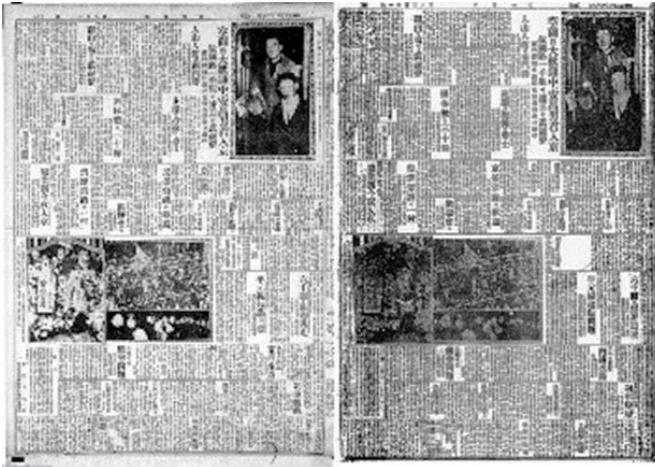
The microfilm archives of *Chosun Ilbo* and *Dong-A Ilbo* published in 1922 and 1923 show only a few articles that were actually erased from newspaper pages. The *Compilation* records sixteen seized articles of *Dong-A Ilbo* in 1922; however, only nine erased articles have been found. The situation becomes even more complicated since only three of these nine actual cases have corresponding records. A similar pattern unfolds with respect to 1923. The numbers of seizures imposed on *Dong-A Ilbo* and *Chosun Ilbo* were sixteen and twenty-three, respectively, but the number of pages that had empty spaces or showed traces of erasure were eleven and fourteen. Among the deletions, only four of the former and two of the latter were classified as confiscations in the *Compilation*.

In the 1920s, the primary instruments that the colonial state used to remove text from newspapers were erasure and seizure orders. We have no access to the complete number of erasures before 1928; the sheer lack of detail regarding erasure orders reflects the general lack of systemization during this period. We can obtain some idea, however, of the scope of censorship through seizures, which were better catalogued in later records, such as the *Monthly Report*. One finding is that the number of seized articles, as found in the records, is *much larger* than the number of “blank spaces” in the newspapers. This implies that the numbers of both erasure and seizure orders were significantly higher than the evidence found in the newspapers would indicate.

It is to be noted that being marked for seizure did not mean that the article would not be included in newspapers that were actually distributed to the public. Newspaper censorship was typically conducted during printing, so some copies and editions were distributed before deletion could occur. In practice, the colonial authority could not boast complete control over whether each newspaper would comply with the sanctions or not.

Even if deletion did occur, the original text—the detached primary text—can be found in the *Compilation*. For example, the article titled “Seditious Incidents in Three Locations” was entirely erased from the second page of the *Chosun Ilbo* on September 5, 1923, but can be found in the *Compilation*. In another case, a part of the article “A Professional Baseball Team Comes to Seoul Tonight,” published on the third page of *Dong-A Ilbo* on December 7, 1922, was removed, while the *Compilation* does not record it as a target of erasure or seizure. Thankfully, in this case, the original primary text provides us with information on what was removed. The censors had banned the names of the players on the Korean soldiers’ team, who were to play an American professional baseball team (Figure 1). On the other hand, the front page of *Dong-A Ilbo*, January 19, 1922, shows an entire editorial as blank space on the top (Figure 2). This would have attracted the attention and curiosity of readers; unfortunately, without the original primary text or records in the *Compilation*, we have no way of discovering what it might have said.

These examples illustrate what was stated earlier—the lack of systematic and official records of censorship during much of the 1920s. Official records would have to wait until the Book Department’s formation in 1926, and its first annual



**Figure 1.** The deleted content in the censored primary text (right) can be compared with the original (left). *Dong-A Ilbo*, Dec. 7, 1922.



**Figure 2.** The deleted editorial at the top of the page cannot be recovered. *Dong-A Ilbo*, Jan. 19, 1922.

report in 1927. Even these early reports included only the number of administrative sanctions; detailed information would come later with the first *Monthly Report* in 1928. These problems of securing historical evidence suggest that it is virtually impossible to draw firm conclusions about the reality of censorship in the 1920s. For us, the first period must rather be characterized by *the absence of the official record* itself. The next section will show how the picture changed with the arrival of the *Monthly Report*.

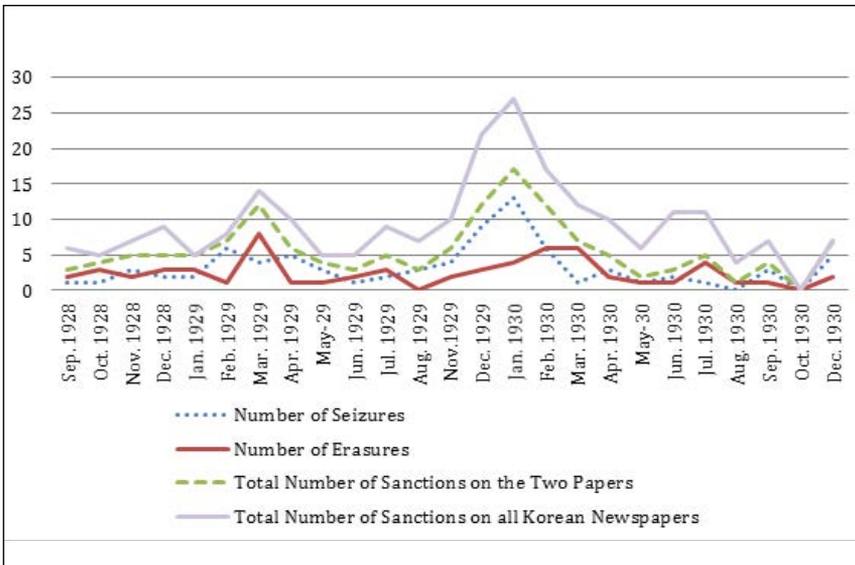
**The Early Years of the *Monthly Report*: Systematic, but Defective Recording**

Beginning in September 1928, the *Monthly Report* began to provide information on current publications and tabulated the numbers of administrative sanctions; it also provided a list of publications targeted with orders, summaries of listed publications, and related information. In particular, the list of disapproved, seized, and erased publications and their summaries show more clearly what was censored and how it was censored, including the titles and content of the articles in question, cities of publication, and the publishers' names. The *Monthly Report* finally provides details on erased publications that the annual reports and other publications do not contain.

Table 2 shows the number of seizures and erasures imposed on *Dong-A Ilbo* and *Chosun Ilbo* between September 1928 and December 1930. The graph shows a sharp upturn in the total number of administrative sanctions around March 1929 and January 1930. These are attributable to the Communist Party Incident trials in March 1929 and the student protests for independence in Kwangju between November 1929 and early 1930. The latter resulted in a 138-day suspension of the *Dong-A Ilbo* for allegedly instigating the protests; this is reflected in a sharp downturn in the graph throughout 1930. Such flashpoints of unrest and resistance provoked periods of tighter censorship. Because measures such as erasure, seizure, or even suspension had a significant economic impact on these private newspapers, they would be compelled to temporarily moderate their anti-Japanese rhetoric.

In order to grasp the characteristics of the censorship records, we will now compare the censored content, as recorded in the *Monthly Report*, with the actual

**Table 2.** Seizures and erasures against *Dong-A Ilbo* and *Chosun Ilbo* as recorded in the *Monthly Report*



Note: No. 13, 14 (Sep., Oct. 1929) and No. 27 (Nov. 1930) were not found.

pages in which these articles were run. First, the *Monthly Report* contains a number of errors. For example, it wrongly reported the *Dong-A Ilbo* article (October 10, 1928), “Director of Police Bureau visits Ch’a Ch’ŏnja” (車天子, a leader of a new religion) as “Director of Police Bureau visits Tong Ch’ŏnja 東天子” (no. 2, October 1928). Similarly, the phrase “366th labor dispute” in an erased article of *Chosun Ilbo* (March 23, 1929) appeared as “336 times” in the *Monthly Report* (no. 7, March 1929). This may be a consequence of the censors’ hectic schedule, as the Book Department had to publish the *Monthly Report* every month while they conducted an inspection of many publications. In addition, the *Monthly Report* was written by hand, thereby increasing the likelihood of such errors. All of this means that the possibility of mistakes was real for every record that we consider.

Second, we should also remember that the *Monthly Report* recorded summaries of articles, and not their full content. These summaries noted the essential elements of the sanctioned articles, but were often limited to the article’s title or a very short description; such summaries did not reflect the actual size or importance of these articles in the newspapers. For instance, the entire print run of the *Dong-A Ilbo* and *Chosun Ilbo* for December 8, 1929 was heavily censored due to their coverage of the Kwangju student independence protests, but the *Monthly Report* only included the briefest of statements. The *Dong-A Ilbo*’s coverage was summarized as “60 policemen were dispatched on the morning of the 7th, mounted policemen also stationed at key spots,” and a curt “same as above” sufficed for the *Chosun Ilbo* (no. 16, January 1930). Such summaries suggest a rather routine and insignificant act of censorship, but a glance at the actual newspapers yields a rather different impression. The *Chosun Ilbo* lost approximately one third of its page space, while the *Dong-A Ilbo* lost a photograph and almost half of its text. This, rather than the *Monthly Report*, demonstrates the seriousness with which the Japanese authorities responded to the student protests.

As we have already mentioned, not all seized or erased items were actually deleted from the pages. Many were recorded as censored in the *Monthly Report*, but microfilm archives show that the content survived in at least some editions of the printed newspapers. Ultimately, these cases testify to the incomplete nature of colonial censorship measures, partly due to the logistics of censoring the daily print runs and multiple editions unique to the newspaper medium. For instance, the microfilm version of the *Dong-A Ilbo*, December 14, 1929, shows partially erased text on the upper right side of the page (Figure 3, left pane). This particular article had the text physically scraped off the stereoplate. The importance the editors placed on the article is indicated by its placement on the right-hand side of the page, which in traditional vertical, right-to-left script most readily attracts the reader’s eye. The *Monthly Report* summarizes this article as follows:

Summary of Article

Arrest of prominent citizens from the religious, social, and other spheres (Monthly Report, No. 16, January 1930) (Figure 3, right pane)

The *Monthly Report* tells us that the erasure occurred as a result of a seizure



Figure 3. Triangulating evidence: Microfilm (left), the original primary text (middle), record in the *Monthly Report* (right). *Dong-A Ilbo*, Dec. 14, 1929.



Figure 4. Discrepancies between record and practice: Microfilm (left), original primary text (middle), record of the *Monthly Report* (right). *Dong-A Ilbo*, Dec. 23, 1929.

order, but beyond this, it is almost impossible to discern the actual content of the article. Only after cross-referencing it with the original primary text posted in the *Dong-A Ilbo's* archives (Figure 3, middle pane) is a reconstruction possible. In addition to the title that the *Monthly Report* mentioned above, it was also subtitled “Police Suddenly Tense on the 13th; Arrested Suspects Detained in Police Department and Chongno Police Station; Details of Incident under Complete Secrecy.” We can also now confirm the use of larger fonts to denote the significance of the story. The article discussed the arrest of thirty individuals by the Kyōnggi Police Department and the Chongno Police Station, mostly belonging to social organizations such as the Association for Korean Education and the Sin’ganhoe (新幹會), the well-known movement that sought to unify nationalists and socialists. There were also religious affiliates of Buddhism and Ch’ōndogyo. Twenty-three names of arrested individuals were printed in a large font, as well. This example demonstrates the importance of triangulating original, censored, and detached

primary texts in order to obtain a full picture of what was censored and how.

Another case is the December 23, 1929 front page of the *Dong-A Ilbo*. The microfilm of the censored primary text shows that two articles were censored (Figure 4, left pane). The upper right article, covering four columns under the title “Salvation Army Christmas Kettle,” has its final portion removed, while the middle left article is entirely erased, including the title. The point of interest here is that neither of these deletions were recorded in the *Monthly Report*. The original primary text tells us that the erased portion of the first article contained criticism of the Japanese Governor-General of Korea, who was described as praising the Salvation Army’s charity work in words only, while granting lavish bonuses to his officials (Figure 4, middle pane). The left middle article was titled “Japan’s Chosŏn Policy,” and relayed a critical editorial from the English version of the *Osaka Mainichi* newspaper. It is apparent that the two articles were censored for their rather direct criticism of the colonial regime. However, the lack of records means it is impossible to know what sanctions or further punishments were applied. These examples also prove conclusively that the *Monthly Report*, for whatever reason, failed to record all of the censors’ sanctions.

Some of the unrecorded seized articles were found instead in the *Compilation*. For instance, the article “Harmful Effects of Police Policies,” from *Dong-A Ilbo* (Nov. 29, 1928), was recorded as seized in the *Compilation* (1932, *Dong-A*, 497) but is missing in the *Monthly Report*. From September 1928 to December 1930, seventeen similar cases were found. Given that the *Compilation* was published later, and that the numbers of annual administrative sanctions presented in this record are corroborated by other annual reports, it is reasonable to assume that these were valid and known reports that were nevertheless omitted from the *Monthly Report*. A review of all published pages of the *Dong-A Ilbo* and *Chosun Ilbo* in September 1929 shows that there were, respectively, fifteen and eight articles that were erased but had no corresponding records in the *Monthly Report*. Clearly, the actual number of censored items ran much higher than those recorded or reported in the *Monthly Report*.

In conclusion, the early years of the *Monthly Report*—from September 1928 to December 1930—featured numerous errors and omissions regarding actual sanctions. The examples discussed in this section show that the *Monthly Report* is, in many ways, not a comprehensive record of the censorship of its time. If the first period is defined by an absence of systematic recording, the second period is characterized by an increasingly systematic, if defective, effort at censorship by the colonial authorities.

### **The “Effacement Policy”: More Systematic, but Still Imperfect Recording**

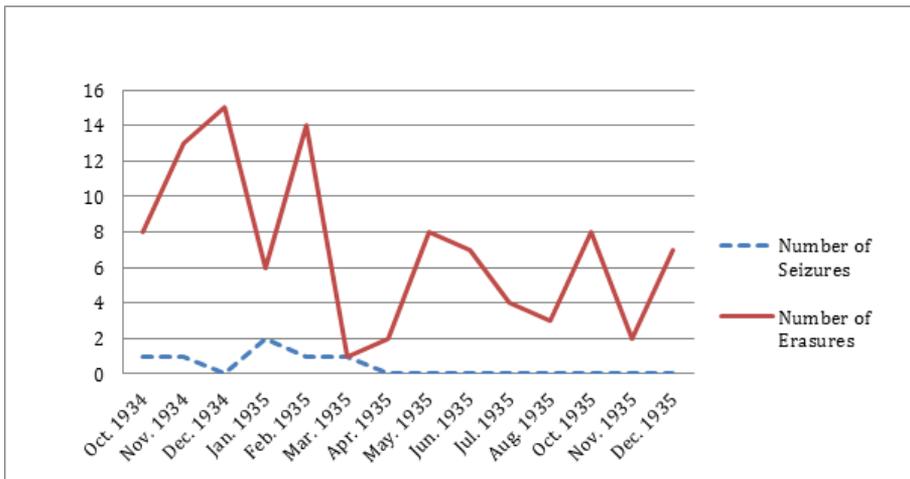
Since their very beginnings, Korean private newspapers from the colonial period contained empty spaces that are traces of censorship. Throughout the 1920s, these spaces unintentionally exposed the intervention of colonial power in media production. According to Kyeong-Hee Choi (2005), the authorities had shown little regard for these traces before; however, around 1929 they began to push for the removal of such evidence. Her argument is based on 1) the reduction of such traces

in the newspapers; 2) the substitution of the term “omission” for “erasure”; and 3) the shift from “deemed to infringe on regulations” to “unavoidable circumstances.” Most importantly, a new set of unofficial guidelines was issued, with the following instructions to publishers: “Avoid the use of symbols or X marks [as substitutes for original text]”; “Avoid leaving blank spaces after erasures”; and “Do not indicate content has been deleted.”

Choi’s study, however, examined literary works and magazines, and it is not clear whether the same kind of effacement occurred in newspapers. She does give an example of a March 12, 1931 *Dong-A Ilbo* article, but it pertained to influential magazines in Seoul. Where magazines and books could be censored before printing began, censors inspected newspapers during the printing process; this meant that effacement logistically could not work in the same way. Previous techniques of erasure could be performed by scratching out the offending material from the stereotype; for effacement, however, the entire plate had to be reformatted and produced anew, imposing significant costs on the publisher. This section examines this more complicated issue of effacement in newspapers after 1931.

In order to study how administrative sanctions such as seizure or erasure were reflected on newspaper pages in the effacement period, we should first turn to the corresponding records in the *Monthly Report*. Because seizures had become very uncommon for Korean private newspapers (Table 3), we focus on cases of erasure. Given that the *Monthly Report* is scant on details of erased articles between January 1931 and September 1934, we examine recorded cases from October 1934 to December 1935. This sample was then analyzed for the impact of the “effacement policy” on traces of censorship. The numbers of seizures and erasures imposed on the *Dong-A Ilbo* and *Chosun Ilbo* are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Numbers of seizures and erasures for *Dong-A Ilbo* and *Chosun Ilbo*, as recorded in the *Monthly Report*.



Note: The issue of the *Monthly Report*, containing the number of Seizures and Erasures for *Dong-A Ilbo* and *Chosun Ilbo*, published in September 1935 was not found.



**Figure 5.** Examples of “effacement”: The front page of the evening edition of *Dong-A Ilbo*, Oct. 31, 1934. The original primary text (left), the first evening edition (middle), and the second evening edition (right).

The decline of seizure numbers, as can be seen above, is striking. Yet, the numbers of erasures, with a high of fifteen, are sufficient to undertake an analysis. We again compared the records in the *Monthly Report* with the newspaper pages that were actually published. Between October 1934 and February 1935, when the numbers of erasures were particularly high, we find that the scale of erasures varied greatly—from as little as a single word to an entire article, sometimes censoring a few words in the title or a specific paragraph. For instance, “Policeman Flees to Home, is Besieged Ferociously,” published in *Chosun Ilbo* on April 2, 1934, or “Tasa Island’s Railroad Problem” on May 4 of the same year both omit only a single word, compared with the original primary text. Another key change concerns the effectiveness of the censorship. Whereas the second period saw many cases where articles were recorded as censored, but nevertheless were published intact, such cases are much rarer in the third period. This suggests that both the recording and implementation of censorship by the colonial authority had become more comprehensive.

Let us take a closer look at Figure 5 with different versions of the front page of the *Dong-A Ilbo* published on October 31, 1934. The *Monthly Report* labels one photograph (upper center) for erasure, with the note “Photograph, with caption Japanese, British, and American submarines—keep or discard?” (no. 75, November 1934). The censored primary text on microfilm shows clear traces of the photograph and caption in their original position, erased beyond recognition by applying a roller over the stereoplate (center pane). However, the second evening edition (right pane) has removed this space altogether, reformatting the page to eliminate all outward signs of censorship. An even clearer case is the second page of the *Dong-A Ilbo* on October 16, 1934. In this case, the *Monthly Report* provides relatively detailed descriptions of the three offending areas (no. 75, November 1934). Microfilm archives show that the first evening edition, again, features traces of removal, with the erased portions corresponding to the records on the *Monthly*

*Report*. The second evening edition eliminates these blank spaces, filling them in with alternative content. One may speculate that this was the newspaper's decision, independent of censorship, perhaps to protect its aesthetic integrity. However, given the fact that those same newspapers had been content to feature blank spaces for years, and the great costs and inconveniences such reformatting would have incurred, it seems most likely that this was a product of a strategy of effacement imposed by the government.

If effacement in Korean private newspapers can be established as a historical fact, this has important implications for our understanding of colonial censorship. It shows that where colonial rule had previously exerted its authority through overt displays of censorship, intentional or otherwise, it had now begun to consciously conceal its intervention in the censored texts. Furthermore, since the final (reformatted) editions of the papers would have to be checked again by the censors, this strategy suggests a more efficient and comprehensive enforcement of censorship. Kyeong-Hee Choi (2005) also argues that effacement went hand in hand with the intensification of censorship. Indeed, this third period sees very few censored articles survive in the printed pages.

However, there remain cases in which articles were actually inspected, but not recorded in the *Monthly Report*. For example, the second page of *Dong-A Ilbo* (first morning edition, December 28, 1934) features a text-box in the bottom right corner with deleted images and words. We have neither the original primary text nor any record of it in the *Monthly Report*. Instead, the same space is filled again in the second morning edition under the title "Special New Year's Supplement: A Famous Painting—A Gift to Our Readers." The article had displayed the said painting, with the explanation that free copies would be offered to regular subscribers. It is impossible to confirm what, if anything, had changed from the original content and why the change had taken place.

Much evidence suggests that Japanese censorship of Korean private newspapers became more comprehensive in the 1930s. However, recording errors persisted up to the mid-1930s at least, suggesting that the censorship system was still struggling with problems of implementation and compliance. Effacement as a strategy, too, was necessarily incomplete. Second editions of newspapers eliminated blank spaces for the most part, but in many smaller cases, traditional methods of erasure were retained. Traces of censorship proved difficult to eradicate altogether.

## Conclusion

Among the various records left behind by the censorship bureau during Japan's colonial rule, the *Monthly Report* is unparalleled as a historical source. It was published regularly and frequently, and contains detailed information on erased newspaper articles that other texts lack. Nevertheless, any research and historical argument made on the basis of the *Monthly Report* must consider its accuracy and comprehensiveness—and where it falls short. As discussed above, the *Monthly Report* was not published prior to 1928, and, particularly in its early years, it contained various typographical errors and omitted cases. From 1931 onward, censorship became more systematic and comprehensive, culminating in a more complex

strategy of effacement. Nevertheless, the enduring presence of empty spaces testifies to the difficulties the censors faced. Moreover, the issues of accuracy and comprehensiveness persisted throughout the *Monthly Report*'s entire publication.

To assess the value of the *Monthly Report* as historical evidence, this study compared its records with the newspaper pages that were actually published to verify their accuracy and detect any differences. Based on the information this analysis revealed, we would like to conclude by raising two significant issues. The first is the possible reasons behind the *Monthly Report*'s errors and omissions. There is no clear answer as to who produced the *Monthly Report*, and what procedures were followed. However, we can consider the logistical specificity of the newspaper medium to have played a significant role. The fact that newspapers had to be censored daily, often during the actual printing stage, made perfect censorship impractical; censorship decisions and their technical implementations had to be made extremely quickly.<sup>6</sup> There was no question of a lengthy back-and-forth of manuscripts and edits that would typically characterize the "restraint system," the censorship of books or magazines before publication. Censorship orders for newspapers tended to be delivered by phone calls or errand boys. Another possible reason for the imperfect nature of censorship is that the *Monthly Report* itself took some time to establish its standard protocols. The *Monthly Report* was probably not borne out of the Chosŏn Censorship Bureau's internal needs, but produced because of an external demand from the Japanese imperial government in order to coordinate its activities in the other colonies and domestic Japan.

The other question is the broader one of the colonial regime and its exercise of power. We have discussed before how the stark presence of evidence of censorship served to make colonial power visible, to make the reader feel the reality of surveillance. However, the question remains as to how intentional and strategic the leaving of these traces was on the part of the colonial government. No clear statement of such intent survives in the historical record. On the contrary, one might speculate that the presence of traces in the 1920s was unintentional; after all, the only clearly premeditated action we know the censorship authority to have taken was the move toward effacement in the 1930s. This question of intention relates more widely to the general character of colonial power in that period. After its forceful occupation of Korea in 1910, imperial Japan had declared martial law and outright prohibited Korean-language private newspapers. Shifting gears to cultural governance in the 1920s, they permitted but closely watched newspapers such as the *Dong-A Ilbo* and *Chosun Ilbo*. This new policy was in response to protests such as the March First Movement, which persuaded Japan that cultural and ideological subjugation was also necessary in order to produce a compliant population. Hence, Korean-language private newspapers became a scene of constant struggle between Japanese and Korean interests, with the colonial administration wielding the tool of censorship for its own ends. In this context, the blank spaces and other traces of censorship unintentionally revealed the work of colonial power, and also made visible the newspapers' struggle against that power.

<sup>6</sup> For more on this process, see Minju Yi (2010).

If the traces made colonial power visible, it also made resistance to it, and its own limitations, visible as well. When effacement became standardized in the 1930s, the censorship authority was, in fact, able to achieve a more unified appearance, masking this daily struggle.

**GLOSSARY**

Ch'öndogyo	天道教	Kwangju	光州
Chongno	鍾路	Kyönggi	京畿
<i>Chosön Publication Monthly Police Report</i>	朝鮮出版警察月報	<i>Minsöngbo</i>	民聲報
<i>Chosun Ilbo</i>	朝鮮日報	<i>Osaka Mainichi</i>	大阪毎日
<i>Dong-A Ilbo</i>	東亞日報	Shim Hun	沈熏
<i>fuseji</i>	伏字	Sin'ganhoe	新幹會
<i>Kwangbun</i>	狂奔	Tasa Island	多獅島
		Yöm Sangsöp	廉想涉

**REFERENCES**

Choi, Kyeong-Hee 2005. "Regime of Self-Effacement: A Shift of Censorship Policy from the 1920s and the 1930s." Paper presented at the ICAS 4 Conference, Shanghai, August.

Chöng, Künsik. 2009. "Taeman ch'ulp'an kyöngch'al kwa kömyöl teksüt'ü—Chosön kwa üi pigyo rül wihayö" 대만 출판경찰과 검열텍스트—조선과의 비교를 위하여 [The publication police in Taiwan and censorship texts: for the purpose of comparison with Korea]. Paper presented at the International Conference of Academy of East Asian Studies, Seoul, February 7.

\_\_\_\_\_. 2010. "Chosön ch'ulp'an kyöngch'al wölbo üi pigyo yön'gu" 조선출판경찰월보의 비교연구 [A comparative analysis of the *Chosön Publication Monthly Police Report*]. Paper presented at the International Conference of Academy of East Asian Studies, Seoul, January 22.

Chöng, Künsik and Ch'oe, Kyöng hüi. 2006. "Tosögwä üi sölch'i wa singminji ch'ulpan kyöngch'al üi ch'egyehwa" 도서관의 설치와 식민지 출판경찰의 체계화 [The Book Department and the systematization of Japan's Publication Police in Korea, 1926-1929]. *Hanguk munhak yön'gu* 30: 103-69.

Chösen Sötokufu Kanbō Bunshoka (朝鮮總督府官房文書課). 1927. *Chösen no genron to sesö* 朝鮮の言論と世相 [The Press and World of Chosön]. Keijō: Chösen Sötokufu.

Han, Kihyöng. 2009. "Kündae siga üi puronsöng kwa singminji kömyöl - 『Onmon

- shinbun no shiika* 諺文新聞の詩歌』(1931) ūi punsŏk” 근대시가의 불온성과 식민지 검열—『諺文新聞의詩歌』(1931)의 분석 [The “seditiousness” of modern poetry and censorship in colonial Korea: an analysis of *Poetry in Korean-Language Newspapers*]. *Sanghŏ hakpo* 25: 115-51.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2010. “Puron munsŏ ūi ch'angch'ul kwa singminji ch'ulp'an kyŏngch'al” 불온문서의 창출과 식민지 출판경찰 [Inventing “seditious documents” and the Publication Police in colonial Korea]. *Taedong munhwa yŏn'gu* 72: 447-90.
- Han, Mansu. 2007. “Singminji sigi kŏmyŏl ūi tŭrŏnaem kwa sumgim” 식민지 검열의 드러냄과 숨김 [The revealing and the concealing of censorship in colonial Korea]. *Paedal mal* 41: 203-31.
- Keimukyoku Toshoka (警務局圖書課). September 1928-December 1935. *Chŏsen shuppan keisatsu geppŏ* 朝鮮出版警察月報 [The Chosŏn Publication Monthly Police Report]. Keijō: Keimukyoku.
- Keimukyoku Toshoka (警務局圖書課). 1932. *Onmon shinbun sashiosae kiji shŭroku* 諺文新聞差押記事輯錄 [Compilation of Articles from Seized Korean Newspapers]. Keijō: Keimukyoku.
- Kŏmyŏl Yŏn'guhoe [Censorship Research Association]. 2011. *Singminji kŏmyŏl, chedo, teksŭt'ŭ, silch'ŏn* 식민지 검열, 제도·텍스트·실천 [Colonial censorship: institution-text-practice]. Seoul: Somyŏng.
- Pak, Hŏnho. 2005. “Munhwa chŏngch'igi sinmun ūi wisang kwa pan'gŏmyŏl ūi naejŏk nollŭ: 1920nyŏntae min'ganji rŭl chungsim ūro” 문화정치기 신문의 위상과 반검열의 내적 논리: 1920년대 민간지를 중심으로 [The position of newspapers in ‘the Cultural Politics’ period and the internal logic of anti-censorship: focusing on Korean-language private newspapers in the 1920s]. *Taedong munhwa yŏn'gu* 50: 199-259.
- Pak, Hŏnho and Son Sŏngjun. 2010. “Han'guk kŭndae munhak kŏmyŏl yŏn'gu ūi t'onggyejŏk chŏpkŭn ūl wihan siron” 한국 근대문학 검열 연구의 통계적 접근을 위한 시론 [Comments on a statistical approach to the study of the censorship of modern Korean literature]. *Oeguk munhak yŏn'gu* 38: 193-224.
- Yi, Hyeryŏng. 2010a. “Singminji kŏmyŏl kwa singminji-jeguk p'yosang—Chosŏn ch'ulp'an kyŏngch'al wŏlbo ūi tasŏt kaji tonggyep'yo ka marhaejunŭn kŏt” 식민지 검열과 식민지제국 표상—조선출판경찰월보의 다섯 가지 통계표가 말해주는 것 [“Colony-Empire” as Japanese Empire self-representation in Japanese censorship in colonial Korea: what five statistical tables of administrative activities on publication in the Publication Police monthly of Korea reveal]. *Taedong munhwa yŏn'gu* 72: 491-534.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2010b. “Kŏmyŏl ūi mimesisŭ—yŏmsangsŏp kwangbun, kŭkhan ūi singminji naerŏtibŭ ro pon yesul ūi kyuch'ik kwa kŏmyŏl” 검열의 미메시스—염상섭 광분, 극한의 내러티브로 본 예술의 규칙과 검열 [Mimesis of censorship: Yŏm Sangsŏp's novel *Madness*, rules and censorship of art as an extreme narrative]. Paper presented at the International Conference of the Academy of East Asian Studies, Seoul, January 22.
- Yi, Minju. 2010. “A Study on Censorship of Korean Private Newspapers during Japanese Colonial Rule.” PhD diss., Seoul National University.
- Yi, Sanggyŏng. 2008. “Chosŏn ch'ulp'an kyŏngch'al wŏlbo e nat'an'an munhak chakpum

- kömyöl yangsang yŏn'gu" 조선출판경찰월보에 나타난 문학작품 검열양상 연구 [A study on the censorship of Korean literature found in *Chosŏn Publication Monthly Police Report*]. *Han'guk kŭndae munhak yŏn'gu* 17: 389-422.
- Yi, Süngil. 2006. "Chosŏn ch'ongdokpu ūi kirok kwalli chŏngchaek kwa singmin t'ongchi" 조선총독부의 기록관리정책과 식민통치 [The recordkeeping policy of the Chosŏn Government General and colonial rule]. Paper presented at the Conference of the Korean Society of Archival Studies, Seoul, December 2006.
- Yu, Chinhüi. 2010. "Singminji kömyöljang ūi hyŏngsŏng kwa kü an ūi pakk—*Chosŏn ch'ulp'an kyŏngch'al wŏlbo* e issŏ China ranŏn met'a pŏmju" 식민지 검열장의 형성과 그 안의 밖—조선출판경찰월보에 있어 지나라는 메타범주 [The outside of the inside in the formation of the colonial censorship field: the metacategory of 'China' in the *Chosŏn Publication Monthly Report*]. *Taedong munhwa yŏn'gu* 72: 417-45.