

Writing “Manchurian-Korean Literature” in the *Mansŏn ilbo*, 1937–1942

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This paper examines the intellectual discourse regarding the place and function of Korean-language writing in Manchuria during the Manchukuo period. I look specifically at several editorials that appeared in the Korean newspaper *Mansŏn ilbo*. These primary sources appeared during the literary zenith of the Manchukuo period between 1937 and 1942, five years mainly characterized by widespread debates about what constituted Manchukuo national culture. I argue that the participation of Korean intellectuals in these debates indicates their desire to be seen as an autonomous group disassociated with the Japanese. The fact that some of the subsequent writing appeared in Chinese translation suggests that it was important for Chinese people as well to see Koreans in a new light. The newspaper articles discussed below show a propensity to change perceptions about Korean belonging in Manchuria through literature and intellectual production. From another perspective, the *Mansŏn ilbo* articles shed light on how Korean intellectuals understood their production value vis-à-vis the nation-building discourses of Manchukuo.

Keywords: *Mansŏn ilbo*, Manchurian-Korean literature, Manchukuo, nation-building, Korean intellectuals

Starting in January 1940, the only Korean-language newspaper in Manchuria, the *Mansŏn ilbo* (Manchuria-Korea news), featured a number of editorials under a short-lived column titled “munhak kŏnsŏl sinjeŭi” 滿洲朝鮮文學建設新提議 (A new proposal to establish Manchurian-Korean literature, hereby referred to as the “New proposal”).¹ As the title suggests, authors endeavored to

1. This article renders quotes from the *Mansŏn ilbo* editorials in *hanja* as opposed to Romanized Korean. The reason for this choice is because, although all English translations are my own, they

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