

A Mushroom Talk: From Natural Delicacy to Colonial Object*

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The *Travelogue from Cheju Island* (韓国濟州嶋旅行日誌; J. *Kankoku Saishūtō ryokō nisshi*; K. *Han'guk Cheju-do yōhaeng ilchi*; hereafter *Travelogue*) consists of four volumes of black-and-white as well as colored ink drawings, along with short written journal entries to explain many of the depicted scenes.¹ The first three volumes portray the author-illustrator's journey with two other men from Tokyo to Shimonoseki, Japan, by train, then to the southern part of the Korean Peninsula and to their destination on Cheju Island (Korea's largest island) by ship, and finally back to Japan via the southern part of the Korean Peninsula. The journey begins on May 10 and ends on September 27 of an unspecified year. Stages of shiitake mushroom cultivation on Cheju Island and views of sightseeing spots elsewhere on the island are illustrated in these three volumes. The fourth volume includes drawings of agricultural implements, kitchen tools, and other ordinary items used by the people of Cheju Island as well as 12 paintings that depict the cycle of barley cultivation.

The year of this travelogue's production is not recorded. However, information from the book enables us to narrow it down to 1909.² First of all, the author and his two companions traveled by the Shimonoseki-Pusan ferryboat (関釜連絡線; J. *Kanpu renrakusen*; K. Kwanbu yōllaksōn), which began service on September 1905 by the private company Sanyō kisen 山陽汽船, though the Japanese national railway authority

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¹ The call number of this book at the Harvard-Yenching Library is TJ 3494.9 4633, and HOLLIS number is 007708053. The entire book is available online:

[https://iif.lib.harvard.edu/manifests/view/drs:44543855\\$1i](https://iif.lib.harvard.edu/manifests/view/drs:44543855$1i)

² Makiko Okamoto at Tsuda Women's University in Tokyo, a specialist in Japanese political history and colonial bureaucracy, provided assistance in determining the date of the book, and I would like to offer my thanks to her.

took over its operation in December 1906.³ The author also notes that the ferry they took was the Egesanmaru (会下山丸; Yekesanmaru in the old pronunciation), which we know was a privately owned boat first introduced for the Hakodate-Aomori line.⁴ Egesanmaru was originally hired for the Shimonoseki-Pusan line in August 1907 as a replacement ship to cover regular ferry boats under repair. Soon it enabled the addition of one round-trip every other day to the regular daily departure.⁵ Since the author's trip began in May, this means that it could not have taken place earlier than 1908.

Second, the author uses such expressions as “return to home country” 歸國 in the June 7 entry, and “国人” for “Japanese,” in contrast to “韓人” for “Koreans” in the June 14 entry and other places. In addition, he calls Korea “韓国” (J. Kankoku; K. Han'guk), which is an abbreviation for Taehan cheguk (大韓帝國 Great Han Empire, 1897–1910). According to Motokazu Matsutani, a historian of Korea at Tohoku Gakuin University, this particular name for Korea appears on official Japanese documents only during the years 1897–1910. During the colonial period (1910–1945), Korea was referred to in Japan as “Chōsen” (朝鮮), while in the postwar period “Kankoku” has been reserved for South Korea. Given the fact that the Japan-Korea Annexation Treaty was signed on August 22, 1910—and that the *Travelogue* ends on September 27 without any mention or hint of annexation, and with a clear understanding of Korea as a separate country from Japan—we can conclude that the author's trip took place in either 1908 or 1909.

The date can be further pinpointed by the fact that in his June 16 entry, the author notes that shiitake mushroom spawn were planted on logs prepared in 1908 (Meiji 41). Finally, the monthly report made by the Government-General of Korea in December

³ “Kanpu sen kako oyobi shorai 関釜線過去及将来” in *Keijo Nippō* 京城日報, December 1, 1912. The article is viewable here. http://www.lib.kobe-u.ac.jp/das/jsp/ja/ContentViewM.jsp?METAID=00100457&TYPE=IMAGE_FILE&POS=1

(accessed on October 7, 2014).

⁴ See <http://nekonote.jp/korea/old/tr/ship/yosen.html> and <http://nekonote.jp/korea/old/ren-data.html> (accessed on November 20, 2013). The Yekesanmaru as a ferryboat from Hakodate, Hokkaido, during the pre-war period is featured in the following website: <http://archives.c.fun.ac.jp/fronts/detail/postcards/4f0ac4edea8e8a0b700000d2> (accessed on May 13, 2014).

⁵ “Kanpu sen kako oyobi shorai 関釜線過去及将来” in *Keijo Nippō* 京城日報, December 1, 1912.

1912 mentions that several Japanese businessmen had invested in shiitake cultivation on Cheju Island again in 1909, after the failure of an initial attempt in 1906.⁶ Therefore, the *Travelogue* must cover May through September of 1909.

P'yogo in Korea

Although the author-illustrator of the *Travelogue* took the time to tour some scenic parts of the volcanic island of Cheju, which is arguably the most renowned tourist site in present-day Korea for its exotic beauty and subtropical climate, the primary purpose of the trip was to survey and assist in the growing of shiitake mushrooms on Cheju. Koreans as well as Japanese had eaten shiitake mushrooms for many centuries. The Korean name for shiitake mushrooms is P'yogo 표고, though in Chosŏn-dynasty (1392–1897) sources it is written with a number of different Chinese characters, such as 蕈菰, 蕈菇, 標蒿, 蕈膏, 蕈古, and, most frequently, 票古. The name also appears as 香簞 or 香菇, as Chinese often called the mushroom, and as 椎茸, as the Japanese named it (椎茸 is the name that the term “shiitake” comes from). It also has different names depending on growing season and on quality. The very best shiitake, called *hwago* 花菇, grows slowly in the early spring and thus has a tender and meaty texture, cracked surface, and pungent, earthy smell. Shiitake grown in the spring are in general called *tonggo* 冬菇 and are usually preferred to those grown in summer because the growth rate in a hot climate is rapid, causing the mushrooms to retain more water and subsequently have less taste.⁷ The author and his group experimented with shiitake cultivation in the summer months on Cheju, so they probably did not expect to produce top-quality shiitake.

One of the earliest historical records of shiitake mushrooms in Korea comes from a fifteenth-century geographical survey, the *Veritable Records of King Sejong's Geographic Survey* (*Sejong sillok chiriji* 世宗實錄地理志), in which shiitake are

⁶ *Chōsen sōtokufu geppō* 朝鮮總督府月報, vol. 2, no. 12 (1912): 66–69.

⁷ I collected this information from this blog: http://navercast.naver.com/contents.nhn?rid=43&contents_id=8052 (accessed on May 26, 2014).

recorded as a local tribute tax item of 30 counties—mostly southern and southwestern coastal counties of Kyōngsang and Chōlla provinces, as well as all three counties of Cheju Island.⁸ Kim Chōng (金淨 1486–1521), who wrote the “Record of Cheju’s Natural Features” (Cheju p’ungto rok 濟州風土錄) during his exile to Cheju Island in 1521, mentions that shiitake mushrooms were abundant there,⁹ and Hō Kyun (許筠 1569–1618) notes that shiitake produced on Cheju Island were the best.¹⁰ Korea’s shiitake mushrooms were one of the well-received tribute items in China.¹¹ Shiitake were also the best gift item in Seoul as Pak Hae-ch’ang’s (朴海昌 1874–?) letter to his father Pak Chu-hyōn (朴周鉉 1844–1910) in 1905 testifies.¹²

Shiitake mushrooms were also known for their medicinal effects. In *Treasures of Korean Medicine* (*Tongui pogam* 東醫寶鑑), compiled by Hō Chun (許浚 1546–1615), which is the most cherished traditional Korean medicinal manual in contemporary Korea, the shiitake mushroom is described as follows:

⁸ I conducted a keyword search with search words “Sejong, chiriji, p’yogo 세종 지리지 표고” from the DB of Korean Classics database:

<http://db.itkc.or.kr/index.jsp?bizName=JO> (accessed May 26, 2014). The search produced shiitake mushrooms as a local tribute tax item of 13 counties in Kyōngsang Province and 14 in Chōlla Province, plus all three counties of Cheju Island.

⁹ Kim Chōng, *Ch’ungam sōnsaenggip* 冲庵先生集, kwōn 4, Cheju p’ungto rok: http://db.itkc.or.kr/itkcdb/text/nodeViewIframe.jsp?bizName=MM&seojiId=kc_mm_a118&gunchaId=av004&muncheId=01&finId=038 (accessed on May 26, 2014).

¹⁰ Hō Kyun, *Sōngsobubugo* 惺所覆瓿藁, kwōn 26, sōlbu 說部 5, tomundaejak 屠門大嚼: http://db.itkc.or.kr/index.jsp?bizName=MK&url=/itkcdb/text/nodeViewIframe.jsp?bizName=MK&seojiId=kc_mk_g007&gunchaId=av026&muncheId=01&finId=001&NodeId=&setid=4658384&Pos=0&TotalCount=1&searchUrl=ok (accessed on May 26, 2014).

¹¹ *Munjong sillok* 文宗實錄, 1450.10.2.

¹² See the following website for the letter:

<http://honam.chonbuk.ac.kr/search/search.jsp?id=11500>. Father and son, who lived in Namwōn, Chōlla Province, passed the higher civil service examination in 1883 and 1894, respectively. See Wagner & Song Munkwa Roster of the Chosōn Dynasty at: <http://www.koreaa2z.com/munkwa/>.

It is gentle, with a sweet taste. It does not carry poison. It refreshes people's minds and stimulates the appetite. It stops nausea and diarrhea. It is pungent and tasty.¹³

Probably due to their tastiness, shiitake mushrooms seem to have been a popular cooking ingredient during the Chosŏn dynasty. In *Recipes for Good Taste* (*Ŭmsik timibang* 음식디미방), a late seventeenth-century cookbook written in vernacular Korean by Madam Chang (安東張氏 1598–1680), shiitake are used in at least 10 out of 95 recipes—vegetarian pot stickers, steamed dumplings, boiled dumplings, seafood dumplings, steamed stuffed sea cucumber, cod-skin wraps, ox-foot soup, pomegranate-shaped meatball soup, wax-gourd wraps, and stir-fried glass noodles.¹⁴

During the Chosŏn dynasty, Koreans must have collected naturally growing shiitake mushrooms from the forests, though it is possible that they also cultivated them, for they had information about how to grow them. One of the earliest records that discusses shiitake mushroom cultivation in East Asia is found in the fourteenth-century Chinese *Agricultural Manual* (*Nong shu* 農書), compiled by Wang Zhen (王禎) in 1333. After discussing mushrooms in general, the manual says:

Plant spores in the third month. Gather rotten paper mulberry tree branches and leaves and bury them under the soil. Pour rice water over them to keep them moist. After two to three days, mushrooms appear. There is another method. Spread ripe manure along the furrows. Gather 6- to 7-*cun*-long [1 *cun* is about 3.33 cm] paper mulberry tree branches, and cut them and chop them. Spread them evenly [over the furrows] and cover them with soil in the same way in which vegetables are

¹³ Hō Chun, *Tongŭi pogam*, glossed and annotated by Yi Nam-gu (Seoul: Pōbin munhwasa, 2011), 1459.

¹⁴ Andong Chang-ssi, *Ŭmsik timibang* (Taegu: Kyōngbuk taehakkyo ch'ulp'anbu, 2003), 3, 6, 8, 9, 10, 12, 15, 18, 25, and 28. The cookbook has 146 recipes, of which 51 are for how to brew different kinds of alcoholic drinks. In this seventeenth-century book, “shiitake mushroom” (*p'yogo*) is written 표고 in vernacular Korean, just as it is in Korea today.

grown. Water them daily so that they stay moist. Eat the mushrooms as they grow. They can be regular side dishes.

These days, [people] in the mountains grow shiitake mushrooms, and they use this exact method, but by keeping them in shadowy areas. Select appropriate trees—such as maple, paper mulberry, willow, and the like—and cut them down. Chip the logs with an axe to make holes. Cover and press the surface with soil. [When] logs have rotted more than a year, chop shiitake mushrooms and fill the holes evenly with [the chopped mushroom particles]. Cover them with straw, leaves, and soil. Pour rice water [on them] from time to time. After several months, hit the logs with a club or hammer. This process is called “awakening the shiitake.” When the climate becomes steamy and warm after snow and rain, shiitake appear. Although it takes a year to grow, the harvest is very abundant. After the harvest, remaining mycelium is still inside the logs and mushrooms will grow again the next year. Select an appropriate place thereafter to plant new spores every other year. Cook and eat the new harvest when fresh. Its smell is amazing. If dried under the sun, it becomes dried shiitake. Nowadays, poor people of the deep mountains and valleys grow mushrooms instead of plowing [to cultivate grain]. Mushrooms are like a product that Heaven sends down and [they are] profitable.¹⁵

In 1543, King Chungjong (中宗 r. 1506–1544) had his officials discuss whether this same *Agricultural Manual* should be printed and disseminated to the people, and Sŏng Se-ch’ang (成世昌 1481–1548) subsequently recommended its publication. Though it is uncertain whether or not it was printed, this book must have been known to the Chosŏn people.¹⁶ In fact, Sŏ Ho-su (徐浩修 1736–1799), who compiled the late eighteenth-century *Agricultural Manual of Chosŏn* (*Haedong nongsŏ* 海東農書), regarded Wang Zhen’s fourteenth-century *Agricultural Manual* as one of the two

¹⁵ Miao Qiyu 繆启愉, *Nong shu yi zhu* 农书译注 (Jinan: Qi Lu shu she, 2009), vol. 1: 235–38. Wenjiao Cai assisted me in locating the original excerpt.

¹⁶ *Chungjong sillok* 中宗實錄, 1543.11.5 and 1543.11.6.

“masterpieces of agricultural manuals” of China.¹⁷ In 1766, *Farm Management, an Augmented Edition* (*Chŭngbo sallim kyŏngje* 增補山林經濟) was compiled by Yu Chung-nim (柳重臨 1705–1771),¹⁸ and it contains entries on shiitake mushrooms and their cultivation that are similar to those in Wang Zhen’s *Agricultural Manual*. These entries make it clear that the knowledge to grow mushrooms was available in Korea, though we do not know whether they were in fact cultivated there during the late Chosŏn period, and if so, how extensively. In its entry entitled “Shiitake Mushroom,” the eighteenth-century *Farm Management* manual says:¹⁹

- It grows in the southern coastal region. There is no particular tree on which shiitake can grow. Sometimes, cut such trees [that grow shiitake] and place them in the shadow. Wait until the sixth or seventh month and cover them with rotten straw. Water them to keep them moist all the time. Then shiitake mushrooms appear. Some people say, “Shiitake easily appear if [people] pound the logs with the head of an axe from time to time.”
- It is very pungent and tasty. It refreshes people’s minds and stimulates the appetite.

In the entry “How to Grow Shiitake Mushrooms,” it says:²⁰

¹⁷ Cited in Kim Yong-sŏp 金容燮, *Chosŏn hugi nonghaksa yŏn’gu* 朝鮮後期農學史研究 (Seoul: Ilchogak, 1988), 330.

¹⁸ The original *Farm Management* (*Sallim kyŏngje* 山林經濟) was compiled by Hong Man-sŏn (洪萬選 1643–1715).

¹⁹ In this manual “shiitake mushroom” is written 蕈菰 in Chinese, followed by the Korean gloss 포고, which must be a variant spelling of *p’yogo* 포고. Yu Chung-nim, *Chŭngbo sallim kyŏngje* (Suwŏn: Nongch’ŏn chinhŭngch’ŏng, 2003), II: 499. The methods for growing mushrooms in this book are similar to the ones introduced in the *Nong shu*, but not exactly identical. It seems that the author had information from the *Nong shu* and had made slight adjustments on his own to fit to Korean forest environment.

²⁰ Yu Chung-nim, *Chŭngbo sallim kyŏngje*, II: 499–500.

- The following five kinds of trees—elm, willow, mulberry, locust, and paper mulberry tree—allow mushrooms to grow. Spread porridge—made of grain—over these tree logs and cover them with grass, and then mushrooms will grow.
- Collect rotten trees and leaves and cover them with soil. Keep them moist with rice water—waste water after washing rice—for two to three days. Then mushrooms appear. Rotten trees do not harm people from the beginning.
- There is another method. Spread ripe manure along the furrows. Gather 5- to 6-*ch'i*-long [1 *ch'i* is about 3 cm] rotten tree branches, and cut them and chop them. Spread them evenly over the furrows and cover them with soil in the same way in which vegetables are grown. Water them so that they stay moist. At first, when small mushrooms grow, cut them off. The next morning, mushrooms appear again; then, cut them off again. Those growing after removing three times are very big. Collect and eat them. They are most delicious.
- Those growing from pine trees, nettle trees, and oak trees are not poisonous. Yet those growing from maple trees, if eaten, could cause people to be unable to stop laughing and ultimately die.
- In general, those summer-growing mushrooms that do not have any patterns on the bottom part when viewed from underneath are extremely poisonous and thus kill people. Even if they are not poisonous, they harm people.

Shiitake in Japan

One of the earliest references to shiitake in Japan comes from the thirteenth century.²¹

Dōgen (道元 1200–1253), the Japanese Buddhist monk who founded the Sōtō Zen sect (曹洞宗), documented the following episode in his *Lessons on Kitchen Duty* (*Tenzo kyōkun* 典座教訓) in 1237.²² When he traveled to China to study Zen in 1223, Dōgen

²¹ This section on the history of the cultivation of shiitake in Japan was written primarily by Kuniko Yamada McVey. I include it in this essay with her generous permission.

²² Dōgen, *Dōgen Zenji zenshū* 2 道元禪師全集 第2卷, edited by Ōkubo Dōshū 大久保道舟 (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1970), 298. Dōgen's *Tenzo kyōkun* is included in Zen

remained for the first few weeks on board ship in the port of Ningbo, near King Asoka Monastery, one of the most important Zen temples in China. On the fourth day of the fifth lunar month, Dōgen met an old Chinese monk who was visiting the ship to buy Japanese dried shiitake for a special occasion the next day at his Zen temple. The old monk's devotion to his cooking responsibilities deeply impressed Dōgen. Japanese dried shiitake was one of the popular export goods to China at the time.

Later references to shiitake begin to appear in Japanese temple documents in the early fifteenth century, also in the context of cooking, while consumption by upper-class households was slowly growing as well. For example, shiitake are found in several entries in the fifteenth-century archives of Daitokuji (大徳寺), a Zen temple in Kyoto.²³ In the sixteenth century, shiitake appear in documents recording the menus of tea ceremonies and other special occasions held by the ruling class. Tea masters such as Tsuda Sōgyū (津田宗及 ?–1591), Sen Rikyu (千利休 1522–1591), and Imai Sōkyū (今井宗久 1520–1593) used shiitake in their highly formal events. The banquet in 1595 hosted by Tokugawa Ieyasu (徳川家康 1543–1616) for Toyotomi Hideyoshi (豊臣秀吉 1537–1598), then the ruler of Japan, included a shiitake dish as well.²⁴ These documents suggest that shiitake were rare and were treasured by the elites.

References to the cultivation of shiitake begin to appear in early seventeenth-century documents, with the Miyazaki and Wakayama regions being well known for producing high-quality shiitake. Miyazaki Yasusada (宮崎安貞 1623–1697), an agricultural scholar, included methods of cultivating shiitake in the fifth volume of his famous *Complete Collection on Agriculture* (*Nōgyō zensho* 農業全書) in 1697. The oldest book specializing in shiitake cultivation, *Onkosai's Essay on Five Positive Signs* (*Onkosai go zuihen* 温故齋五端篇), was written by Satō Shigehiro (佐藤成裕 1762–

Master Dōgen and Kōshō Uchiyama, *Refining your Life: From the Zen Kitchen to Enlightenment*, translated by Thomas Wright (New York and Tokyo: Weatherhill, 1983).

²³ *Daitokuji Shinjuan monjo* 大徳寺真珠庵文書, in *Dai Nihon Komonjo Iewake 17* 大日本古文書家わけ第十七, edited by Tōkyō daigaku shiryō hensanjo (Tokyo: Tōkyō daigaku shuppankai, 1970), vols. 1 and 8, documents 1, 3, 6, and 1104.

²⁴ “Bunroku 4-nen onariki 文禄四年御成記,” in *Shinko Gunsho Ruiju Buke-bu* 409 新校群書類従 武家部 卷第四百九 (Tokyo: Naigai shoseki, 1940), vol. 17: 637–640.

1848) in 1796.²⁵ Satō included topics such as how to select logs, management of spores, and drying shiitake with fire. Satō was invited by several domains to teach his method of cultivating shiitake as a way to improve their fiscal condition. As a botanist, Satō left a hand-colored manuscript called *Onkosai's Mushroom Catalogue* (*Onkosai kinbu* 温故齋菌譜) as well.²⁶

The early Edo-period (1603–1868) cookbook *Tales of Cooking* (*Ryōri monogatari* 料理物語), dated 1643, includes instructions on how to use dried shiitake.²⁷ *Night Tales of Kasshi* (*Kasshi yawa* 甲子夜話)—278 volumes of essays written by Matsura Seizan (松浦静山 1760–1841), the lord of Hirado domain, covering a wide range of topics—has five entries in which shiitake are mentioned, including the menu of a banquet at which he hosted Russian envoys sent by Catherine the Great in 1793.²⁸ Major Edo-period references such as the *Illustrated Sino-Japanese Encyclopedia* (*Wakan sansei zue* 和漢三才図会, 1712)²⁹ and *Encyclopedia of Japanese Diet* (*Honchō shokkan* 本朝食鑑, 1697)³⁰ include a description of shiitake. Swedish Botanist Carl Peter Thunberg's *Flora Japonica* (1784) has an entry for shiitake as well.³¹

During the Meiji period (1868–1911), cultivation methods were gradually improved and modernized by incorporating scientific understanding. Umebara Kanjū's (梅原寛重 1843–1911) *Promoting Agriculture Series: Self-Guided Methods for Shiitake Cultivation* (*Kannō sōsho shiitake seizō hitori annai* 勸農叢書椎茸製造独案内, 1887) is

²⁵ The National Diet Library of Japan has digitized the entire manuscript by Satō Shigehiro, and it can be viewed at: http://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/2536397?_lang=en (accessed on September 9, 2014).

²⁶ The manuscript, digitized by the National Diet Library of Japan, can be viewed at: http://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/2536493?_lang=en (accessed on September 9, 2014).

²⁷ *Ryōri Monogatari* 料理物語, in *Edo jidai ryōribon shūsei* 1 江戸時代料理本集成 第1巻 (Kyoto: Rinsen shoten, 1978), 36.

²⁸ Matsura Seizan 松浦静山, *Kasshi yawa* 甲子夜話続篇一, in *Tōyō bunko* 360 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1979), 236–238.

²⁹ Terashima Ryoan 寺島良安, *Wakan sansei zue* 和漢三才図会 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 1906), 1420.

³⁰ Ono Hitsudai 小野必大, *Honchō shokkan* 本朝食鑑, in *Shokumotsu honzō Taisei* 9 食物本草大成 第9巻 (Kyoto: Rinsen shoten, 1980), 296.

³¹ See “sitaki,” under *Fungi Agaricus* in Caroli Petri Thunberg, *Flora Japonica* (Lipsiae: In bibliopolio I.G. Mülleriano, 1784), 347.

the earliest book of its kind.³² As the title suggests, it is a self-learning guide for shiitake production as a part of the series promoting agriculture. Mimura Shōzaburo's (三村鐘三郎 1869–1935) *A Summary of Artificial Germination Method for Growing Shiitake* (*Jinkō hashu shiitake saibaihō taiyō* 人工播種椎茸栽培法大要, 1909) introduces a scientific method of artificial germination.³³ Mimura's method helped establish artificial shiitake cultivation while also improving its productivity in the early twentieth century.³⁴

The National Diet Library (NDL) of Japan houses 45 books on shiitake cultivation published between 1868 and 1920; in the same period, 64 journal articles on shiitake are found in NDL holdings.³⁵ Most books and articles are for practitioners, but some are scholarly. Such a large number of publications suggest a rather high interest in efficient cultivation of shiitake. A keyword search for “shiitake” in the Japanese daily newspaper *Asahi shinbun* (朝日新聞) between 1879 and 1920 yielded 125 articles and advertisements, most of which were agriculture- and trade-related. NDL even holds a popular music recording disk entitled “Shiitake Song” (*Shiitake ondo* 椎茸音頭), issued by Columbia Record Company in 1900.

These publications may have stimulated the entrepreneurial spirit of many Japanese at the time, including the *Travelogue* author's main companion, Mr. Fujita Kanjirō, a businessman from Ehime Prefecture. According to Takenaka Yō (竹中要), a botanist who visited Cheju Island in 1933 for his research, the success of the shiitake cultivation business on Cheju brought many Japanese to the island following Mr. Fujita Kanjirō's pioneering move in 1906, while more than 30,000 islanders went to Japan.³⁶ Shiitake had been listed as a main Japanese export product ever since the first national statistics were prepared in 1874. In 1874, 525,000 *kin* (1 *kin* 斤 = 0.6 kg) of shiitake were

³² The National Diet Library of Japan has digitized this book and made it publicly available here: <http://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/842263> (accessed on September 9, 2014).

³³ Ibid. <http://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/842315> (accessed on September 9, 2014).

³⁴ Mimura's long article “Shiitake shushi saibaihō” 椎茸種子栽培法 (How to produce shiitake spores) was carried in the major daily newspaper *Asahi shinbun* on March 9, 1908.

³⁵ Search was conducted on June 30, 2014.

³⁶ Takenaka Yō 竹中要, “Somei Yoshino Sakura no gensanchi ni tsuite 染井吉野桜の原産地に就て,” in *Shiseki meisho tennen kinennbutsu* 史跡名勝天然記念物, vol. 11, no. 1 (1936): 27–34.

exported, valued at 214,000 yen; in 1875, 625 *kin*, valued at 250,000 yen; in 1876, 851 *kin*, valued at 355,000 yen; in 1877, 878 *kin*, valued at 329,000 yen; and in 1880, 1,243,000 *kin* were exported, valued at 340,000 yen.³⁷ According to the English publication on commerce and industry published by the Japanese government in 1893, “shiitake” was a class 3 export commodity, and in 1887–1891, 98 percent of the shiitake that Japan exported went to China and Hong Kong.³⁸ In 1891, shiitake was the nineteenth highest-value exported commodity (at 156,226 yen), out of total exports valued at 49,185,511 yen.³⁹ The earliest statistics on shiitake production are from 1905, with 1,606,655 *kin* produced, valued at 858,244 yen; this had grown 150 percent by 1916, when 2,412,311 *kin* were produced, valued at 1,798,093 yen.⁴⁰ Shiitake indeed played a critical economic role in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Japan.

Shiitake Business Opportunities in Korea for Japanese

One of the earliest Korean sources that reveals Japanese business interests in shiitake cultivation in Korea is the monopoly licensing contract granted by Korea’s Emperor Kojong on January 15, 1905. According to the botanist Takenaka Yō, Fujita Kanjirō, the *Travelogue* author’s businessman-companion, had started a shiitake plantation on Cheju Island after presumably obtaining a ten-year license from the Korean government in 1905, and this was the beginning of shiitake production on the island.⁴¹ The contract permitted Japanese to grow and sell shiitake in various local areas in Korea, although it seems that this contract had become void, as discussed below.

³⁷ *Nihon teikoku tōkei nenkan* 1 日本帝國統計年鑑 第1回 (Tokyo: Tōkei Kyōkai, 1882), 299.

³⁸ Bureau of Commerce and Industry, Department of Agriculture and Commerce, *General View of Commerce & Industry in the Empire of Japan* (Tokyo: M. Ōnuki, 1893), 119.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 14–15.

⁴⁰ Tōa keizai chōsakyoku 東亜經濟調査局, *Shiitake no seisan to yushutsu jijō* 椎茸の生産と輸出事情 (Tokyo: Tōa Keizai chōsakyoku, 1931), 34–35.

⁴¹ Takenaka Yō, “Somei Yoshino Sakura no gensanchi ni tsuite,” 27–34.

The text of the 1905 contract first of all declares that all matters concerning the cultivation and sale of shiitake mushrooms everywhere within the Korean Empire belong to Korea's Imperial Household. The contract was reportedly written up in collaboration between Yi Se-jik (李世植 1860?-?) on behalf of Korea's emperor and four Japanese representatives of the Japan-Korea Friends Association (Nikkan Dōshi Kumiai 日韓同志組合), and was signed by Acting Minister Yi Chae-gŭk (李載克 1864-?) of the Ministry of Imperial Household (Kungnaebu 宮內府).⁴² The content of its thirteen articles is as follows:⁴³

1. The exclusive right to grow and sell shiitake mushrooms in various places is granted to the representatives of the Japan-Korea Friends Association (JKFS).
2. The representatives of the JKFS shall supply the necessary capital to carry out the aforementioned business.
3. The Emperor of the Korean Empire shall dispatch ten or fewer officials to supervise the business, and also to review all the accounting books at the end of the year. Three or fewer among those ten shall be invited from foreign nationals.
4. In cases in which those representatives of the JKFS, after calculating the best timing, request an imperial announcement in regard to this, the Emperor of the

⁴² Yi Se-jik was also known as Yi Il-jik (李逸植). He was responsible for plotting the assassination of Kim Ok-kyun (金玉均 1851–1894), one of the leaders of the failed coup of 1884, in 1894 in Shanghai. He frequently appears in Korea's official documents as well as Japanese diplomatic documents from 1892 to 1907 as someone who seems to have earned great trust from Emperor Kojong. The monopoly licensing contract on shiitake mushrooms was one of 23 similar contracts made between the same parties in January 1905. Not much is known about the Japan-Korea Friends Association. The four Japanese representatives of the Association mentioned were Oshikawa Masayoshi (押川方義), Matsumoto Buhei (松本武平), Moribe Torahisa (or Moribe Inju 毛利部寅壽), and Iwamoto Yoshiharu (巖本善治). For an in-depth study of Yi Se-jik, see Sun Joo Kim, "Yi Se-jik (Yi Il-jik) ūi hwaltong ūl t'onghaesō pon Taehan chegukki chōngch'i wa oegyo 이세직(이일직)의 활동을 통해서 본 대한제국기 정치와 외교," *Yōksa wa hyōlsil 역사와현실* 99 (2016).

⁴³ *Chuhan ilbon kongsagwan kirok* 25, 6 Han'guk hwangje milch'ik kŭp kyeyak, (36) Han'gungnae kak chibang ch'ui chaebae p'anmaegwōn t'ūkhō kyeyaksō 駐韓日本公使館記錄 25 권, 六. 韓國皇帝密勅及契約, (36) 韓國內 各地方 椎茸栽培 販賣權 特許契約書: http://db.history.go.kr/item/level.do?levelId=jh_025_0060_0360.

- Korean Empire shall make an announcement of this contract to the public so as to provide various accommodations for the accomplishment of this business.
5. Only the representatives of the JKFS shall select and hire those people who will carry out this business.
 6. The yearly gross income, less the expenses specified in Article Two, is the net profit. Twenty percent of the net profit shall be submitted to the Imperial Household and the remaining 80 percent shall be given to the JKFS. However, [such taxes shall be levied] only from the fourth year after each business site is opened.
 7. The representatives of the JKFS shall contribute 50,000 yen to the Emperor of the Korean Empire by July 31, 1905.
 8. The contract term is 25 years.
 9. This special right has not been granted to anyone before, and shall not be granted to anyone else.
 10. If the contribution specified in Article Seven is not made by July 31, 1905, this contract shall be null and void.
 11. If the said Association cheats and covers up at the time of dividing the net profit and such deception is discovered, this contract shall be immediately broken.
 12. Only after submitting the contribution specified in Article Seven can the business activities begin.
 13. Other unspecified items shall be amended later.

This contract would appear to have been approved by the Korean emperor and signed by the minister of the Imperial Household, given the presence of multiple seals of the Ministry of Imperial Household on the contract. However, an October 23, 1905 article in the *Imperial Gazette* (*Hwangsŏng sinmun* 皇城新聞) reveals that this contract—along with 22 other similar ones concerning such business interests as land reclamation, transportation, fishery, sugar, salt, brewery, tobacco, and camphor made between the Imperial Household and the aforementioned four representatives of the JKFA with the facilitation of Yi Se-jik—was not ratified by the State Council (Üijŏngbu 議政府) and was thus invalid, according to a report made by the Court of Justice (P’yŏngniwŏn

平理院) to the Ministry of Justice (Pöppu 法部). Yi Se-jik, who had reportedly escaped from his lifetime exile to Cheju Island in 1899 and facilitated these contracts, was blamed for damaging the reputation of the state by engaging in these illegal contracting activities, and was once more sentenced to a lifetime banishment, after a beating of 100 strokes with a light stick for committing such a crime.⁴⁴

Earlier, on July 11, 1905, the Japanese government, which had conducted its own investigation of this incident, reproached the Korean government for violating the Korea-Japan Treaty made in February 1904 and the First Japan-Korea Agreement made in August 1904, which required that the Korean government consult the Japanese government before making any concession contracts with foreigners, and demanded that the Korean government officially announce the invalidity of those contracts.⁴⁵ On July 17, 1905, Minister of Foreign Affairs Yi Ha-yöng (李夏榮 1858–1929) thus advised the Korean emperor that all the contracts negotiated by Yi Se-jik and others not only violated the articles of the 1904 Treaty but had not been ratified by due process, and were therefore invalid. Yi Ha-yöng then asked for an imperial announcement that any concession contracts must follow due process to be effective, and also asked the emperor to punish criminals such as Yi Se-jik in relation to this incident.⁴⁶

Given these developments, the January 1905 monopoly licensing contract awarded to the JKFA to grow and sell shiitake mushrooms on Cheju Island must have been nullified. Moreover, with the signing of the Protectorate Treaty in November 1905 (also known as the Second Japan-Korea Agreement), which made Korea Japan's protectorate and completely took away Korea's sovereignty, the Japanese Resident-General (統監府; K. T'onggambu; J. Tōkanfu) must have retained all power to grant business licensing to foreigners, including Japanese.

⁴⁴ *Hwangsöng sinmun*, October 23, 1905. Also see *Kojong sillok* 高宗實錄, October 22, 1905.

⁴⁵ *Chuhan ilbon kongsagwan kirok* 26, 8 oebuwang, (19) hanil tongji chohap kwaüi saöp t'ükhö kwan'gye tǔng chunhö e taehan kongjök haemyöng yogu kaksö 駐韓日本公使館記錄 26 권, 八. 外部往, (18) 韓日同志組合과의 事業特許關係等 准許에 대한 公的解明要求 覺書:

http://db.history.go.kr/item/level.do?levelId=jh_026_0080_0180.

⁴⁶ *Kojong sillok*, July 17, 1905.

According to an article published in the *Imperial Gazette* on April 9, 1906, three Japanese had arrived on Cheju Island with the intention of producing charcoal and growing shiitake mushroom. Even after the Cheju magistrate's notification that they should get a permit from the central government before proceeding, the men were reportedly adamant and planned to move ahead with business operations.⁴⁷ Receiving the Cheju magistrate's report on these Japanese illegal activities, on April 16, 1906 Minister Yi Chi-yong (李址鎔 1870–1928) of the Ministry of the Interior (Naebu 內部) requested that the State Council prohibit Japanese business activities, including shiitake cultivation on Cheju Island.⁴⁸ Despite this effort to prohibit them, Japanese entrepreneurs from a company called Tōeisha (東瀛社) set about their businesses, supposedly with permission from the Cheju magistrate. According to an April 25, 1906 report made by Cheju's financial advisor (*chaemugwan* 財務官), who was himself a Japanese, the Japanese businessmen had successfully argued that they planned to improve the quality of shiitake mushrooms produced on Cheju Island and also to use new techniques to make better charcoal, using only miscellaneous trees and not harming any other forest resources.⁴⁹

The First Japan-Korea Agreement, made in August 1904, had ushered in an era of “government by advisors” by forcing Korea to hire foreign advisors to oversee key government affairs, including finance. In September 1905, finance advisor Megata Tanetarō (目賀田種太郎 1853–1926) arrived in Seoul and began to lead various financial and accounting reforms. One of these was to dispatch financial advisors to provincial governments.⁵⁰ After the Protectorate Treaty was made in November 1905, first Resident-General Itō Hirobumi (伊藤博文 1841–1909) unleashed various local administrative reforms that confined local magistrates to overseeing executive functions alone, while separating out judicial and financial administrations.⁵¹ When Tōeisha came

⁴⁷ *Hwangsŏng sinmun*, April 9, 1906.

⁴⁸ *Kaksa tŭngnok kŭndaep'yŏn* 各司謄錄, Naebu kōraean 1 內部來去案 1: http://db.history.go.kr/item/level.do?jsessionid=F3101F88B6A2780B140A45C63EE54DEB?levelId=mk_024_0010_0180

⁴⁹ *Hwangsŏng sinmun*, April 25, 1906.

⁵⁰ *Kuksa p'yŏnch'an wiwŏnhoe*, ed., *Han'guksa* 한국사, vol. 42 (Kuksan p'yŏnch'anwiwŏnhoe, 1999), 320.

⁵¹ *Kuksa p'yŏnch'an wiwŏnhoe*, ed., *Han'guksa*, vol. 42: 260.

to operate on Cheju in April 1906, all these administrative reforms were in flux and not yet totally in effect, so the presence and voice of the Japanese financial advisor must have played a role in enabling Tōeisha to establish its business there at this early date.

According to a report on Cheju Island compiled by the Finance Audit Department within the Office of Resident-General (probably based on the report made by the same financial advisor mentioned above), the charcoal and mushroom businesses that Tōeisha established in 1906 were rather experimental and were thus more like a dry run than a full-fledged business venture.⁵²

After the establishment of the Residency-General in late 1905, the Japanese government became actively involved in the colonization of Korea in all aspects, and “opening up undeveloped lands in and moving Japanese settlers to Korea” (K. *ch’ōksik*; J. *takushoku* 拓殖) was one crucial component of this. Though the shiitake business must have been a small part of the *ch’ōksik*, we see the colonial government’s encouragement in this sector in the report made by the Government-General of Korea (Chōsen Sōtokufu 朝鮮總督府) in December 1912. In its monthly report, the Government-General introduces the shiitake business on Cheju Island as a promising enterprise for five reasons: (1) 70 to 80 percent of the trees growing on the island are suited to growing shiitake; (2) its climate is ideal for the business; (3) the slope is gentle, making the cultivation business easy; (4) Korean labor costs are low and the laborers are obedient; and (5) the cost of the raw materials—logs—is relatively cheap. Following this introduction, the report explains in depth the processes and methods of shiitake cultivation. As it forecasts the profitability of the business, it introduces one of the pioneering companies that had begun its experimental cultivation since 1906: none other than the aforementioned Tōeisha.

⁵² T’onggambu chaejōng kamsa-ch’ōng 統監府財政監査廳, *Cheju-do hyōnhwang ilban* 濟洲島現況一般 (Kyōngsōng 京城: T’onggambu 統監府, 1907), 61–62. According to this contemporary report, there were 206 Japanese in residence on Cheju in 1907, and several hundred more Japanese coming and going for fishing and trading. The Japanese economic stake in Cheju was still nascent at the time and was concentrated on the island’s fishery. Cheju people, the report states, seemed friendly to Japanese, although, it adds, they must have felt jealous of Japanese.

According to this December 1912 report, Tōeisha had lost their big investment in their initial try in 1906 because they had relied on an ineffective method for cultivating shiitake. However, in 1909 several businessmen invested in the business again, probably adopting Mimura Shōzaburo's new scientific method of artificial germination (mentioned earlier), and they were expecting a good harvest in 1912, since the fourth year after planting the spawn was the best harvest year. Though the spring harvest had not been satisfactory due to dry weather, they were expecting a bumper crop of shiitake in fall, the report says.⁵³ A news article published by the *Daily News* (*Maeil sinbo* 毎日申報) on July 21, 1912 complements the Government-General's report. After stating that shiitake cultivation in Cheju is a promising business, as everyone knows, the article says that a Japanese businessman experimented with fruiting shiitake in the summertime because spring production that year in Cheju was very disappointing. The result was very successful. Not only was the harvest abundant but the price was high due to the mushrooms' good texture and taste.⁵⁴

As the newspaper as well as the Government-General report note, the ideal fruiting seasons for shiitake are spring and fall, though summer fruiting is possible. Fujita Kanjirō and the author of the *Travelogue* were those pioneers in this business who came to Cheju to experiment with summer fruiting in 1909, after the failure of the initial try in 1906. The regular shiitake cultivation was a multi-year endeavor, producing a commercial harvest in its fourth, fifth, and sixth years, with the best quality and the largest amount produced in the fourth year. As of 1912, the profit after investing 4,376 yen for an entire cycle of six years, to grow 7,000 *kin* of shiitake on 1,000 felled trees, was expected to be 874 yen.⁵⁵ By 1918, there were at least 14 cultivation sites on Cheju Island and, by 1920, there were at least 21 growers on Cheju Island, producing 86,210 *kin* of shiitake mushrooms, which were worth 224,046 yen.⁵⁶ This yield and profit surpassed the forecast made in 1912. Because it was regarded as a profitable method of farming,

⁵³ *Chōsen sōtokufu geppō* 朝鮮總督府月報, vol. 2, no. 12 (1912): 66–69.

⁵⁴ *Maeil sinbo*, July 21, 1912.

⁵⁵ *Chōsen sōtokufu geppō*, vol. 2, no.12 (1912): 69.

⁵⁶ *Maeil sinbo*, May 30, 1920.

shiitake cultivation spread to other parts of the Korean Peninsula during the colonial period.⁵⁷

Korea lost its independence in foreign affairs and its control over domestic affairs by a series of agreements forced upon it by Japan in 1904 and 1905. After the November 1905 Protectorate Treaty, Korea was put under the rule of the Residency-General and was well on its way to colonization, which became official in 1910. As Jun Uchida aptly shows in her book *Brokers of Empire: Japanese Settler Colonialism in Korea, 1876–1945*, during these years “a wide array of [Japanese] people journeyed across the sea—not only soldiers and officials, but merchants, traders, prostitutes, journalists, teachers, and continental adventurers,” remaking their lives on the Korean Peninsula and ultimately helping establish their nation’s empire.⁵⁸ Apparently, after 1905 a lot more Japanese seeking new opportunities arrived in Korea.

The Japanese who came to grow shiitake mushrooms on Cheju Island in 1906 were among the earlier entrepreneurs seeking a business opportunity in a soon-to-be colony of Japan. We do not know under what licensing contract or privileges they received permission to experiment with shiitake cultivation on Cheju. Nor do we know whether or not this first group stayed on. For the unnamed author of the *Travelogue*, 1909 was his first visit to Korea. Yet when he arrived on Cheju Island, at least three shiitake cultivation sites were in operation and more than a dozen Japanese people, including three families and three adult male laborers, were residing there with their own houses and facilities. They were pioneers in the shiitake business on Cheju, and their employers were movers and shakers of Japanese colonialism on the ground. This *Travelogue*, then, gives us a very rare opportunity to increase our understanding of early Japanese settlers and entrepreneurs and their daily activities in Korea.

The drawings in the *Travelogue* also include elements of an amateur anthropological survey of the people and customs of Cheju Island by the author-illustrator, since the colonizing power always observes, investigates, and collects material about the colonized. Such collection of information is done not only to satisfy the

⁵⁷ For example, see *Tonga ilbo*, March 11 and 13, 1936; April 8, 1936; and April 27, 1939.

⁵⁸ Jun Uchida, *Brokers of Empire: Japanese Settler Colonialism in Korea, 1876–1945* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2011), 2–3.

colonizers' curiosity about exotic landscapes, customs, and people but to prepare for use of the colonized lands, people, and resources. The challenges that the first Japanese mushroom businessmen met in Cheju in 1906 were not limited to obtaining a business permit. Under the flag of advanced technologies and access to capital, they made their way into the forests of a foreign country with the intention of violating rules of conduct for the use of natural resources that had been established among the people of Cheju for many years. For charcoal production, they explained that their use of raw materials—trees—would meet the established practices and not infringe upon natives' forest use rights. Considering how many trees were chopped down to grow shiitake, however, as vividly illustrated in some of the drawings in the *Travelogue*, it is not difficult to imagine long-term damage to Cheju's forest and natural environment.

The colonizing power and settlers apparently did not care much about the harmful impacts of their capitalist investments on the colonized land. As we have seen, Government-General's monthly report for December 1912 on the profitability of the shiitake farming includes no entries either about the environmental impact caused by shiitake farming or about any measures to restore damaged forest, but only highlights the low cost of raw materials and labor. The growing investments in shiitake farming by Japanese entrepreneurs on Cheju Island would certainly have created more jobs for the native residents, and might have resulted in the transfer of advanced techniques in mushroom cultivation to the colonized. I do not intend to jump into the age-old debate on the pros and cons of colonization. Nevertheless, the *Travelogue* does allow us to get much closer to the heart of the issue, with its vibrant illustrations of shiitake farming, Japanese investors and specialists, Japanese and Korean workers, and the land and its natural resources that colonial opportunists tend to devour.