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### 33 Marketing Medicine to Koreans

Soyoung Suh 서소영

On 1 September 1911, a full-page advertisement for *Jintan* 仁丹 (Humane Elixir) was placed in *Maeil sinbo* 毎日申報 (Daily News), targeting Korean consumers. A lady in Western costume (Fig. 1) testifies to the merits of the elixir. The text is multilingual; the English copy reads:

Whenever, however, and wherever you may be, you'd surely enjoy excellent health in taking *Jintan* as a task. *Jintan* is a wonderful tonic and the best mouth refresher.<sup>1</sup>

First manufactured by Morishita Hiroshi (1869–1943) in 1900, Humane Elixir became one of the most notable Japanese marketing successes in Korea.<sup>2</sup> Not only Humane Elixir, but medicine in general was extensively advertised in Korean-language newspapers. Medicine-related advertisements occupied 30% of advertising space in *Tonga ilbo* 東亞日報 (East Asia Daily) in 1923, rising to more than half by 1938.<sup>3</sup>

Korean newspapers began to carry advertisements as early as 1886. However, of the six newspapers then distributed in Seoul, only *Taehan maeil sinbo* 大韓毎日申報 (Korean Daily News) continued to publish after the Japanese annexation in 1910, albeit with the word *Taehan* (Korea) removed from the title. Thus until the *East Asia Daily* and *Chosŏn ilbo* 朝鮮日報 (Korean Daily) appeared in 1920, advertisements in Korean found few media outlets.<sup>4</sup>

At the same time, Japanese-language newspapers, published and owned by the Japanese in Korea, flourished with the growth of Japanese colonial governance. According to statistics from the Government-General, in 1913 there were 25 Japanese-language newspapers in national circulation, most of which had been launched between 1905 and 1909. These Japanese newspapers were designed to appeal not only to Japanese residents of Korea but to indigenous

Koreans as well.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, over half the advertisements placed in Korean newspapers during the 1920s were sponsored by Japanese companies. Recognising the significance of the Korean market, Japanese entrepreneurs set out to attract more Korean consumers. For instance, by 1923 Japanese advertisements made up 36% of the total in the *East Asia Daily*, increasing to 40% by 1925 and 61% by 1938. Japanese enterprises were major sponsors of Korean newspapers, publicising Japanese commodities to a Korean market.<sup>6</sup>

Humane Elixir was one of the two Japanese products most frequently advertised in the *Daily News* in the 1910s and 1920s.<sup>7</sup> As its popularity grew, profits were ploughed back into increasingly sophisticated advertising. In addition to the iconic trademark (the Humane Elixir man with his



Figure 33.1 Advertising 'Jintan' 仁丹 (Humane Elixir) in *Maeil Sinbo* 毎日申報 (the Daily News), 1 September 1911

1 *Maeil sinbo*, 1 September, 1911.

2 For the success of Humane Elixir in Japan, see Burns 2009, pp. 194–8. In China, an attempt was made to imitate Humane Elixir by the Shanghai businessman, Huang Chujiu 黄楚九, who successfully popularised Chinese-made, Western-style patent medicine in early 20th-century China. The Chinese version of Humane Elixir was slightly modified, with a trivial change of the brand name – the original character *ren* (仁), which means 'benevolence', was replaced by *ren* (人), a homophone with the same tone meaning 'human', i.e. 'Humane Elixir' became 'Human Elixir' (人丹). Cochran 2006, pp. 46–7.

3 Han'guk Kwanggo Yŏn'guwŏn 1996, p. 50. Shin and Sŏ 2011, p. 110.

4 Shin 1980, pp. 18–19. For an English version, see Shin and Shin 2004.

5 Han'guk Kwanggo Yŏn'guwŏn 1996, p. 65.

6 *Ibid.*, pp. 49–50.

7 The other item was Ajinomoto 味の素, a Japanese-made seasoning for every kind of food, now well known as monosodium glutamate (MSG). It was successfully marketed in Korea by portraying it as indispensable to the modern household. Shin 1980, p. 53; Han'guk Kwanggo Yŏn'guwŏn 1996, pp. 238–43.



Figure 33.2 Various advertisements for 'Humane Elixir' placed in the *Daily News* in the 1910s

admiral's hat and distinctive moustache), print advertisements utilised a variety of illustrations and catchphrases.

Special events and presentations aimed to create a festive atmosphere reminiscent of New Year celebrations. The elixir was advertised as having important health benefits for children. In 1914 much was made of the fact that 600,000 doses of Humane Elixir had been sent to China in to aid flood survivors. When *Kyōngsōng Kongjinhoe* 京城共進會 (a competitive trade fair) was held in Seoul in 1915, a billboard for Humane Elixir was erected on the clock tower, signalling its leading position, and this event was also exploited for newspaper advertisements. Its popularity abroad was highlighted: Humane Elixir figured in a popular Indian novel; four overseas sales branches were touted as evidence of its international fame. When Li Yuanhong 黎元洪, (1864–1928) became Generalissimo of the Chinese Republic in 1916, portraits of him and Vice-Generalissimo Feng Guozhang 馮國璋 (1859–1919) featured in advertisements for Humane Elixir with product endorsements in their own handwriting (Fig. 2).<sup>8</sup> Humane Elixir, with its sophisticated advertising techniques and financial clout, dominated the newspaper's medical advertisements, not to mention the Korean market, during the first half of the 20th century.

Humane Elixir well exemplifies the Japanese pre-eminence in marketing medicine in Korea. How, then, did Koreans respond to Japan's domination of the market? Did Korean drug sellers or pharmacists try to emulate Japanese initiatives? Or did Koreans develop their own marketing strategies? As Figure 1 shows, medical advertisements in Korean newspapers often displayed hybrid features. This example incorporates texts in Korean, Japanese, English and Chinese alongside an image of a modern lady. Invoking scientific modernity, the advertisement points out that Humane Elixir is specifically manufactured under the direction of two famous Japanese researchers. Yet although the advertisement employs the imagery and rhetoric of modernity, the text does not mention biomedical principles at all. Instead, concepts from traditional medicine are deployed to explain bodily processes.

Given this situation, what role did indigenous features play in fashioning medical advertisements aimed at Koreans? Did Korean advertisers focus on local specificities or did they ignore indigenous attributes in order to emulate the modern approaches adopted by the Japanese? By examining early 20th-century medicine advertisements, this chapter considers the ways in which the concepts of

'medicine for Koreans' was utilised and/or disregarded in the process of creating opportunities for Korean drug sellers.

### Japan's Domination of the Korean Market

Japan had a significant impact on restructuring the pharmaceutical market in Korea, primarily by enhancing legal regulation. In March 1912, the Japanese Government-General of Korea (*Chosŏn Ch'ongdokpu* 朝鮮總督府) promulgated the Regulations for the Enforcement of Laws for Medicinal Products and the Medicinal Product Businesses (*Yakuhin oyobi yakuhin eigyō torishimari shikō kisoku* 藥品及藥品營業取締令). This law specified four categories of pharmaceutical professionals, differentiating their range of knowledge and degree of commercial engagement: a pharmacist (*cheyaksa* 劑藥士) should 'combine chemicals according to doctors' prescriptions'; a manufacturer (*cheyakja* 劑藥者) should 'prepare and sell medicinal products'; a drug seller (*yakchongsang* 藥種商) should 'sell chemicals'; and finally, merchants of patent medicines (*maeyagōpcha* 賣藥者) should 'sell patent medicines by manufacturing, introducing, or importing'.<sup>9</sup> Although the boundaries between the categories were often blurred, those concerned gradually reoriented their professional careers in line with the official licensing system, and the newly imposed regulation remained in force until 1945.

Even before the 1910 annexation of Korea, Japan had begun to establish modern biomedical hospitals in Korea, thereby paving the way for the introduction of biomedically trained personnel and medical commodities. Clinics run by Japanese army doctors were first set up in Pusan in 1877, Wŏnsan in 1880, and Seoul and Inch'ŏn in 1883. Named Government-Sponsored Hospitals (*Kwallip pyōngwŏn* 官立病院), these institutions aimed to 'relieve (Japanese) settlers' diseases and to provide hygiene'.<sup>10</sup> Compared with the Government-Sponsored Hospitals, the Seoul Hospital (*Hansōng pyōngwŏn* 漢城病院), established by Japan in 1895, was more explicitly intended to display imperial benevolence toward Koreans in need. Upon annexation, the Government-General Hospital of Korea (*Chosŏn ch'ongdokpu ūiwŏn* 朝鮮總督府醫院) replaced the Hospital of Great Han (*Taehan ūiwŏn* 大韓醫院), which had been established by the Residency-General (*T'onggambu* 統監府) in Seoul in 1907. Paralleling the initiative in Seoul, regional branches of charity hospitals (*Chahye pyōngwŏn* 慈惠病院) began to be built nationwide beginning in 1909; after 1925 these regional

8 *Maeil sinbo*, 1 January, 1916; 1 January, 1915; 21 July, 1914; 6 October, 1915; 8 March, 1916; 31 March, 1916; 22 November, 1916; 1 August, 1934.

9 Park 2005, pp. 322–30, Burns 2012, pp. 8–10.

10 *Ibid.*, pp. 57–68.

hospitals were redesignated as provincial hospitals (*torip pyŏngwŏn* 道立病院). Overall, 41 provincial hospitals had been established in Korea by 1938.<sup>11</sup> Through these national facilities, biomedically trained Japanese pharmacists were also introduced into Korea. After a period of service, they frequently opened apothecary shops, and made a variety of Japanese commodities available for sale to the public, including cosmetics and miscellaneous consumer goods as well as medicinal items. Around the turn of the 20th century, a few Japanese wholesale drug sellers established themselves in major cities in Korea. Arai Kotarō 新井虎太郎 (b. 1867) and Yamagishi Yūtarō 山岸祐太郎 (1868–1927), for instance, set up businesses in Seoul in the early 1900s. When the two railway links opened between Seoul and Pusan in 1905 and Seoul and Sinūiju in 1906, traversing the Korean peninsula, Japanese apothecaries gradually expanded and came to dominate the Korean market.<sup>12</sup>

Yamagishi, one of the most famous Japanese-run apothecary businesses in Seoul, first set up a wholesale outlet in 1906, and prospered by supplying medicine and medical equipment to the charity hospitals. In 1913 the Yamagishi enterprise employed a staff of 30, with sales of ¥500,000 per month rising to ¥1 million per month in 1935. During the 1920s major Japanese pharmacies and pharmaceutical companies established branch offices in Seoul. As the Japanese imperial vision for Manchuria took concrete form with the establishment of Manchukuo 滿洲國 in 1932, drug manufacturers opened new area offices in Korea and increased their marketing budgets. Korean branches were regarded as a significant bridgehead to the Chinese continental market. Having seen business boom during the 1920s and 1930s, Japanese companies began to construct factories in Korea during the early 1940s to produce agricultural chemicals, tonic soups, and medicines using Korean raw materials and special products.<sup>13</sup>

The Japanese initiative in Korea was underpinned in a variety of ways, primarily using the associations of Japanese pharmacists and drug merchants to consolidate the Japanese network in the country. The Association of Pharmacists of Korea (*Han'guk yakchesahoe* 韓國藥劑師會) was first established in 1909 under the leadership of Japanese pharmacists working for the Residency-General (the Japanese Government-General in Korea after 1910) and its affiliate hospital, the Government-General Hospital of Korea. Of 28 regular members, only one was Korean.

Originally, membership was limited to those holding a licence in biomedical pharmacy.<sup>14</sup> However in 1913, the Association was renamed the Pharmaceutical Society of Korea (*Chosŏn yakhakhoe* 朝鮮藥學會), in an attempt to recruit anyone with connections to the pharmaceutical field. It held lectures to publicise newly promulgated qualifications for pharmacists, provided information about the regulation of toxic chemicals, and specified biomedical principles for the preparation of medicines. A short course managed by the society developed into a training school, which later became the School of Pharmacy of Korea (*Chosŏn yakhakkyo* 朝鮮藥學校).<sup>15</sup>

Several major newsletters fortified the Japanocentric network. The first of these, *Kyŏngsŏng hakpo* 京城藥報 (Newsletter of Pharmacy of Seoul), was launched in 1915, sponsored by the Arai and Yamagishi apothecaries. As trade prospered, Arai also funded *Mansŏn ji hwa jangp'um sangbo* 滿鮮之化粧品商報 (Commercial News of Cosmetics in Manchuria and Korea) and *Mansen no ikai* (*Mansŏn ji ūigye* 滿鮮之醫界, Medical World of Manchuria and Korea). Stimulated by the positive response to these new ventures and the successful impact of the *Newsletter of Pharmacy of Seoul*, drug manufacturers in Pusan published *Chosŏn yakpo* 朝鮮藥報 (Newsletter of Pharmacy of Korea) in 1927. All these periodicals were published in Japanese.<sup>16</sup>

Japanese influence also made itself felt in the aggressive strategies and advanced techniques employed for advertising medicine in Korea, as exemplified by the Humane Elixir publicity campaigns discussed above. Introduced to Korea via Japanese traders in the early 20th century, Humane Elixir was soon circulating and being consumed nationwide. A Korean copy of the elixir appeared, but as in China, the original Japanese brand retained its dominant position.

In sum, the Japanese dominated the early 20th-century Korean medicine market by regulating the modern licensing system, introducing biomedically oriented training, organising nationwide associations, and employing a variety of marketing strategies. Anti-Japanese sentiment was not a major issue in the market in that period. Although nationalism grew during the 1910s and 1920s, it was difficult and unnecessary for Korean drug-sellers to contest Japanese supremacy overtly while under colonial rule.

11 Ibid., pp. 247–67.

12 Hong 1972, pp. 158–9.

13 Ibid., pp. 155–76, pp. 191–4. By 1941, Seoul had approximately 300,000 Japanese residents, out of a total population of about 1,000,000.

14 The licensing system for medical professions in Korea was not fully operational until 1913.

15 Hong 1972, pp. 5–9.

16 Ibid., pp. 184–5.

## Latecomers' Strategies

### Patent Medicines<sup>17</sup>

Under Japanese domination, Koreans developed independent commercial power primarily by manufacturing and marketing patent medicines. Advertisements for patent medicines from the late 19th and early 20th centuries generally juxtapose traditional herbs familiar to Korean practitioners and traders with Western imagery, sometimes in conjunction with ingredients associated with biomedical practitioners. Korean drug sellers involved in trading herbs with Qing China were among the first to notice a flow of new commodities from China and Japan. A few entrepreneurial spirits took the opportunity to manufacture their own unique brands by turning their knowledge of native herbs to new combinations.

Two notable examples well illustrate the opportunistic and eclectic aspects of patent medicines at the turn of the last century. Whal Myung Su (*Hwalmyöngsu* 活命水, 'Lifesaving Water'), an oral liquid digestive, was one of the most popular medicinal products ever to be sold in Korea. It was first manufactured in 1897 by Min Pyöng-ho 閔並浩, who came from a family belonging to the *yangban* (兩班) ruling class, and had himself gained an official position by passing the state examination. He was known to be well-versed in the medical classics and the secret prescriptions that circulated among Chosön court doctors, but what inspired Min was the perceived superiority of 'Western' medicine. As a Christian, Min had a general interest in Western culture, and he set about acquiring knowledge of biomedicine through a friend who worked at a newly-founded Western-style hospital managed by Western missionaries. Based on his experience and knowledge, Min first extracted a few herbs including dried orange peel and silver magnolia, then added recently-imported catechu, menthol and alcohol.<sup>18</sup> The result was Whal Myung Su, and the news of its miraculous efficacy quickly spread beyond his own locality. His apothecary shop, Tonghwa yakpang 同和藥房, prospered, and he registered 98 patent medicines in 1908.<sup>19</sup> Although Min was neither a trained

pharmacist nor a merchant, he found a way into the market by combining his knowledge of traditional medicine with elements of Western medicine.

Another example is the Pill for Clearing the Heart and Guarding Life (*Ch'öngsim pomyöngdan* 清心保命丹, hereafter the Pill for Clearing the Heart), manufactured by Yi Kyöng-bong 李庚鳳, who, following in a family tradition, was engaged in the herb trade with China in the years around the turn of the 19th century. Spurred on by the success of Humane Elixir, Yi was determined to manufacture his own patent medicine. The Pill for Clearing the Heart reflects his knowledge of herbs and sensitivity to market changes. It was, like Whal Myung Su, a digestive preparation. Made from ingredients like borneol and peppermint, it tasted sweet and came in the form of small red granules. Being a domestic product, the pill was sold for 5 *chön*,<sup>20</sup> half the price of Humane Elixir. Yi's handsome and Westernised appearance was in line with his eloquent and flamboyant style of public speech, which conferred a modern image on this medicine. Frequent street performances with music and colourful banners were used to promote the medicine, providing a form of public entertainment (Fig. 3). On the strength of the success of the Pill for Clearing the Heart, Yi opened an apothecary shop, Chesaengdang yakpang 濟生堂藥房, first in Chemulp'o, then in Seoul.<sup>21</sup> By recognising the commercial features of Japanese patent medicines and appealing to Korean aspirations for the visual culture of modernity, Yi was able to create a new market.

The successful practices of Min, Yi, and other drug sellers shared the following characteristics. They were all versed in herbs and familiar with the herb trade. They were inspired to produce their own commodities by patent medicines from China and Japan. With the exception of Min, whose major market was in P'yöngyang, they all began their business in treaty ports and then moved into the main streets in the centre of Seoul. Min was interested in biomedical practices, which presumably influenced his patent medicine. However, neither he nor the others were trained in biomedicine, and hardly any biomedical principles or ingredients were involved in their products. They stepped into a gap in the market, using *materia medica* that were familiar to them, and imparting a veneer of modernity to the finished product. During the heyday of these traditional patent medicines, the claim that this was 'a medicine of our own' was not made explicit. But the herb traders did indirectly appeal to Korean nationalism, claiming to

17 The practice of patenting medicine involves some kind of institutional legitimisation. Hereafter I define patent medicines as medicines registered with their own brand names, even though the ingredients and efficacy may be similar to other ready-made or pre-compounded medicines. The Japanese government officially controlled patent medicines with detailed regulations from 1912 onward, although the patenting of medicines had already been practised since 1907.

18 Hong 1972, pp. 3–4, Ye 2009, pp. 16–17.

19 Tonghwa yakpang opened in 1897, developed into Dong Wha (Tonghwa) Pharmaceutical Industrial Company Limited in 1962,

and continues to be one of the leading pharmaceutical companies in contemporary Korea. Ye 2009, p. 31.

20 One *chön* was the equivalent of 1 US cent at that time.

21 Hong 1972, pp. 12–13.



Figure 33.3 Advertising 'Ch'ongsim pomyongdan' 清心保命丹 (Pill for Clearing the Heart and Guarding Life) in front of Chesaengdang yakpang 濟生堂藥房

produce patent medicines that were both convenient and familiar to Koreans, or to utilise 'something Korean'.<sup>22</sup> In some cases, growing nationalism provided a new motivation to establish a Korean pharmacy that might compete with Japanese domination. For instance, Min's son, Min Kang 閔疆 (1883–1931), who expanded and modernised his father's apothecary business, first supported and then actively participated in the Korean independence movement. Min Kang's nationalist consciousness, however, put his business in jeopardy. As a result of his anti-Japanese activism, 60 of his 86 medical patents were cancelled by the Japanese colonial government.<sup>23</sup> Under Japanese colonialism, it was unwise for traders to explicitly claim Korean traits for their products.

Under these circumstances, Korean specificity was expressed, not in any explicit catchphrases or images, but through merchants' social networks. For instance, the successes of wholesale herb dealers called for brokers with the capacity to establish local branches and extend the market into every corner of the Korean peninsula. Ch'önil yakpang 天一藥房, a wholesale pharmacy, attracted local dealers by offering free gifts or trips, and became known for its varied programme of high-profile public events. As discussed earlier, the market for Korean patent medicine had surged by the 1920s. Most Korean apothecaries registered more than 40 or 50 medicines with their own brand names, yet many of these were similar in terms of ingredients and therefore medical efficacy. In the 1920s over

1500 patent medicines were on sale in Korea. Newspapers criticised their low quality and the excessive competition among apothecaries. While the retail shops usually took a 40–50% profit margin, latecomers who attempted to market knock-offs had to offer bargain prices, allowing a profit of up to 60–70%.<sup>24</sup>

Most Korean apothecaries, then, attempted to seize the advantage, not by improving the quality of the medicines they sold, but by commissioning ever more impressive advertising and publicity stunts. To appeal to the public, Ch'önil yakpang sponsored a variety of spectacular events including a parade of Ford cars. A free cinema ticket was given away with each purchase of a large-size tonic. A chamber pot was among the most popular free gifts on offer! Additionally, Ch'önil yakpang published its own monthly newsletter, *Ch'önil yakpo* 天一藥報 (Medical Newsletter of Ch'önil), which circulated among traders nationwide. Special events for middlemen or local sales forces were frequently held. Ch'önil yakpang spent substantial sums on treating local traders, wooing them with calendars printed in Japan and a variety of entertaining free gifts such as Korean playing cards or the Four-Stick Game. Frequently, traders were invited to one of the most lavish and flamboyant restaurants in Seoul, which usually provided scores of singing girls (*kisaeng* 妓生). Famous singers, a comic storyteller and a dancing master were enlisted to put on local performances.<sup>25</sup>

22 For this quotation, see *ibid.*, p. 14.

23 *Ibid.*, p. 22. Ye 2009, pp. 62–3.

24 Hong 1972, pp. 47–8.

25 *Ibid.*, pp. 112–13.

The highlight of Ch'õnil yakpang's publicity events in Seoul was an aeroplane ride. Though it lasted only five minutes, more than 80 traders gathered in the city for their turn. All travel and accommodation expenses were borne by Ch'õnil yakpang. Another popular event was a trip to north-eastern China. Eight days in duration, it took in the major cities of northern and southern Manchuria in addition to Beijing and Tianjin. These types of sales promotions continued until 1939. Though costly, they did ultimately pay off: the extraordinary sales strategies were reported in newspapers, doubling their effect. In addition, the initial cost for manufacturing Ch'õnil yakpang's flagship item, *Chogoyak* 趙膏藥, a medicinal plaster originating from the Cho family, was less than 2 *chõn*, but it was then sold for 10 *chõn* at retail, and 5 *chõn* at wholesale.<sup>26</sup> Despite the financial cost, special sales promotions continued because they consolidated sales networks by retaining local dealers. To be popular and profitable, medical efficacy was not enough. Patent medicines needed to be packaged with free gifts, lavish entertainment, and spectacular events.

Korean drug sellers at the turn of the 19th century recognised the commercial possibilities presented by patent medicines. Herbs grown in Korean soil or familiar to Korean tastes were lent a sense of novelty by the terminology and imagery of 'Western' biomedicine, sensational advertising, and local salesmanship. While indigenous medicine did not lose favour, drug sellers under Japanese domination tactically managed whether local, familiar medical ways should be recognised as 'Korean' medicine or not.

### Combining Nationalism with Biomedicine

Manufacturing biomedicines gave Koreans another opportunity to strategically establish their own commercial networks. Without relying on Japanese brokerage, Koreans founded pharmaceutical businesses by first importing biomedicines, then ultimately manufacturing indigenous branded items. The Yuhan Corporation (*Yuhan yanghaeng* 柳韓洋行) is a case of successful marketing of biomedicine which evoked nationalist sentiment while challenging aspects of ethnic identity. A significant example of a modern Korean pharmaceutical company in Korea that utilised purely Korean capital and management, while competing with Japanese companies, the Yuhan Corporation is instinct with the distinctive career and nationalist vision of Yu Ir-han (1895–1971).<sup>27</sup>

Yu was the first-born son of a local merchant of P'yõngyang. His father, Yu Ki-yõn, a Christian convert, was impressed by Western missionaries' medical services and educational efforts. Concerned at the advance of Japanese colonialism, he decided to educate his eldest son abroad. Thus at the age of nine, Yu Ir-han was sent to San Francisco, then to high school in Nebraska. After majoring in business at the University of Michigan, Yu pursued a variety of business careers, establishing the highly successful La Choy Food Products Inc., producing canned food, in the US in 1922. Within four years the company was grossing \$500,000 p.a., and expanding its commercial network throughout the major US cities.<sup>28</sup> Imbued with American capitalism, Yu envisioned a trading firm that would manufacture medical supplies and miscellaneous goods to improve the quality of Korean lives. Accordingly in 1926, he established the Yuhan Corporation, which introduced insecticides, anti-tuberculosis drugs, plasters for skin diseases, etc. to Korea under its own brand name. It also imported sundry goods like farming implements, paints, dyes, toilet paper, cosmetics, chewing gum, and chocolates, all of which were wonderful novelties for many Koreans.

Every biography of Yu cites nationalism and Christianity as the two most significant factors shaping his entrepreneurship, and relates anecdotes revealing his nationalist activism.<sup>29</sup> But although nationalism was undoubtedly embedded in the Yuhan Corporation's management, the company did not openly display ethnic traits or employ nationalist catchphrases; rather its advertisements relied on a variety of messages encompassing enlightenment and modernity, which sometimes ran counter to indigenous sentiments.

Prontosil and Neotone well exemplify this point. Determined to manufacture and not merely import biomedicines during the 1930s, Yu endeavoured to keep abreast with the latest achievements in biomedicine that might be applicable to his modern manufacturing facilities. A PhD chemist from Vienna was invited to act as a consultant in the development of new medicines; a Korean who had gained a degree in Japan followed, and finally Yu and his company were able to exploit the commercial possibilities of the recent discovery of Prontosil.<sup>30</sup>

Prontosil, a sulphanilamide derivative (p-aminobenzene sulphonamide) synthesised by a Viennese chemist in 1908, was discovered to have antibacterial use by Gerhard

26 Ibid., pp. 113–14.

27 For detailed stories about Yu Ir-han and the Yuhan Corporation, see Cho 2005, Yu Ir-han Chõn'gi P'yõnjip Wiwõnhoe 1995, and

Kim 1984.

28 Cho 2005, pp. 158–66.

29 For instance, Yu Ir-han Chõn'gi P'yõnjip Wiwõnhoe 1995, pp. 193–4, p. 215.

30 Hong 1972, pp. 67–71.





Figure 33.4 Advertising 'G-U-CIDE' in 1939

Domagk in 1934, for which he was awarded a Nobel Prize in 1939. The discovery of Prontosil opened up new ways of synthesising and commercialising the antibacterials which would become known as sulfa drugs. For instance, Satsutarimu サツタリム, a Japanese brand of Prontosil-based antibiotics, was developed for treating gonorrhoea.<sup>31</sup> Not long after it was first introduced to Japan via Germany in 1937, the Yuhan Corporation manufactured a variety of branded items containing Prontosil, which it sold in domestic and overseas markets. G-U-CIDE, the Korean brand of Prontosil, was Yuhan's most financially successful item (Fig. 4).

Interestingly, the success of G-U-CIDE is often ascribed to a marketing catchphrase.<sup>32</sup> The advertising placed much emphasis on 'difference': G-U-CIDE was presented as quite different from any previous medicine, and readers were urged by implication to completely disconnect and distance themselves from the inadequacies of old-fashioned medicine and pre-modern inefficiency. In a sense, this language clearly reflects the desire of the Yuhan Corporation to cure Korea's ills through the introduction of biomedicine, but also through the use of attendant modern methods, knowledge and even marketing strategies. Just as the Yuhan Corporation's new medicine destroyed pathogenic bacteria, so too would the modernity of biomedicine cure the deep-seated germs of Korean backwardness and inferiority.

Another of the Yuhan Corporation's brands was Neotone, a tonic that claimed to promote health by adding nutrition and strengthening users' immunity to disease. Lack of nutrition and resistance was described as not only a problem of individual bodies, but also the problem of the

national body as a whole. Alluding to the deterioration of the nation's health in general, advertisements for Neotone encouraged people to consume the medicine to be healthy members of the Korean nation.<sup>33</sup>

An analogy between the individual and the nation is more explicitly expressed in Yuhan's corporate advertisements. While appealing to people to contribute to the 'Korean fund' for Korean business, advertisements for the Yuhan Corporation from 1926 emphasise the link between prosperity and national health:

By business, the nation-state (*kukka* 國家) becomes saved, and so does the individual. The nation-state that fails to develop business falls to the level of an uncivilised country and those who do not understand business become poor. Acknowledging this principle, we should be interested in business and work hard to find a means of survival. This is why we founded our company. We aim to show our reserves of strength and do our best in order to establish a Korean business that is solid and perfect.<sup>34</sup>

When the company offered investment stock in the same year, it argued that the company should be owned and managed by Koreans, using racial categories to underline the need for Koreans to take the initiative in investing in their own enterprises:

If we offer stocks for subscription to Caucasians (*paegin* 白人), we are sure to easily collect a huge fund in a short time. Yet, that would result in transferring our company to Caucasians, not Koreans.<sup>35</sup>

These brief examples demonstrate that manufacturers of biomedicine as a commodity utilised nationalist ideas, but often projected indigenous attributes negatively. The swift marketing of Prontosil by the Yuhan Corporation was motivated and sustained by Yu's and his colleagues' nationalistic ardour. From the beginning the owners of the corporation set out to establish a Korean pharmaceutical company with its own skill sets and markets, aiming to cure Korean diseases, and improve their fellow countrymen's health.<sup>36</sup> The biomedically enhanced Korean body was going to be a radically different thing from bodies constructed and managed through indigenous ways of living. Hence the Yuhan Firm's nationalist passion looked for its fulfilment, to a great extent, through enlightenment and hygiene rather than through Korean culture. Even when marketing its vitamins, nutrients, tonics, and antibacterials in Manchuria and Vietnam, the Yuhan Corporation did not showcase 'Korean' attributes in its advertisements.

31 Advertisements for Satsutarimu frequently appeared in the *Daily News of Manchuria and Korea* between 1940 and 1943. For a case study of the Japanese pharmaceutical company and Japanese research on Salvarsan, see Nihon Keieishi Kenkyūjo 2001.

32 Hong 1972, pp. 67–71.

33 *Manson ilbo*, 3 December, 1940.

34 Yu Ir-han *Chōn'gi P'yōnjip* Wiwōnhoe 1995, p. 518.

35 *Ibid.*, pp. 519–20.

36 See, for instance, Hong 1972, pp. 53–61.

But while the Yuhan Corporation's advertising rhetoric remained indifferent to any native 'Korean' characteristics, it still appealed to Koreans to support 'Korean business for Korea's own sake'.

### Seeking Markets in Manchuria<sup>37</sup>

Manchuria, during the first half of the 20th century, provides an intriguing lens through which to view the eclectic attributes of 'Koreanness', because it engaged the nationalist imagination of Korea's pure and primitive antiquity within the multi-ethnic circumstances that Koreans experienced outside Korea under Japanese colonialism. Koreans moved into Manchuria beginning in the 18th century for a variety of reasons: freedom from bondage, avoidance of severe taxes and forced labour, escape from criminal punishment or harsh creditors, and the quest for more fertile soil for farming. Whatever the reasons, during the late 18th and 19th centuries Korean settlers were willing to risk their lives by going against the Qing xenophobic policy of 'seal and prohibit' and the Chosŏn prohibition on emigration to Manchuria. It is those 'illegal' immigrants who are now remembered as the first generation of Korean immigrants in China.

Japan gained international approval for colonising the Korean peninsula after it won the Sino-Japanese war in 1895 and the Russo-Japanese war in 1905. It became obvious after 1905 that Korea, once a tributary kingdom belonging to the Sinocentric world order, was now compelled to fit herself into a Japanocentric political world. China, the Middle Kingdom, the millennia-long source of political, intellectual and cultural authority, was rapidly being marginalised in every sphere, including diplomatic ceremonial and education, and in public consciousness.<sup>38</sup> The appeal of the new, combined with Japanese colonisation, rapidly displaced the centrifugal force of the Middle Kingdom. Given the changing contours of world politics around the Korean peninsula, it is not difficult to imagine that Koreans in Manchuria encountered even more complicated political and cultural issues than did Koreans in Korea: questions of land ownership, the extent of jurisdiction, and extraterritoriality, which mainly resulted from the ambivalent status of citizenship of Korean settlers in Manchuria, often

triggered disputes and even provoked physical conflicts among Koreans, Chinese, and Japanese.<sup>39</sup>

Japan argued for extraterritoriality. The Japanese claim over Korean citizenship made most Chinese uncomfortable. Koreans in Manchuria, particularly when in dispute with local Chinese farmers or officials, were thought to be agents of Japanese imperial penetration into China. The more Chinese nationalism grew, the more strongly Korean ties to Japanese rule were criticised. By way of compromise, a few Korean leaders in Manchuria at the end of the 1920s persuaded their communities to become naturalised Chinese.<sup>40</sup> However, when Korean settlers felt they were being unfairly treated, bullied or plundered by Chinese petty officials, landlords and local gangsters, they looked to Japanese consular jurisdiction as a resource. When Manchukuo (1932–45) was established, Koreans in Manchuria were considered to belong to the state of Manchukuo, and were classified as one of the ethnic groups of that state. But the general Chinese view was that Koreans were closer to the Japanese empire than other ethnic groups, including Manchurian and Mongols as well as Han Chinese. In other words, even when Koreans were defined as people of Manchukuo, they were still represented as the second people of Japan, or as Korean Japanese, with more intimate cultural, linguistic, and social connections to Japan than to China.<sup>41</sup>

Given this milieu, Korean in-betweenness in Manchuria was experienced in every corner of people's lives. Ethnically, culturally, and politically, Koreans were situated in between Chinese and Japanese officials; between Han Chinese and Manchurians; and between the lost motherland and occupied foreign lands. Caught in the middle of these intersecting ethnic groups and therefore needing to be open to political negotiation, Koreans in Manchuria cooperated or resisted, and more often compromised merely to survive or to recover their losses.<sup>42</sup> As a reflection of this weakened identity, Korean immigrants' plight was described in metaphors of sickness, and Korean writers in Manchuria underlined the way in which harsh circumstances created psychosomatic wounds that were accumulated and exacerbated into more serious chronic diseases.

Medical advertisements conveyed their messages with a vocabulary and visual register that set the agenda whereby unhealthy conditions were defined and proper treatment was claimed. After the establishment of Manchukuo, both

37 Regarding the term Manchu, see Duara 2003, pp. 41–2. Koreans have called Manchuria Manju (滿洲, Manzhou in Chinese), Yŏnbyŏn (延邊, Yanbian in Chinese) or Kando (間島, Jiandao in Chinese), the last of which literally means an island in-between.

38 For instance, Schmid in Brooks and Schmid 2000, pp. 83–107.

39 Kwŏn 1990.

40 Shin 1999, p. 184.

41 Kwŏn 1990, pp. 276–7. K. Kim 2004, pp. 16–25.

42 For the in-betweenness expressed in literary works by Koreans in Manchuria, see, J. Kim 2004.

Japanese and Korean traders actively expanded their markets in Manchuria. Little research exists charting the early 20th-century rise of the medical trade between Korea, Japan, and Manchuria. However, the advertisements in *Mansŏn ilbo* 滿鮮日報 (Daily News of Manchuria and Korea) and *Mansen no ikai* 滿鮮之醫界 (Medical World of Manchuria and Korea)<sup>43</sup> suggest that major Japanese drugstores and pharmaceutical companies with Korean branches in Seoul established additional headquarters in Changchun (長春), the capital of Manchukuo. Their Korean counterparts responded similarly. The Yuhan Corporation established the Yuhan Pharmaceutical Company of Manchuria (*Yuhan manju cheyak* 柳韓滿洲製藥) in Fengtian (奉天) in 1938, aiming to trade its own-brand items throughout Manchuria.<sup>44</sup> Kŭmgang Pharmaceutical Company (*Kŭmgang cheyak* 金剛製藥), which synthesised Salvarsan and anaesthetics containing morphine or cocaine, also sold its branded medicines in Manchuria.<sup>45</sup> Not only these major pharmaceutical companies but also successful apothecary stores aimed to trade their patent medicines in Manchuria in the 1930s. The number of Korean immigrants exceeded that of Japanese residents in Manchuria, so although the Japanese held administrative and political authority, Koreans were able to maintain economic rights, not to mention their ethnic identity.

The ways in which medicines were marketed to Koreans in Manchuria did not explicitly articulate the liminal politics of Korean 'in-betweenness'. However, the advertisements do show how Korean ethnic identity was deliberately fashioned as a reflection of the physical and cultural circumstances that Korean immigrants faced in Manchuria. Needless to say, most advertisements by the Japanese pharmaceutical companies and the Yuhan Corporation are copies of the domestic versions. Yet advertisements for medicines like *Paekpohwan* 百補丸 (the Pill

of Nourishment with One Hundred Ingredients, hereafter the Pill of Nourishment) and *Mansu paekpohwan* 萬壽百補丸 (the Longevity Pill of Nourishment with One Hundred Ingredients, hereafter the Longevity Pill) include content specifically tailored to appeal to Korean immigrants.

First and foremost, they highlight the Chinese origin of traditional medicine. An advertisement for the Longevity Pill explains that traditional medicine originated in Manchuria (i.e. a part of China) and not Korea or Japan, and suggests that the pill is based on a traditional secret formula that guarantees greater efficacy than newer products manufactured in Korea or Japan. Although the drugstore selling the Longevity Pill – Kŭmgang Pharmaceutical Company (Kŭmgang cheyak 金剛製藥) – was not exclusively based in Manchuria, it emphasised geographical difference as a way to establish its authentic traditional credentials, thus differentiating its brand from other nourishing pills.<sup>46</sup>

Furthermore, the advertisement uses the harsh environmental conditions peculiar to Manchuria – drought and extremes of hot and cold weather that sapped water, energy and primal vitality (*wŏn'gi* 元氣) from both plants and human beings – to point to the origins of a perceived decline in immunity suffered by Koreans living there. Hence, even those who have never previously taken the 'Pill of Nourishment' are urged to consider doing so without delay (Fig. 5).<sup>47</sup>

Sickness among Koreans in Manchuria was often ascribed to the strong and hazardous winds of the region. A series of articles based on interviews with Korean women in Manchuria revealed that Korean settlers were apt to be troubled by severe cold, muscular fatigue, and mental exhaustion, symptoms that were not curable by one-dose medicines. The women interviewed ascribed their bodily discomfort to the merciless wind of Manchuria, which in their expression, 'broke through' every joint of their limbs.<sup>48</sup>

A corollary of the portrayal of Manchuria as the cause of chronic illness was the portrayal of Korea as the best place for healing herbs. The Pill of Nourishment was apparently the best in the world because its ingredients were rooted in Korean soil. Unlike medicines imported from the West or even from other places in East Asia, the pill was made from mysterious grass roots from the homeland and the fruit of trees free from all kinds of chemical adulterants and foreign contamination. Korean soil was an indispensable element of health, even for those who resided elsewhere.<sup>49</sup>

43 *Mansŏn ilbo* was first published in 1937, combining two previous local newspapers, *Kando ilbo* 間島日報 (The Daily News of Kando), which appeared in the 1920s, and *Mangmong ilbo* 滿蒙日報 (The Daily News of Manchuria and Mongolia), first printed in 1933 and published in Korean. *Mansŏn ilbo* is one of the most significant sources of information on the daily lives of Korean immigrants in Manchuria during the first half of the 20th century. In 1936, approximately 875,908 Koreans resided in Manchuria. K. Kim 2004, p. 34.

44 Hong 1972, pp. 69–71. Yu Ir-han Chŏn'gi P'yŏn'jip Wiwŏnhoe 1995, p. 585. In addition to the Fengtian branch, the Yuhan Firm also established branch shops in Dalien 大連, Tianjin 天津, Shanghai 上海, and Taibei 臺北, and branch offices in Los Angeles and Tokyo, between 1933 and 1943.

45 *Ibid.*, pp. 85–7.

46 *Mansŏn ilbo*, 5 December, 1939.

47 *Ibid.*, 13 January, 1940.

48 See the series of interviews published in *Mansŏn ilbo*, 1 January, 1940.

49 *Mansŏn ilbo*, 7 December, 1939.



Figure 33.5 Advertising 'Mansu paekpohwan' 萬壽百補丸 (Longevity Pill of Nourishment with One Hundred Ingredients) in *Mansön ilbo* 滿鮮日報 (Daily News of Manchuria and Korea) December 1940

Furthermore, the authority of the Government-General was invoked to highlight the connection between health and the native Korean condition. The Imperial University, with the support of the Government-General, encouraged research into Korean indigenous medicine and botanicals native to Korea.<sup>50</sup> To target Korean immigrants in Manchuria, some medical advertisements described how medicine from Manchuria (China) guaranteed superior efficacy, while others emphasised that Koreans needed purely Korean medicine whose ingredients were exclusively grown in Korea.

In addition, the Longevity Pill deployed biomedical terminology as part of its advertising arsenal. Interpreting knowledge drawn from traditional medicine in the new language of endocrinology, the advertisements explain sexual apathy, nervous breakdown, and general symptoms of sensitivity.

The eclectic and hybrid features of medicine advertisements should be understood in the context of an adjustment of both manufacturing and marketing to the changing political and cultural contours of the region. At times, an appeal to the local and indigenous qualities of the medicines proved an effective marketing strategy. However, there existed no purely indigenous medicine. Rather, there were various medical commodities with multi-regional ingredients and various methods of advertising, all of which claimed to serve the best health of Koreans.

**Conclusion**

Medical advertisements published in the early 20th century provide a lens to view the contingent and eclectic aspects

of Korean medicine. The multifarious elements that constituted Korean medicine need to be considered, as the purity of indigenous medicine was often asserted in conjuring up traditional medicine as a national heritage. With a critical perspective on a contemporary framing of the uniquely Korean medicine, it is possible to avoid essentialising a Korean medicine as if it were a self-determining unit of analysis. Traditional medicine in Korea shares its textual heritage with China and has often looked to China for medical innovations. Novel texts from China were constantly in demand; the Korean physicians who accompanied the official envoys to China during the 16th century sought to learn from Chinese doctors; the theories of the Four Masters of the Jin (1115–1234) and Yuan (1271–1368) period<sup>51</sup> were carefully read and interpreted by Korean scholars. At the end of the 19th century a Korean doctor practising in Seoul would proudly legitimise his own medical writings by claiming an unbroken line of descent from the Yellow Emperor and the Four Masters.

But while Koreans valued the Chinese origins of their medical tradition, they also emphasised the local qualities of Korean medicine. Publications on local botanicals increased during the 15th century; in the 17th century, Hō Chun 許浚 (1539–1615) acknowledged that Korea had her own indigenous medical tradition – *Tongŭi* 東醫 (Eastern Medicine) – while at the same time, he synthesised Chinese Song-Yuan-Ming medicine (medicine from the mid-10th to the 17th century) from his own perspective. Given Korea's dual position as both an importer of medicine from China and a producer of its own medicine, the traditions of Korean medicine should be viewed as an outcome of tension and compromise between the claim to the local

50 See, for instance, Japanese research published in *Mansen no ikai* 68 (1926) to 89 (1928).

51 Liu Wansu 劉完素 (1120–1200?), Zhang Congzheng 張從正 (1156–1228), Li Gao 李杲 (1180–1251) and Zhu Zhenheng 朱震亨 (1281–1358).

and an aspiration toward the universal. The changing relationship between the indigenous and the foreign, or the local and the universal, enables us to view the ways in which the identity of Korean medicine has been created and modified over time.

The verbal and graphic language of medical advertisements in the major newspapers provides an example of this changing mode of styling indigenous products. Against a colonial backdrop, and enthused with a growing sense of nationalism, drug sellers, as we have seen, were among those who shaped indigenous medicine to their own ends. They exhibited a marked sensitivity to the changing relationship between local and universal legitimacy for their products as they negotiated the demands of their target audience. The Japanese and Western agents attempting to expand their markets in Korea were sources of new manufacturing skills and advertising strategies. Navigating the overwhelming flow of medical commodities from abroad, Korean drug sellers gradually established markets for their own goods. In that process, new strategies were developed, yet there was also continuity in the methods of both manufacturing and selling medicinal products.

Consistent representation of the indigenous was not an issue in the competitive drug trade. However, to maximise profits under Japanese domination, Korean drug sellers had to develop local networks to attract retailers in outlying areas, and they utilised Korean sociocultural references to promote sales. Early 20th-century advertisements for medicine show that the indigenous features of Korean medicine were both utilised and ignored as Korean drug sellers sought to create and exploit new opportunities for themselves. 'Medicine for the Koreans' was undoubtedly emphasised. Yet advertising tactics from Japan, new theories from the West, and the ancient authority of Chinese medicine were selectively employed to style the imagery and meanings of the 'Korean' attributes of Korean medicine.

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