



RESEARCH ARTICLE

The transnational historiography of a dynastic transition: Writing the Ming-Qing transition in seventeenth-century China, Korea, and Japan

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Abstract

The Ming-Qing transition (1618–1683), a dynastic upheaval that not only consumed much of China, but also saw the Qing invasion of Joseon Korea and an influx of refugees into Tokugawa Japan, was a source of inspiration for writers across East Asia. Unofficial, contemporary histories written by Ming and early Qing subjects made their way by land and sea to Korea and Japan, where they were either adapted for domestic audiences or used as the basis for new unofficial histories of the dynastic transition.

This article makes the argument that unofficial, contemporary history-writing about the Ming-Qing transition in China, Korea, and Japan was part of a regional trend towards an intellectual culture of contemporaneity. While scholars have focused on the transition and its impact upon notions of cultural centrality, it should be emphasized that these notions emerged alongside developments encouraging the production and circulation of contemporary, cross-cultural knowledge and information. In other words, the flourishing of print, diversification of reading audiences, and evolution of new modes of knowledge-production and transmission formed a background against which demand increased for updated information about a shared world. Participation as producers (writers and editors) and consumers (readers) in this seventeenth-century culture of contemporaneity was restricted by language, schooling, and economic standing. Nonetheless, a transnational history perspective will show that the unofficial, multi-vocal, and multilingual historiography of the Ming-Qing transition encourages a re-evaluation of not only the intellectual history of East Asia, but also the history of the transition.

Keywords: Historiography; Ming-Qing transition; transnational history; knowledge-production and transmission; East Asia

With the disaster of the third month of the *Jiashen* year [1644], the sky collapsed and the earth split apart, and the sun and moon were without light.

甲申三月之變天摧地裂日月無光。¹

—*Xinbian jiaochuang xiaoshuo* 新編勦闖小說 (1645), author unknown.

Introduction

Not two months after the Ming dynastic capital, Beijing, fell to the Manchu Qing, the anonymous author of the *Jiaochuang xiaoshuo* 勦闖小說 completed his text. A young man in Hangzhou, named Yao Tinglin 姚廷遴, refers to its circulation in China in the mid-seventeenth century.² Thirty years later, a compiler of the text *Ka'i hentai* 華夷變態, Hayashi Shunsai 林春齋 (1618–1680), mentions in his 1674 preface that the *Jiaochuang xiaoshuo* was one of a number of accounts of the Ming–Qing transition that had reached Japan. Two editions of a later publication of the *Jiaochuang xiaoshuo*—the *Xinbian jiaochuang xiaoshuo* (1645) that is quoted above—now survive in the National Archives of Japan. One of them is a Ming-dynasty print edition, and the other is an Edo-period hand-copied manuscript.

The *Jiaochuang xiaoshuo* was a limited account of the transition, covering events only until the Ming's loss of the dynastic capital in 1645. Years later, an updated narrative called the *Mingji yiwen* 明季遺聞 (1657) would be published in the south of China, narrating events up until 1651.³ Two years after its publication, an emissary from Joseon Korea acquired the text, and presented it to the Korean court.⁴ A Japanese publisher reissued the *Mingji yiwen* in an annotated edition in 1662. Alongside imported Chinese texts such as these, the mid-seventeenth century also saw the domestic circulation of texts about the dynastic upheaval written by literate Japanese and Korean individuals. The Korean author of the *史要聚選* *Sayo chwi seon* (preface 1648, printed 1679) began his biographical compilation of Chinese rulers with mythical figures such as Nüwa and Shennong, and ended it with the Ming Chongzhen emperor, whose death had occurred in 1644. Across the East Sea, the Japanese author of the *Minshin tōki* 明清闖記 (1661) travelled from Nagasaki to Kyōto to ask the scholar Ukai Sekisai 鵜飼石齋 (1615–1664) to edit his unofficial history for publication. The *Minshin tōki*, which covered events up until the 1650s, appears in bookseller catalogues in 1692 and 1709.⁵

The writing and circulation of unofficial historical writing about the Ming–Qing transition, as described above, is the focus of the article. The insight provided by

¹Landaoren 懶道人, *Xinbian jiaochuang xiaoshuo* 新編勦闖小說 (Tōkyō: Momijiyama bunko, 1645), Xu 序: 2b–3a.

²Yao Tinglin 姚廷遴, 'Linian ji' 歷年記, in *Qingdai riji huichao* 清代日記匯抄, (ed.) Liu Pinggang 刘平岗 (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1982), p. 54.

³See Devin Fitzgerald, 'The Ming Open Archive and the Global Reading of Early Modern China', PhD thesis, Harvard University, 2020, pp. 215–221, 337–348 for discussion of *Mingji yiwen*'s circulation in East Asia.

⁴*Hyeonjong sillok* 현종실록, 2:4a (16/10/20:1). The *sillok* are cited according to fascicle 卷 and page, followed by the date (reign year, lunar month and day), and the entry number as displayed for the Taebaek sansa gobon 태백산사고본 edition, as made available on the *Joseon wangjo sillok* 조선왕조실록 database of the Guksa pyeonchan wiwonhoe 국사편찬위원회. <http://www.history.go.kr/>, [accessed 22 November 2022].

⁵*Kōeki shojaku mokuroku taizen* 廣益書籍目錄大全 (Kyōto: Yao Ichibei, 1692), fasc 3: 67a; and *Zōeki shojaku mokuroku* 増益書籍目錄 (Kyōto: Maruya Genbei, 1709), fasc 5: 5a.

unofficial, contemporary historical writing is valuable because it encourages scholars to rethink existing narratives of East Asia in the seventeenth century. Historians have focused on two parallel socio-intellectual developments: the study of classical and ancient texts, and the rise of commercial printing; and, with a focus on the impact of these trends on knowledge-production, in particular, how such knowledge contributed to nascent notions of cultural centrality and shared political identity. However, the transnational phenomenon of unofficial, contemporary historiography about the dynastic transition, which was itself a transnational event, suggests the emergence of an intellectual culture of contemporaneity in the seventeenth century. Contemporaneity was 'the perception, shared by a number of human beings, of experiencing a particular event at more or less the same time', which 'may add to a notion of participating in a shared present'.⁶ In contrast to the modern reader's ability to access, within moments, news about distant happenings, the seventeenth-century individual had to wait months or years for information. Furthermore, the individuals able to access that information, though greater than in previous centuries, was nonetheless constrained to a limited circle. As such, the contemporaneity of the contemporary, unofficial historiography of the Ming-Qing transition is characterized in a manner that is specifically pre-modern and East Asian. It was transnational in production, circulation, or subject matter; expressed in an unofficial historical mode; and limited to participants not only educated to literacy in the language of the texts they wrote and read, but also financially and socially capable of acquiring those texts.

Introducing the parameters of the argument

The Ming-Qing dynastic transition cannot be said to have been a simple transfer of power between Ming and Qing, culminating with the fall of the Ming capital in 1644. Rather, the dynastic transition was a major event that dominated much of the seventeenth century in East Asia, from roughly 1618 to 1683. Certain incidents or individuals loom large in the narrative of this time period: incursions by the Later Jin (renamed the Qing in 1636) in the early seventeenth century, the capture of Beijing by the rebel Li Zicheng in 1644, the death of the final Ming emperor Yongli in 1662, and the suppression of a large-scale rebellion in the name of the fallen dynasty in 1681. What these incidents suggest is that, at its most fundamental, the dynastic transition was a military struggle for power between a number of parties in Ming territory, with effects spilling out into the wider world.

Within China itself, regimes that claimed succession to Ming imperial legitimacy emerged in the south, and competed not only with each other for control over the dynasty's nominal territory, but also with new, non-Ming claimants: Li Zicheng, founder of the Shun dynasty in central China (1644–1645); Zhang Xianzhong, founder of the Xi dynasty in the west (1644–1646); the Zheng family, a bastion of anti-Qing resistance based on Taiwan from 1661 to 1683; and the Manchu Qing, who by the mid-eighteenth century had defeated other claimants to consolidate control over a vast dominion that enfolded the former Ming empire alongside other lands to the north and west.

⁶Brendan Dooley, 'Preface', in *The Dissemination of News and the Emergence of Contemporaneity in Early Modern Europe*, (ed.) Brendan Dooley (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), pp. xiii–xiv.

Meanwhile, outside of China, the effects of the transition were also experienced in various ways. The Qing invaded Joseon Korea in 1627 and 1636 as part of a strategy to prevent the kingdom from providing aid to the Ming dynasty, and to make use of Joseon naval troops.⁷ As a consequence of the second invasion, the Joseon crown prince and his brother were taken as hostages to the Qing capital of Shenyang and then to Beijing after its occupation. Meanwhile, Ming loyalist officials, generals, and literati sent 22 requests for military aid to the Tokugawa government (the *bakufu*) in Japan between 1645 and 1686.⁸ In response to these circumstances, *bakufu* officials discussed an invasion of the mainland in 1646, but ultimately decided against direct intervention.⁹ Other requests for aid were made by Ming loyalists to Southeast Asian countries: Vietnam, Burma, and Siam (modern Thailand)—and even to the Vatican in 1650.¹⁰

Over the course of the seventeenth century, literate Chinese recorded their personal experiences of the violence and disruption of dynastic transition in unofficial, contemporary writings: chronicles, diaries, poetry, and drama. Literate non-Chinese, who encountered the transition in multiple guises—shipwrecked sailors, emissaries to various parties on the mainland, observers of the arrivals of Ming loyalist émigrés, and European Jesuit missionaries—circulated Chinese records to international audiences. They also produced their own unofficial, contemporary records.

What constituted contemporary, unofficial historical writing? While the transition itself was an event on a large scale, geographically and politically, it comprised a series of key incidents, which took place between the Jurchen Jin's capture of Fushun in 1618 and the fall of Ming-loyalist-held Taiwan in 1683. Hence, the timescale of 'contemporary history', or history that was written within living memory of the incidents they describe, was not fixed, but shifted as the transition progressed. The article sets this timescale at 80 years (three or four generations) after the last incident described in a given work. For example, unofficial histories ending with the 1636 Manchu invasion should not be written later than 1716, while histories ending with the occupation of Taiwan in 1683 should not be written later than 1763. Therefore, while all the major incidents of the dynastic transition occurred in the seventeenth century, it should be noted that contemporary history written for these incidents may have been written as late as the mid-eighteenth century.

As for 'unofficial history', as a bibliographic category it was variably interpreted by literate individuals in East Asia. Here, it is defined in the following terms: those works containing historical detail about incidents that verifiably took place, or individuals who verifiably existed, and which were written outside of official auspices. These works took the form of a variety of modes and styles. The article will limit its scope to

⁷George Kallander, 'Introduction', in *The Diary of 1636: The Second Manchu Invasion of Korea*, (ed.) George Kallander (New York: Columbia University Press, 2020), p. xl. Also see Kim Il Hwan 김일환, 'Myeong Cheong gyoche gi han Joseon gun'in ui poro cheheom gwa gwhwan ui seosa: Im Bang ui 'Ki Im Gyeongik Saenghwan Shimal' reul jungshim euro' 명청교체기 한 조선 군인의 포로 체험과 귀환의 서사-任墮의 <記任廷益生還始末>를 중심으로, *Dongak eomunhak* 동학어문학62 (2014), pp. 152–153.

⁸By 'literati' in this article, I mean educated individuals who were able to read and write.

⁹Patrizia Carioti, 'The Zheng Regime and the Tokugawa Bakufu: Asking for Japanese Intervention', in *Sea Rovers, Silver, and Samurai: Maritime East Asia in Global History, 1550–1700*, (eds) Tonio Andrade and Xing Hang (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2016), pp. 165, 175.

¹⁰Jiang Wu, *Leaving for the Rising Sun: Chinese Zen Master Yinyuan and the Authenticity Crisis in Early Modern East Asia* (New York: University of Oxford Press, 2015), pp. 105–106.

written prose for which performance was not a primary function, such as narratives, diaries, and chronicles.

By examining the unofficial, contemporary history-writing produced by witnesses of the Ming-Qing transition in China, Korea, and Japan, the article hopes to illuminate a neglected dimension of the existing historiographical narrative of seventeenth-century East Asia. While the current scholarly consensus is that in this time period China, Korea, and Japan saw the emergence of national awareness, through a confluence of intellectual trends, material developments, and historical events, the flip-side of emergent nationalism was an interest in events outside of the polity.¹¹

To illustrate, on the one hand, the seventeenth century in East Asia saw scholars in China, Korea, and Japan advocate for a return to the classics (C: *kaozheng*, J: *kogaku* and *kokugaku*, K: *silhak*); the growth of private publishing and the book trade, including the international book trade; and destabilizing political-military events such as the Japanese invasion of Korea, the Imjin War (1592–1598), and the Ming-Qing transition.¹² These developments, in particular the Ming-Qing transition, encouraged or facilitated a reimagining of the Sinocentric world order, leading to a search for new sources of cultural authority, located outside of China and within one's own polity.¹³ Hence, seventeenth-century drama and literature represented the cultural centre as being located in Japan or Korea; scholars reinterpreted ancient texts, whether Chinese (J: *kogaku*, K: *silhak*) or Japanese (*kokugaku*), in order to make a similar argument; and the Joseon court implemented rites to memorialize the fallen Ming dynasty, thus claiming their succession to the Ming's cultural legitimacy.¹⁴

On the other hand, while there was certainly an inclination among Japanese and Korean intellectuals in the late sixteenth to eighteenth centuries towards generating new, proto-nationalist discourses surrounding identity, this time period was also a key moment in the transnational history of East Asia. The Ming-Qing transition was, again, a significant contribution to this moment. Involving incursions by the Manchu Qing into Joseon Korea and China, it was the second major conflict of the early modern era, after the Imjin War, to be characterized by interactions between two or more political entities or regions. It also saw the production, in more than one language and in more than one country, of unofficial, contemporary historical writing.¹⁵ The diverse

¹¹Peter Kornicki, *Languages, Scripts, and Texts in East Asia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 307–310; Jahyun Kim Haboush, *The Great East Asian War and the Birth of the Korean Nation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), pp. 4–5; Mary Elizabeth Berry, *Japan in Print: Information and Nation in the Early Modern Period* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), pp. 209–211, 224–225.

¹²Wu, *Leaving for the Rising Sun*, pp. 247–251.

¹³Fitzgerald, 'Ming Open Archive', pp. 267–269, 388, 392.

¹⁴Wu, *Leaving for the Rising Sun*, pp. 254–257. For a specific example of a Japanese dramatic work that reinterpreted Japan as the cultural centre, see Satoko Shimazaki, 'Fantastic Histories: The Battles of Coxinga and the Preservation of Ming in Japan', *Frontiers of Literary Studies in China* 9, no. 1 (2015), p. 48. For a discussion of the Joseon commemoration of the Ming dynasty, see Seung B. Kye, 'The Altar of Great Gratitude: A Korean Memory of Ming China under Manchu Dominance, 1704–1894', *Journal of Korean Religions* 5, no. 2 (2014), pp. 71–88.

¹⁵These histories also included accounts produced by Europeans. The ample existence of preceding scholarship; the regional particularity of history as a genre to China, Korea, and Japan; and the historiographical narrative of an early modern turn towards cultural centrality and proto-nationalism have made it prudent to focus the argument on East Asia. Similarly, an argument could be made to include Vietnam as part of 'East Asia'; however, there is a paucity of relevant sources.

provenance of these writings further provides insight into the experiences of non-state actors in the context of the dynastic transition.¹⁶ In light of its transnationality, the Ming-Qing transition and its historiography therefore provides an opportunity to examine a large-scale political shift in East Asia, not on the scale of the nation-state and its consequences for cultural centrality and other forms of proto-nationalism, but of regional networks and cross-border interactions. These include: the import and export of accounts by individuals; the experiences of travellers to and from places embroiled in the fighting; and the interest in contemporary events demonstrated by those observers who spoke to travellers, read their accounts, and wrote their own.

It should be noted that while it would be useful to examine the extent to which the seventeenth-century intellectual culture of contemporaneity reverberated into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, most notably through the continued production of unofficial historical writing about recent events within and across national borders, due to the scope of the task at hand, such an examination is best reserved for future scholarly research. The focus of the current article is not on the continuation of the trend, rather on one particular moment in the seventeenth century.

Furthermore, when discussing an intellectual culture of contemporaneity rooted in unofficial, contemporary texts, it is necessary to recognize that there are multiple kinds of participants in that textual community: producers (including writers and editors) and consumers (those who obtained and read the books). In other words, those who produced knowledge with the intention of circulating it and those who accessed and interpreted that knowledge. This article places an emphasis on the former, for two reasons. Records of circulation are generally lacking for many of these unofficial, privately produced works. Despite this, the presence of evidence showing an increase in the *production* of writing about recent events in the seventeenth century, whether or not it is possible to establish a significant readership for this writing, offers valuable insight into the history of the seventeenth century in East Asia.

By focusing on the endeavours of writers and editors to produce knowledge about the Ming-Qing transition in China, Japan, and Korea, it is possible to gain insight into three aspects of history. The first of these is history itself: how people in the seventeenth century conceived of and understood the act of writing about the past. The second of these is historical writing: to a greater extent than their predecessors, witnesses of the various upheavals of the dynastic transition considered it necessary to write in an informal medium about recent events. The third of these is modern historians' understanding of the role of the Ming-Qing transition in seventeenth-century East Asia: as an event with transnational consequences, it caught the imagination of writers across the region, whose interests ranged from describing the history of the Ming as a whole, the history of the transition, or the trajectory of selected incidents. In that way, the Ming-Qing transition was the continuation of a trend that began with the Imjin War (1592–1598), in which a transnational historiography was the outcome of an event with

¹⁶Peter Perdue has defined transnational history as meaning 'primary sources in more than one language, in more than one country, which describe interactions between two or more nations or large regions, and which stress the interaction of external forces and non-state actors with internal developments'. Peter Perdue, 'Reflections on the Transnational and Comparative Imperial History of Asia: Its Promises, Perils, and Prospects', *Thesis Eleven* 139, no. 1 (2017), p. 132.

regional impact. While a deeper understanding of the readership of the unofficial, contemporary histories surrounding the transition would be beneficial, and an attempt to outline that readership is made below, it should be noted that the history-writers and the histories they produced are in themselves deserving of scholarly consideration.

In summary, a perceived demand for, or necessity of, privately produced information about contemporary events, including events outside of the polity, combined with increased access via transnational networks to that information to create an epistemic shift towards contemporaneity. This shift, at least in the seventeenth century, highlights the presence of cross-currents in East Asian intellectual history. The emergence of a shared political identity (proto-nationalism) coexisted with the nascent and limited perception of a shared present, which reached across political borders (contemporaneity). The article will make this argument by sketching the landscape of unofficial, contemporary historiography as produced and circulated in China, Japan, and Korea about events from the Imjin War (1592–1598) to the Ming-Qing transition (1618–1683).

The landscape of unofficial historical writing in seventeenth-century East Asia

Though I am unrefined, I have simply penned a document. It begins from the *bingchen* year of the Wanli reign [1616] and extends to the *jiashen* year of the Chongzhen reign [1644], a period of thirty years, and is divided into twenty-four *juan*, to be titled *Beilüe*. Here has been recorded in writing a summary of the contemporary affairs of the northern capital.

予也不揣，漫編一集。上自神宗丙辰，下迄思宗甲申，凡三十年，分二十四卷，題曰北略。以誌北都時事之大略焉耳

—*Mingji beilüe* 明季北略, 1671 preface by author Ji Liuqi 計六奇¹⁷

The seventeenth century saw a key moment in the development of historical writing across East Asia: the proliferation of unofficial historical writing about contemporary events. While historical writing had long been used to narrate events of distant times, there was a growing interest in writing about the present in late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century China, Korea, and Japan. The author of the Chinese unofficial history *Mingji beilüe* elucidates this change in the extract above, where he emphasizes the importance of writing a record of contemporary affairs, such that ‘the doings of the time should not be obliterated’.

The historiographical turn towards unofficial, contemporary history was one that extended across the region. It stemmed from a combination of material and epistemic shifts, which prompted changes in the circumstances surrounding the production and circulation of histories. However, the historiographical turn generally has not been seen by scholars as a regional phenomenon, rather as a national or local trend.¹⁸ This

¹⁷Ji Liuqi 計六奇, *Mingji beilüe* 明季北略 (1671), preface 自序: 1a.

¹⁸Key scholarship in English on unofficial, contemporary history-writing in China includes: Han Li, ‘News, Public Opinions, and History: Fiction on Current Events in Seventeenth-Century China’, PhD thesis, University of California, Irvine, 2009, and Paul Vierthaler, ‘Quasi-History and Public Knowledge: A Social History of Late Ming and Early Qing Unofficial Historical Narratives’, PhD thesis, Yale University, 2014.

is not to say that as a regional phenomenon, it has not been the subject of scholarly interest. Kiri Paramore and Devin Fitzgerald are two scholars who use historical writing to explore the creation of regional and global information orders centring on China.¹⁹ There are also scholars who have employed historical writing as sources from which to excavate images and perceptions held about China in Japan or Korea, or vice-versa.²⁰ Nonetheless, due to practical language barriers, most of this scholarship on historical writing has either focused on works in one language, such as Classical Chinese, or in one country.²¹ Alternatively, they enumerate works in more than one language and/or country without in-depth exploration of their significance as vehicles of knowledge-production and knowledge-transmission across borders.²²

Aside from the limitations of national boundaries, historical writing in East Asia has often been studied with the aim of deepening scholarly understanding of official history, in particular the relationship between official history and court politics.²³ Private history-writing, albeit with a few well-known exceptions, has received less attention from scholars, an omission that most likely stems from the amorphousness of the genre's definition.²⁴ Where private history in early modern East Asia has been the subject of scholarly study, it has often been examined primarily in terms of what it reveals about court politics or long-term cultural memory; or as a vehicle for exploring the boundary between history and fiction in pre-modern times.²⁵

In the case of Japan and Korea, see Peter Kornicki, 'The Enmeiin Affair of 1803: The Spread of Information in the Tokugawa Period', *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 42, no. 2 (1982), pp. 503–533; and Jahyun Kim Haboush, 'Dead Bodies in the Postwar Discourse of Identity in Seventeenth-Century Korea: Subversion and Literary Production in the Private Sector', *The Journal of Asian Studies* 62, no. 2 (2003), pp. 415–442.

¹⁹Fitzgerald, 'Ming Open Archive'. Also, Kiri Paramore, 'The Transnational Archive of the Sinosphere: The Early Modern East Asian Information Order', in *Archives and Information in the Early Modern World*, (eds) Kate Peters, Alexandra Walsham and Liesbeth Corens (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 285–310.

²⁰See Ng Wai-Ming, *Imagining China in Tokugawa Japan: Legends, Classics, and Historical Terms* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2017). See also Marshall Craig, *China, Korea, and Japan at War, 1592–1598: Eyewitness Accounts* (London: Routledge, 2020), and Wang Sixiang, 'Loyalty, History, and Empire: Qian Qianyi and his Korean Biographies', in *Representing Lives in China: Forms of Biography in the Ming-Qing Period 1368–1911*, (eds) Ihor Pidhainy, Roger Des Forges and Grace S. Fong (New York: Cornell University Press, 2018), pp. 299–332.

²¹Fitzgerald represents an exception, but the works in other languages which he introduces into the discourse are primarily European; when discussing China, Korea, and Japan, he relies on Classical Chinese works. Fitzgerald, 'The Ming Open Archive'.

²²See Choi Gwan, 'The Imjin Waeran in Korean and Japanese Literatures', in *The East Asian War, 1592–1598: International Relations, Violence, and Memory*, (ed.) James B. Lewis (Oxford: Routledge, 2015), pp. 340–356.

²³For China, see Charles Hartman, *The Making of Song Dynasty History: Sources and Narratives, 960–1279 CE* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021) for a recent example. For Japan, see John Brownlee, *Japanese Historians and the National Myths, 1600–1945: The Age of the Gods and Emperor Jimmu* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1997); and Luke Roberts, *Performing the Great Peace: Political Space and Open Secrets in Tokugawa Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2012), Chapter 7. For Korea, see Don Baker, 'Writing History in Pre-Modern Korea', in *The Oxford History of Historical Writing. Volume 3: 1400–1800*, (eds) José Rabasa, Masayuki Sato, Edoardo Tortarolo and Daniel Woolf (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 103–118.

²⁴Vierthaler, 'Quasi-History and Public Knowledge', pp. 7–12.

²⁵Examples include Vierthaler's 'Quasi-History and Public Knowledge', which examines 'quasi-historical' Chinese texts that include both narratives understood as unofficial history, and also works more commonly understood as novels. See also Thomas Keirstead, '史学 / Shigaku / History', *Working Words: New Approaches to Japanese Studies* (2012), <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/32t6g8nf>, [accessed 22 November 2022]. Keirstead explores the boundaries between history and fiction, and highlights the

The following section will explore definitions of unofficial history in East Asia, and establish that from the late sixteenth century onwards, there was a new demand for unofficial narratives of recent events. The section will then examine the particular significance of the Ming-Qing transition as an event that prompted the writing of unofficial histories in China, Korea, and Japan. While unofficial, contemporary history-writing was a concurrent development in all three countries, the dynastic transition in Ming China offers the opportunity to study history-writing as a regional phenomenon.

Within the boundaries of national history, scholars of the late Ming dynasty in China have noted the confluence of two trends. One of these trends was a change in state archival and compilation practices that saw the decentralization of historiographical production and the opening of official archives, which in turn encouraged scepticism about official historical narratives. The second trend was the flourishing of the print industry, which facilitated—and was facilitated by—the growth and diversification of reading audiences.²⁶ These trends promoted a greater demand for, and the production and circulation of, unofficial histories about contemporary events. The genre of ‘unofficial history’, translated as *yeshi* 野史 by modern historians, incorporated an amorphous, ill-defined group of writings, which were organized by imperial bibliographers under labels including history, miscellaneous history, or *xiaoshuo* 小說, commonly translated as ‘novels’.²⁷ Historians have considered *xiaoshuo*, particularly where self-labelled, as indicative of fictionalized narratives. However, the history of the term prior to the introduction of the Western concept of ‘fiction’ in the twentieth century suggests an ambiguous distinction between ‘fiction’ and ‘history’. *Xiaoshuo* delineated a ‘short and petty tale or talk, fictional or factual, narrative or non-narrative, meant for entertaining people and/or explaining social or supernatural phenomena’.²⁸ Hence, unofficial historical works were unified not by a commonly accepted label or clearly delineated genre characteristics, but by two key features: they contained historical information and were not produced under official auspices. As unofficial histories, at times they also stoked official disapproval and censorship.

range of works that were considered ‘history’ in the Tokugawa period. See also Si Nae Park, *The Korean Vernacular Story: Telling Tales of Contemporary Chosŏn in Sinographic Writing* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2020), which examines Korean *yadam* as unofficial works written in Sinitic script in a comparatively vernacular register, and which described contemporary or recent events.

²⁶Fitzgerald, ‘The Ming Open Archive’, pp. 427–429. See also Aaron Throness, ‘An Age of Exalted Harmony? Deciphering the Contested Historiography of the Jingtai Reign’, *Ming Studies* 83 (2021), pp. 46–47. The expansion of print and reading audiences in the Ming dynasty is discussed in Cynthia Brokaw, ‘On the History of the Book in China’, in *Printing and Book Culture in Late Imperial China*, (eds) Cynthia Brokaw and Kai-wing Chow (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), pp. 24–29.

²⁷Vierthaler, ‘Quasi-History and Public Knowledge’, pp. 9–10. Stephen H. West, ‘Crossing Over: Huizong in the Afterglow, or the Deaths of a Troubling Emperor’, in *Emperor Huizong and Late Northern Song China: The Politics of Culture and the Culture of Politics*, (eds) Patricia Buckley Ebrey and Maggie Bickford (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2006), p. 577. Wen Xin 温馨, ‘Cong “Qinding siku quanshu zongmu” kan Ming Qing yeshi de wenti guannian’ 从《钦定四库全书总目》看清清野史的文体观念, *Guangxi keji shifan xueyuan xuebao* 广西科技师范学院学报 32, no. 2 (2017), p. 51.

²⁸Zhao Xiaohuan, ‘Xiaoshuo as a Cataloguing Term in Traditional Chinese Bibliography’, *Sungkyun Journal of East Asian Studies* 5, no. 2 (2005), p. 172.

For example, from the eighteenth century onwards, the early Qing regime censored unofficial historical narratives of the dynastic transition.²⁹

The scholarship on the writing and circulation of unofficial histories about recent events in late Ming China sees parallels in scholarship on historical writing in mid-Joseon Korea and early Tokugawa Japan. While non-state-commissioned print and publishing did not take off in the same way in early modern Korea as it did in contemporary China and Japan, with hand-copied manuscripts continuing to be important as a means of information transmission, 'a new mode of private printing emerged whereby individuals used state-owned facilities to print books based on personal tastes and needs'.³⁰ There was also a diversification of the reading audience to include non-elite literate individuals, and women.³¹ Against this background of developments in print and reading, the wars of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries encouraged a demand for timely information about recent events in the form of unofficial historical writing.³²

Similarly to Chinese *yeshi* (K: *yashi*), these Korean unofficial histories have been variously defined by contemporary and modern scholars. Works produced after the sixteenth century in Joseon, which are labelled *yashi*, have a tendency to correspond with earlier materials called 'miscellany, collected discourses, bitter remarks, trivial records, or daily records'.³³ As such, the scholar Kim Kyung Soo has argued that unofficial history should be defined as '[a work that is compiled by] the officials of the court or by scholars without political office, whom, on the basis of their personal concerns, organise the details of contemporary history and in this way [provide a] contrast with officially-compiled "official history"'.³⁴ This definition corresponds to the unifying characteristics of Ming-dynasty *yeshi* as delineated above. I would further argue that unofficial travel records written by Joseon envoys, called *jocheon rok* (when travelling to the Ming capital) and *yeonhaeng nok* (when travelling to the early Qing capital of Shenyang and, after 1644, to Qing-controlled Beijing), may constitute a form of unofficial, contemporary history. While usually written by officials appointed as envoys, they were not commissioned by the court and were rarely published. As such, they offer important contemporary, unofficial perspectives on the competition over territory between the Ming and Qing regimes.

²⁹See Timothy Brook, 'Censorship in Eighteenth-Century China: A View from the Book Trade', *Canadian Journal of History* 23, no. 2 (1988), pp. 177–196.

³⁰Park, *Korean Vernacular Story*, pp. 172, 177.

³¹Michael Kim, 'Literary Production, Circulating Libraries, and Private Publishing: The Popular Reception of Vernacular Fiction Texts in the Late Chosŏn Dynasty', *Journal of Korean Studies* 9, no. 1 (2004), p. 4. See also Thomas Quartermain, 'Socio-political Identity in Chosŏn Korea during the Japanese and Manchu Invasions 1567–1637: Barbarians at the Gates', PhD thesis, University of Oxford, 2016, p. 76.

³²Choi Won Oh 최원오, '17 segi seosamunhak e natanan wolgyeong ui yangsang gwa chogukjeok gonggan ui chulyeon' 17세기 서사문학에 나타난 越境의 양상과 超國의 공간의 출현, *Gojeon munhak yeongu* 고전문학연구 36 (2009), pp. 217–218. See also Lee Seo Hee 이서희, 'Byeongja horan silgi seobalryu ui teukjing gwa uiui' 병자호란 실기 서발류의 특징 과 의의, *Eomun nonjip* 어문논집 77 (2016), pp. 41–68.

³³Kim Kyung Soo 金慶洙, 'Joseon jeongi yashi pyeonchan ui sahasajeok gochal' 朝鮮前期野史 編纂의 史學史的 考察, *Yeoksa wa silhak* 역사와실학 19–20 (2001), p. 158.

³⁴*Ibid.*, p. 159.

Meanwhile, the production and circulation of writing about recent events among a large and diversified readership was also a feature of early Tokugawa society.³⁵ Compilations of biographies, such as the *kōshiden*, or biographies of filial persons, began including contemporary figures in the seventeenth century.³⁶ Prose narratives, categorized as *jitsurokutai shōsetsu* 実録体小説 by modern scholars, also saw increased production and circulation, usually in manuscript form.³⁷ It should be noted that *jitsurokutai shōsetsu*, like the Chinese term *yeshi* and the Korean term *yashi*, is a modern bibliographical category that may incorporate a wide variety of works, while excluding others that in early Tokugawa times may have been considered historical works to some degree or another.³⁸ For example, the Imperial Library (Tokyo Library) issued a catalogue in 1907 that divided *shōsetsu* into 16 categories, including *jitsurokutai shōsetsu*; however, earlier nineteenth-century catalogues did not include this category, as demonstrated by Laura Moretti's exploration of booksellers' catalogues from 1666–1801.³⁹ These catalogues were more likely to categorize works of unofficial history under different headings, such as 'military treatises'.⁴⁰ Nonetheless, despite the amorphousness of 'unofficial history' as a genre, it is clear that in early Tokugawa Japan, as in contemporary China and Korea, there was a shift in historical writing towards writing about recent events, in particular recent events of a military nature.⁴¹

In all three countries, it should be noted that reading audiences, though expanded and diversified compared to those of previous centuries, were nonetheless limited to those who could read the language and script in which the material was written. In the seventeenth century, these included Classical Chinese, also known as Literary Sinitic, and distinct from the vernacular, and in Japan as *kanbun* 漢文 and Korea as *hanmun* 漢文; vernacular Chinese; Classical Chinese with marks to enable Japanese or Korean reading order, known as *kunten kundoku* 訓点訓読 in Japan and as *idu* 吏讀 in Korea; or Classical Japanese and Classical Chinese mixed to varying degrees in syntax or script: *hentai kanbun* 変体漢文, *wakan konkōbun* 和漢混交文; or Classical Japanese written completely in Japanese *kana* 假名 syllabary; or Korean written in Korean *hangeul* 韓字 syllabary. There are also different registers of writing, even where one script or one language is used, as Park Si Nae argues with respect to an eighteenth-century Korean *yadam* 野談 (a miscellany of stories about the contemporary world of Joseon Korea). This *yadam* used Classical Chinese script in a more vernacular register.⁴²

³⁵Laura Moretti, *Pleasure in Profit: Popular Prose in Seventeenth-Century Japan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2020), pp. 66, 294–295. Berry, *Japan in Print*, pp. 14–18.

³⁶Motoi Katsumata, 'Monks as Advocates of Filial Piety: The History of Buddhist *Kōshiden* in the Early Edo Period', *Proceedings of the Association for Japanese Literary Studies* 16 (2015), pp. 35–44.

³⁷For a discussion of *jitsuroku*, see Peter Kornicki, *The Book in Japan: A Cultural History from the Beginnings to the Nineteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), pp. 102–111.

³⁸While Keirstead does not refer specifically to *jitsurokutai shōsetsu*, he argues that modern definitions of *shigaku* or history came to exclude war chronicles and popular histories. Keirstead, 'Shigaku', p. 15.

³⁹Kōno Kimiko, "'Literature' (*bungaku*) and "The Novel" (*shōsetsu*) as Book Classifications in Modern Japan and China', *Waseda RILAS Journal* 6 (2018), pp. 31–32. See Laura Moretti, 'The Japanese Early-Modern Publishing Market Unveiled: A Survey of Edo-Period Booksellers' Catalogues', *East Asian Publishing and Society* 2, no. 2 (2012), Appendix, pp. 199–308.

⁴⁰Moretti, 'Japanese Early-Modern Publishing Market', p. 233.

⁴¹Inoue Yasushi 井上泰至, *Kinsei kankō gunshoron: kyōkun goraku kōshō* 近世刊行軍書論 教訓・娯楽・考証 (Tōkyō: Kasama Shōin, 2014), pp. 37–38.

⁴²Park, *Korean Vernacular Story*, pp. 125–126.

With regard to unofficial, contemporary historical accounts specifically, during the seventeenth century in China, some were written in a more vernacular prose form, with the *Jiaochuang xiaoshuo* as an example; while in Japan, some were written in *kana*, in particular *jitsuroku* accounts of current affairs; and in Korea, some tales, set against the background of recent historical events, were written in the vernacular instead of Sinitic script. Those unofficial, contemporary accounts dealing specifically with the Ming-Qing transition, with which this article is concerned, tended to have been written largely in Classical Chinese in China and Korea; and in either Classical Chinese with *kunten* marks, or *wakan konkōbun* or *kana* in Japan. Therefore the reading audiences in China and Korea are likely to have been limited to the educated elite (usually literate men), while reading audiences in Japan varied depending on the language and script in which a given text was written. For example, the *Minki ibun* (C: *Mingji yiwen*), an imported text with a 1662 edition annotated with *kunten* reading marks, would have required the ability to read Classical Chinese in a *kunten kundoku* style. Meanwhile, the *Minshin tōki*, a 1661 account of the transition in the mixed grammar and syllabary of *wakan konkōbun*, and in a handwritten script called *kuzushiji* 崩字, would have been perhaps more accessible but still restricted to those who could understand both language and script.⁴³ Language and script also influenced which texts (and which subjects of interest) survived, as can be seen in extant seventeenth and early eighteenth-century bookseller catalogues in Japan.

Another barrier to the acquisition of certain texts was the price of books in the seventeenth century. While in China the price of books was falling in the middle decades of the century, their cost was most likely still beyond the financial capacity of the average day labourer. However, they were affordable to literati and merchants.⁴⁴ In Japan, a bookseller's catalogue from 1696 establishes the *Minshin tōki* as selling at the price of 13 *monme* 匁, which equalled roughly one-third of a maidservant's annual wages in 1667–1773.⁴⁵ Meanwhile, one imported Chinese text, the *Minki ibun*, cost five *monme* five *fun* 分, while a second imported text, the *Chūkō iryaku* 中興偉略 (C: *Zhongxing weilüe*), cost one *monme* five *fun*. Works in Japan about recent events that had happened domestically may have been more available to the general reader. For example, the *Ōsaka monogatari* 大坂物語, which told the story of the siege of Ōsaka castle in 1614–1615, and was written in *kana*, cost the same as the *Chūkō iryaku*, but would certainly have been easier to read, as the latter was written in Classical Chinese with *kunten* marks.⁴⁶ With regard to the acquisition of books in seventeenth-century Korea, there is little available scholarship concerning prices. Park Si Nae has argued that books tended to be 'circulated through informal networks of people' who obtained texts through borrowing, copying, or buying from book peddlers.⁴⁷

As can be seen from the above, in all three countries, writing about recent events flourished against a background of the wider accessibility of print and/or a greater

⁴³ *Kanbunban shojaku mokuroku* 寛文板書籍目録 (Kyōto: Nishimura Matazaemon, 1670), pp. 131a–131b. See also the 1692 *Kōeki shojaku mokuroku taizen*, fasc 3:67a.

⁴⁴ Daria Berg, 'Female Self Fashioning in Late Imperial China: How the Gentlewoman and the Courtesan Edited Her Story and Rewrote Hi/story', in *Reading China: Fiction, History and the Dynamics of Discourse. Essays in Honour of Professor Glen Dudbridge*, (ed.) Daria Berg (Leiden: Brill, 2007), p. 260–261.

⁴⁵ Moretti, *Pleasure in Profit*, p. 94.

⁴⁶ *Zōeki shojaku mokuroku* 増益書籍目録 (Kyōto: Maruya Genbei, 1696), fasc 2: 3a, 18b; fasc 5: 5a, 9a.

⁴⁷ Park, *Korean Vernacular Story*, pp. 174–177.

distribution of manuscripts to an expanded reading audience. Alongside these socio-economic developments were historical circumstances of political instability: invasion, banditry, and warfare, which resulted in efforts both on the part of government to consolidate its authority and determine what should enter into formal, cultural memory, and also on the part of private, non-state actors to produce and circulate informal, documentary sources about their experiences. The readership of their texts, though larger and more diverse than in previous centuries, was nonetheless restricted to those able to fulfil two conditions: the ability to read the language and script in which the texts were written, and the ability to obtain manuscripts either from acquaintances in their social network or from book traders at relatively expensive prices. This was particularly the case for unofficial, contemporary historical works about the Ming-Qing transition, as these tended to be written in a more literary script and language, and to be sold at higher prices than other writings. Hence, those who participated in the intellectual culture of contemporaneity of the seventeenth century were largely the educated elite. Despite this, the phenomenon of literati choosing to write about recent events, when their predecessors had often chosen to write about events further back in the past, demonstrates a socio-intellectual shift in the seventeenth century. At least in educated circles, there was an emerging sense of a shared present, one which encouraged individuals to produce knowledge about recent events with the intention of circulating it to others of similar educational background, financial capability, or social network.

Writing about recent events in China, Korea, and Japan: War, invasion, rebellion, and natural disaster

Generally speaking, the proliferation of unofficial histories from the late sixteenth to early eighteenth centuries in East Asia addressed a number of ongoing domestic and transnational or regional events. Korean writers were preoccupied with the Imjin War and key incidents in the Ming-Qing transition, most notably the Manchu invasions of their own country which were part of the Qing strategy for conquest of the Ming. Ming writers wrote about the Imjin War, the Ming-Qing transition, major natural disasters, and the lives of certain political individuals such as the powerful Tianqi-era eunuch Wei Zhongxian.⁴⁸ Japanese writers, for whom the Ming-Qing transition was a more distant event than the political developments and military conflicts of their own country, wrote about a plethora of subjects: the Imjin War; the Battle of Sekigahara (1600), which was a watershed in the unification of Japan under Tokugawa Ieyasu; the Siege of Ōsaka Castle (1614–1615), which saw the final defeat of major opposition to the Tokugawa shogunate; unrest such as the Shimabara Rebellion (1638) and the rebellion of Yui Shosetsu (1651); and large-scale disasters such as the Meireki Fire (1657) and the Kanbun Ōmi-Wakasa Earthquake (1662). All these events generated unofficial historical writing not long after they occurred. The table below illustrates the rapidity of production. The Imjin War and the Ming-Qing transition occasioned a large amount of literature in comparison to other events. As such, they are elucidated in dedicated tables below.

⁴⁸Ying Zhang, *Confucian Image Politics: Masculine Morality in Seventeenth-Century China* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2016), pp. 52–53.

Table 1: Unofficial, contemporary records about recent events in China, Japan, and Korea

Region	Event	Unofficial historical works
Korea	Rebellion of Jeong Yeo Rip (1589)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Gichuk rok</i> 己丑錄 (before 1618)
Japan	Sekigahara (1600)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Sekigahara shimatsu ki</i> 関ヶ原始末記 (1656)
Korea	Gwanghaegun's reign and dethronement (1608–1623)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Gamjae ilgi</i> 感齋日記 (1608–1610) • <i>Gyechuk ilgi</i> 癸丑日記 (circa 1623)⁴⁹ • <i>Hanghae nojeong ilgi</i> 航海路程日記 (1623) • <i>Liangchao congxin lu</i> 兩朝從信錄 (1630)
Japan	Siege of Ōsaka Castle (1614–1615)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Ōsaka monogatari</i> 大阪物語 (1615)⁵⁰ • <i>Naniwa mukashi banashi sanban zoku</i> 難波昔話三番続 (1686)
China	The eunuch Wei Zhongxian's rise and fall (1620–1627)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Jingshi yinyang meng</i> 警世陰陽夢 'A Dream of Light and Dark to Admonish the World' (1628) • <i>Qi Zhen liang chao bofu lu</i> 啓禎兩朝剝復錄 (before 1644)
China	Wangongchang Explosion (1626)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Tianbian dichao</i> 天變邸抄 (collected in the miscellany <i>Songtian lubi</i> pub. 1629)⁵¹
Japan	Shimabara Rebellion (1638)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Kirishitan monogatari</i> 吉利支丹物語 (1639)⁵² • <i>Shimabara ki</i> 嶋原記 (1673)
Japan	Rebellion of Yui Shosetsu (1651)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Yui kongenki</i> 油井根元記 (1682)
Japan	Meireki Fire (1657)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Musashi abumi</i> むさしあぶみ (1661)
Japan	Kanbun Ōmi-Wakasa Earthquake (1662)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Kanameishi</i> かなめいし (1662)

Source: Compiled by the author of the article on the basis of a variety of primary and secondary materials.

⁴⁹ Park Yoon Ho 박윤호, “‘Gyechuk ilgi’ wa ‘Tosa nikki’ ui ilgi munhwa ui hwansang’ 『계축일기(癸丑日記)』와 『토사넛키(土佐日記)』의 일기문학의 환상, *Namdo munhwa yeongu* 남도문화연구 38 (2019), p. 246. Park argues that the *Gyechuk ilgi*, which covers the ten years between the imprisonment of Queen Inmok's father and son, was written directly after Gwanghaegun's dethronement in 1623.

⁵⁰ Jan C Leuchtenberger, 'Demons and Conquerors: The West, Japan and the World in Early-Modern Kirishitan Texts', PhD thesis, University of Michigan, 2005, pp. 18–19.

⁵¹ Feng Naixi, 'Mushroom Cloud over the Northern Capital: Writing the Tianqi Explosion in the Seventeenth Century', *Late Imperial China* 41, no. 1 (2020), p. 72.

⁵² Leuchtenberger, 'Demons and Conquerors', pp. 18–19.

Table 1 makes it clear that interest in writing unofficial histories about contemporary events was not a trend limited to writing about the Imjin War or the Ming-Qing transition, that is to say, events of regional significance involving multiple parties from different states and regions. Rather, the trend towards writing contemporary, unofficial histories extended to literate people in all three countries, and their subjects included a wide range of current affairs. The history-writers hailed from a range of socio-economic backgrounds, though the majority were male and literate. Some works, such as the *Gyechuk ilgi* (1613), *Tianbian dichao* (circa 1629), and *Kirishitan monogatari* (1639), were compiled by unknown authors. Some works were written by authors from a moderate social background, such as the *Liangchao congxin lu* (1630), written by Shen Guoyuan 沈國元. Shen was a licentiate scholar or *shengyuan* 生員 who had passed county-level examinations but who did not hold government office.⁵³ The number of *shengyuan* degree-holders in the late Ming had grown exponentially, from 30,000 in the mid-fifteenth century to 500,000 by the late sixteenth to early seventeenth centuries.⁵⁴ In other words, Shen occupied a privileged status afforded to a small percentage of the literate male population; however, this status had become more widely available by the seventeenth century. Meanwhile, Asai Ryōi 淺井了意, the author of the *Musashi abumi* and the *Kanameishi*, came from a family that had headed a Buddhist temple before encountering misfortune and losing their home.⁵⁵ Hence, it could be argued that in the seventeenth century in China, Korea, and Japan, news and information about recent events was being propagated through the medium of history by authors from a greater diversity of social strata than in previous centuries.

A key difference between writing about the events in Table 1 and writing about the Imjin War and the Ming-Qing transition is that unofficial histories written about the latter saw greater cross-border circulation. This was particularly the case for Chinese unofficial histories about the Ming-Qing transition, as will be seen below. In contrast, only one of the historical works listed in Table 1, the *Liangchao congxin lu* 兩朝從信錄, travelled beyond its writer's polity, reaching Korea from China in 1632.⁵⁶ Information about the events in Table 1 did travel rapidly within the region using means other than unofficial history, as demonstrated by the speed at which news of the Shimabara Rebellion (December 1637–April 1638) reached Korea from Japan; the Korean court discussed the Shimabara Rebellion at the end of April 1638 and again in early June.⁵⁷ In another example, the overthrow of the Joseon ruler Gwanhaegun in favour of King Injo in 1623 was of demonstrable interest to inhabitants of Ming China. This is clear in the nature of the records available for the Injo coup, which included not only Korean contemporary records, but also the accounts of Joseon envoys to Beijing such as the

⁵³Su Feng 苏峰, 'Shen Guoyuan yu "Liangchao congxinlu yanjiu"' 沈國元与《两朝从信录》研究, Master's thesis, Zhongyang Minzu Daxue, 2015, p. 7.

⁵⁴J. P. Park, *Art by the Book: Painting Manuals and the Leisure Life in Late Ming China* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2012), p. 12.

⁵⁵Michael Alan Levine, 'Chronicle Catastrophe and Constructing Urban Destruction: Asai Ryōi's "Musashi Abumi" and "Kanameishi"', Master's thesis, University of Colorado, 2016, p. 3.

⁵⁶*Seungjeongwon ilgi* 승정원일기, 38:22a (Injo 10/8/22:3/9). The *Seungjeongwon ilgi* are cited according to volume 책 and page number, followed by the date (reign year, lunar month, and day), and the entry number, as detailed on the *Seungjeongwon ilgi* 승정원일기 database of the Guksa pyeonchan wiwonhoe 국사편찬위원회. <http://www.history.go.kr/>, [accessed 22 November 2022].

⁵⁷*Seungjeongwon ilgi*, 64:158a (Injo 16/5/3:20/20). Also see *Injo sillok* 인조실록, 36:24b (16/3/13:1).

Hanghae nojeong ilgi 航海路程日記 (1623), and Ming unofficial histories such as the *Liangchao congxin lu* (1630).⁵⁸

From the above, it can be seen that Table 1 offers two important takeaways. The first is that there emerged, after the sixteenth century, a trend towards the writing of unofficial historical accounts of recent events. The second is that the transnationality of most of these works was limited; unofficial histories regarding domestic events were not often circulated across national borders and only a small number of authors wrote unofficial histories about events that had happened outside their own polities. The Imjin War and the Ming-Qing transition and their historiographies differed, both of these being transnational conflicts with regional consequences. The former involved armies from China, Korea, and Japan on Korean soil between 1592 and 1598, and had a significant impact on international relations within East Asia. Meanwhile, the latter saw the invasion of Korea by the Qing, Ming loyalist emigrants to Japan, and the Qing conquest of Ming China. It resulted in a material and intellectual crisis for the seventeenth-century Joseon state, as Joseon Korea recovered from the invasion and attempted to negotiate a new relationship with the Qing and the Ming. The dynastic transition also set in motion various smaller-scale consequences for the Tokugawa, including the founding of the Ōbaku Zen sect of Buddhism by Chinese monks.⁵⁹

A survey of unofficial histories written about the Imjin War and the Ming-Qing transition attests to the large number of unofficial, contemporary histories written about both regional events. With regard to accounts of the Imjin War produced within 80 years of the end of the conflict, that is, before 1678, the author has located five Chinese, 12 Korean, and 16 Japanese accounts.⁶⁰ These include diaries written between 1592 and 1598, as well as accounts of the entire conflict written after the Japanese withdrawal. In particular, the proliferation of Japanese accounts about the Imjin War has led scholars to suggest that ‘war...shifted the main purpose of publishing from *preserving* to *communicating* information’ in seventeenth-century Japan.⁶¹ Aside from straightforward history-writing, the Japanese invasion of Korea also spurred transnational literary output in other ways. Ming generals returning from the Imjin War collected and published Korean poetry, which became the basis for further poetry collections during the Ming-Qing transition, one example being Qian Qianyi’s 錢謙益 *Liechao shiji* 列朝詩集.⁶² However, in terms not of production but circulation, the reception of Imjin War historical writing was less transnational than the war it described or the writers who created it, as it was largely limited to domestic audiences.

In contrast, the Ming-Qing conflict, which was longer in duration, incorporated multiple key incidents over the period 1618–1683, and ranged across a larger

⁵⁸Ji Nan 季南, ‘Chaoxian wangchao yu Ming Qing shuji jiaoliu yanjiu’ 朝鮮王朝与明清书籍交流研究, PhD thesis, Yanbian Daxue, 2015, p. 109.

⁵⁹Wu, *Leaving for the Rising Sun*, pp. 2–4.

⁶⁰This does not include 70 works that Murai considers to not ‘qualify fully as *oboegaki*’, defined as such by the length of the work. See Murai Shōsuke, ‘Post-War Domain Source Material on Hideyoshi’s Invasion of Korea: The Wartime Memoirs of Shimazu Soldiers’, in *The East Asian War, 1592–1598: International Relations, Violence, and Memory*, (ed.) James B. Lewis (Oxford: Routledge, 2015), p. 112.

⁶¹Janice Shizue Kanemitsu, ‘Extraordinary Exemplars in the Period Pieces of Chikamatsu Monzaemon’, PhD thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 2008, p. 125.

⁶²Rho Kyung-hee 노경희, ‘17 segi jeonbangi Myeong mundan ui Joseon siseonjib ganhaeng gwa Joseon hanshi e daehan’ 17세기 전반기 명문단의 조선시선집 간행과 조선한시에 대한, *Hanguk hanmunhak yeongu* 한국한문학회연구47 (2011), pp. 33–63.

geography than the Imjin War, resulted in a historiography that was not only overall greater in volume, but also tended to include updated information about individuals and events new to the trajectory of the dynastic transition. For example, unofficial histories describing the fall of Beijing in 1644, that is, histories written before 1724, include more than 30 Chinese, six Japanese (and more than three Chinese texts annotated into a Japanese reading style), and over ten Korean accounts. Regarding the Manchu invasion of 1636, unofficial histories dating to before 1716 include three Chinese records and nearly 30 Korean accounts. Over the course of the transition as a whole, records that described the beginning of the conflict in the early seventeenth century also sought to address events such as the death of the Yongli emperor in 1662 and the fall of Zheng-held Taiwan to the Qing in 1683. Indeed, many of the histories enumerated above, which mostly describe the fall of Beijing, incorporated new and updated information on more recent events. The *Minshin tōki*, completed in 1661 and quoted at the beginning of the section, began with the fall of Beijing in 1644 and went on to describe loyalist Ming resistance up to the 1650s. The *Minshin gundan kokusen'ya chūgiden* 明清軍談国姓爺忠義伝, completed in 1717, narrated events up until 1682.⁶³ Conversely, the nature of the unofficial, contemporary historiography for the Imjin War was demonstrably different. While histories such as the *Sei kan roku* 征韓録 (1671) included information from newer histories written after 1598, they did not incorporate significant information on more recent events.⁶⁴ This was because the Imjin War had ended after a six-year period, in 1598, while the dynastic transition extended over a much longer period of time.

As such, the historiography of the Ming-Qing transition offers more pronounced insights into the way in which unofficial, contemporary historical writing served as a means of conveying news as well as information about the past, or the shift of historiography from merely 'preserving to [also] communicating information'.⁶⁵ The Ming-Qing transition historiography shows that unofficial, contemporary history began to serve both purposes over the course of the seventeenth century. Though the knowledge history-writers sought to communicate reached limited audiences, there was a clear *intent* to communicate that knowledge, which was shared by a greater number of literate individuals in the seventeenth century. Furthermore, aside from prompting a greater overall volume of unofficial historical writing, and a more pronounced tendency towards the inclusion of updated information, the Ming-Qing transition saw many Chinese unofficial, contemporary histories circulated internationally—and relatively rapidly after production. These works became the basis and source material for domestically produced Japanese and Korean contemporary histories of the transition. Tables 2, 3, and 4 illustrate the difference in the transmission of unofficial records between the Imjin War and the Ming-Qing transition. As the largest number of records circulated beyond Ming borders are those that describe the fall of Beijing in 1644, Table 4 is limited to those that were written within 80 years of that incident.

⁶³*Minshin gundan Kokusen'ya chūgiden* 明清軍談国姓爺忠義伝 (Kyōto: Tanaka Shōbei. 1717), fasc 19: 21a.

⁶⁴Wataru Masuda, *Japan and China: Mutual Representations in the Modern Era*, (trans.) Joshua A. Fogel (Richmond: Curzon, 2000), p. 178.

⁶⁵Kanemitsu, 'Extraordinary Exemplars', p. 125.

Table 2: Chinese records of the Imjin War that were circulated to Japan and Korea

Text	Completed/published in China	Arrived in Japan	Arrived in Korea
東征記 <i>Dongzheng ji</i>	1604	n/a	1667
兩朝平壤錄 <i>Liangchao pingrang lu</i>	1606	Before 1636	n/a
武備志 <i>Wubei zhi</i>	1625	n/a	1738

Source: Compiled by the author of the article on the basis of a variety of primary and secondary materials.

Table 3: Korean records of the Imjin War that were circulated to Japan and China

Text	Completed/published in Korea	Arrived in Japan	Arrived in China
懲毖錄 <i>Chingbirok</i>	1604	1695	n/a

Source: Compiled by the author of the article on the basis of a variety of primary and secondary materials.

Table 4: Chinese records of the Ming-Qing transition that were circulated to Japan and Korea between 1644 and 1724

Text	Completed/published in China	Arrived in Japan	Arrived in Korea
勦闖小說 <i>Jiaochuang xiaoshuo</i>	1644	1674	n/a
中興偉略 <i>Zhongxing weilue</i>	1645	1646	n/a
明史紀事本末 ⁶⁶ <i>Mingshi jishi benmo</i>	1653	1661	Before 1684
明季遺聞 <i>Mingji yiwen</i>	1657	1662	1659
明紀編年 <i>Mingji biannian</i>	1660	n/a	1697
明朝小史 <i>Mingchao xiaoshi</i>	Between 1644–1661	1661	n/a
啓禎野乘 <i>Qi Zhen yesheng</i>	1644–1645, 1679	n/a	Before 1743
讀史綱 <i>Dushi gang</i>	1691	1701	n/a
明紀輯略 <i>Mingji jilue</i>	1696	1717 ⁶⁷	Before 1703

Source: Compiled by the author of the article on the basis of a variety of primary and secondary materials.

As can be seen above, [Tables 2](#) and [3](#) show that both Chinese and Korean records about the Imjin War were circulated beyond the borders of their writer’s polity. However, there are only four instances of this happening. The *Liangchao pingrang lu*

⁶⁶ Also known as *Huang Ming jishi benmo* 皇明紀事本末 or *Mingshi benmo* 明史本末.

⁶⁷ There is a 1717 copy in the National Archives of Japan, appended to the *Houletang zuanji lichao gangjian* 後榮堂纂集歷朝綱鑑 under the alternative title of *Mingji quan'ai* 明紀全載.

saw the shortest period of time between production and export to Japan: 30 years. The one Korean record that was exported was circulated in Japan in 1695, almost a century after the close of the Imjin War and its initial completion. Meanwhile, Tables 2 and 4 both demonstrate that Chinese unofficial histories, whether about the Imjin War or the Ming-Qing transition, were much more likely to be transmitted than Japanese and Korean records, which show little evidence of any cross-border circulation. However, nine Chinese histories describing the incident of the fall of Beijing, in comparison to three describing the Imjin War as a whole, were exported to Korea and Japan between 1644 and 1724. Furthermore, there was a much shorter time between production and export, with the shortest being the *Zhongxing weilue* (one year) and the *Mingji yiwen* (two years), and the longest being the *Qi Zhen yesheng* (potentially 64 years, if it was the 1679 edition that was exported).

On the basis of the evidence given in the section above, it can be argued that the Imjin War and the Ming-Qing transition were both key moments in the historiographical shift towards producing unofficial writing about contemporary events in seventeenth-century East Asia. However, the Imjin War may be seen as the beginning of that trend, while the Ming-Qing transition was its flourishing. The following section will elaborate on the unofficial, contemporary historiography of the Ming-Qing transition, in an effort to highlight the historical context of this emerging historiographical trend. The late sixteenth to early eighteenth centuries saw an epistemic shift towards an intellectual culture of contemporaneity in East Asia, in which educated, literate individuals were able to receive news and information or otherwise obtain them through money and connections. The transnational production and circulation of history about the Ming-Qing transition was an expression of this shift.

'The disaster of the Late Ming, and the flourishing of the Qing':⁶⁸ The transnational historiography of a dynastic transition

The historical writing of the Ming-Qing transition has received much attention from scholars and historians of China and East Asia. Unofficial histories written by literate individuals in China have been studied by modern historians as sources of information on the Ming-Qing transition as a historical event, and part of the history of loyalism, memory-construction, news and the public sphere, and shifts in perceptions of the state.⁶⁹ With respect to East Asia, scholars have argued that historical writing about the dynastic transition prompted or structured a challenge to Sinocentric views of the world, as intellectuals in Korea and Japan rejected the Qing as a legitimate successor to Ming cultural legitimacy, and posited their own states as new centres of cultural authority.

⁶⁸'明季之禍亂清朝之勃興'. Zou Yi 鄒漪, *Mingji yiwen* 明季遺聞, annotated by Kurokawa Gentsū Gentsu 黒川玄通 (Kyoto, Katsumura Jiemon 勝村治右衛門, 1662), postscript跋: 1a.

⁶⁹Among many examples of the scholarly literature are: Stephen McDowall, 'History, Temporality, and the Interdynastic Experience: Yu Binshuo's Survey of Nanjing (ca. 1672)', *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 78, no. 2 (2018), pp. 307–338; Dewei Wang and Wei Shang (eds), *Dynastic Crisis and Cultural Innovation: From the Late Ming to the Late Qing and beyond* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2005); and Wilt Idema, Wai-ye Li and Ellen Widmer (eds), *Trauma and Transcendence in Early Qing Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2006).

This section builds upon the preceding scholarship by exploring the unofficial, contemporary historiography of the Ming-Qing transition, not from the perspective of its role as repository of historical information, nor as the basis for insight into themes in national history, nor as argument for the de-centring of Ming cultural centrality, but rather as a simultaneous outgrowth and expression of a historical phenomenon that was shared across the East Asian region. In other words, by viewing unofficial, contemporary history outside of the disciplinary framework of national history or as part of the history of emergent nationalism, and within the context of regional developments in historiography and intellectual history, a different dimension of the Ming-Qing transition is highlighted. The dynastic upheaval was, from a socio-intellectual perspective, a watershed for the evolution of contemporary, unofficial history as a regional, transnational mode of cross-border knowledge-production and transmission. In turn, the evolution of history-writing in China, Korea, and Japan towards producing information about recent events, including events outside of the polity, demonstrates an epistemic shift towards the perception of a shared present, one which crossed political borders.

Table 5 below illustrates the range and diversity of unofficial, contemporary historical accounts produced and circulated about the Ming-Qing transition in East Asia. As far as possible, only those works that were completed within 80 years of the final incident they depict have been included in the table. Table 5 will serve as the basis for a discussion of the characteristics of the unofficial, contemporary historiography of the transition in China, Japan, and Korea. Furthermore, the focus of the table is on works that were produced with the intent of being circulated; who read these works will be elaborated upon below.

Characteristics of unofficial, contemporary historical writing

A study of the differing characteristics of the unofficial, contemporary historiographies of the dynastic transition produced in China, Japan, and Korea is important for two reasons. On the one hand, an understanding of that contemporary historiography illuminates the degree to which the dynastic transition was a different, but still key, experience for many in the region, thereby contributing to the writing of records in different locales, languages, and with different perspectives and emphases. On the other hand, it highlights the intellectual culture of contemporaneity that flourished in early modern China, Japan, and Korea.

Contemporary Chinese unofficial historical writing about the Ming-Qing transition offered, perhaps naturally, the most comprehensive and pluralistic repository of information about the transition. As Table 5 demonstrates, included among the types of accounts were: witness accounts of certain events such as the fall of the capital in 1644; accounts based on a combination of direct experience; primary documents and/or hearsay about individual events; accounts written around themes instead of individual events, such as personas, movements, or phenomena; general histories of the Ming dynasty or the late Ming dynasty; and diaries or chronicles that, while not specifically aimed at contributing to a historiography of the Ming-Qing transition, incorporated details of related events because of the time period in which their authors were active. Of the surviving unofficial, contemporary writings by literate individuals in China, the majority is written in Classical Chinese by late Ming and early Qing subjects. There

Table 5: Unofficial, contemporary histories in East Asia about the Ming-Qing transition⁷⁰

China	Korea	Japan
<p>Witness accounts, e.g. accounts by individuals who experienced the 1644 occupation of the capital by Li Zicheng's army</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 定思小紀 <i>Dingsi xiaoji</i> (seventeenth century) • 甲申核真略 <i>Jiashen hezhen lue</i> (1645) • 甲申傳信錄 <i>Jiashen chuanxin lu</i> (1653) • 吳三桂紀略 <i>Wu Sangui jilue</i> (before 1673) 	<p>Unofficial histories imported from China about events within Ming territory from 1618 to 1683</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 兩朝從信錄 (1630 China, 1632 Korea) • 皇明十六朝廣匯記 (1632 China, 1669 or 1672 Korea)⁷¹ • 明季遺聞 <i>Myeonggye yumun</i> (1657 China, 1659 Korea) • 明史紀事本末 <i>Myeongsa gisa bonmal</i> (1653 China, by 1684 Korea) • 明紀編年 <i>Myeonggi pyeomyeon</i> (1660 China, 1697 Korea) • 明紀輯略 <i>Myeonggi jibryak</i> (1696 China, 1703 Korea)⁷² • 啓禎野乘 <i>Gyejeong yaseung</i> (1644–1645, 1679; by 1743 Korea) • 三藩紀事 (1717 China, by 1756 Korea)⁷³ 	<p>Unofficial histories imported from China about events within Ming territory from 1618 to 1683</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 中興偉畧 <i>Chūkō iryaku</i> (1645 China, 1646 Japan)⁷⁴ • 武經開宗 <i>Bukyō kaisō</i> 'Origins of the Military Classics' (1636 China, 1661 Japan)⁷⁵ • 明史紀事本末 <i>Minshi kiji honmatsu</i> (1653 China, 1661 Japan) • 明朝小史 <i>Minchō shōshi</i> (between 1644–1661 China, 1661 Japan) • 明季遺聞 <i>Minki ibun</i> 'Remnant Hearsay about the End of the Ming Dynasty' (1657 China, 1662 Japan) • 剿圍小說 <i>Sō shōsetsu</i> (1644 China, by 1674 Japan) • 讀史綱 <i>Dokushi kō</i> (1691 China, 1701 Japan)

(Continued)

⁷⁰Due to the vast number of works produced in China during the Ming-Qing transition, the author has opted to limit the histories entered in the Chinese section of Table 5 to a non-representative sample, intended merely to illustrate the kind of accounts written in China as opposed to their volume. Where there is a large number of Korean and Japanese works that may be included, such as in the case of the Manchu invasions of Korea in 1627 and 1636, and the Japanese fascination with Zheng Chenggong, the author has also opted for illustration over exhaustive enumeration.

⁷¹Detailed the early years of the Ming-Qing transition from 1618 to 1627.

⁷²Sun Weiguo 孫衛國, "Mingji jilue" "zhi dongchuan jiqi yinfu zhi shijian: Zhong Han shuji jiaoliushi yanjiu zhi yili" 《明紀輯略》之東傳及其引發之事件—中韓書籍交流史研究之一例, *Shumu jikan* 書目季刊31, no. 1 (1997), p. 62.

⁷³This may refer to the *Sanfan jishi benmo* 三藩紀事本末 by Yang Lurong 楊陸榮. The *Sanfan jishi benmo* describes the Hongguang, Longwu, and Yongli reigns, a period ending in 1662. The relevant timescale of 'living memory' terminates in 1742, which means that the 1717 text is a contemporary narrative.

⁷⁴Also seems to have been sold under the title *Dai Min gunko* 大明軍記. See *Bengisho mokuroku* 辨疑書目録 (Kyōto: Nakamura Tomihei, 1709), fasc 1:45b. They are listed separately in some bookseller catalogues.

⁷⁵Includes biographies of late Ming generals, including those who participated in the fighting against the Qing.

Table 5: (Continued.)

China	Korea	Japan
<p>Accounts covering specific events, e.g. the occupation of the capital in 1644</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 新編通俗刺園小說 <i>Xinbian tongshu jiaochuang xiaoshuo</i> (1645) • 甲申紀事 <i>Jiashen jishi</i> (1645) • 甲申大事記 <i>Jiashen dashiji</i> (circa 1646) • 明季甲乙兩年彙略 <i>Mingji jiyi liangnian huiyue</i> (1644–1645) 	<p>Accounts written in Korea about or including recent events in China</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 史要纂選 <i>Soyo chwí seon</i> (1648, printed 1679) • 皇明紀略 <i>Hwang Myeong kiryak</i> (before 1658) • 池氏鴻史 <i>Ji ssi hongsa</i> (1690) • 明史綱目 <i>Myeongsa gangmok</i> (1703) • 歷代史選 <i>Yeokdae saseon</i> (before 1715) • 增補歷代總目 <i>Jeungbo yeokdae chongmok</i> (1706) • 林氏史統 <i>Im ssi satong</i> (1721) 	<p>Accounts written in Japan about or including recent events in China</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 明清圖記 <i>Minshin toki</i> (1661) • 桑華紀年 <i>Sōka kinen</i> (1670) • 国仙野手柄日記 <i>Kokusen'ya tegara nikki</i> (1701) • 国性爺御前軍談 (1716) <i>Kokusen'ya gozen gundan</i> • 明清軍談国姓爺忠義伝 <i>Minshin gundan kokusen'ya chūgiden</i> (1717) • 国性爺明朝太平記 <i>Kokusen'ya Min chō taiheiki</i> (1717) • 通俗台湾軍談 <i>Tsuzoku Taiwan gundan</i> (1723)
<p>Accounts centring on specific themes relating to the dynastic transition, e.g. biographies, histories of rebel movements, natural and unnatural phenomena</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 雪交亭正氣錄 <i>Xuejiao ting zhengqi lu</i> (1655) • 緩寇紀略 <i>Suikou jilue</i> (1674) • 鐵冠圖全傳 <i>Tieguan tu quanzhuan</i> (before 1673) • 榕城紀聞 <i>Rongcheng jiwen</i> (1640–1662) 	<p>Accounts of Korean experiences of the end of Ming rule in China</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 朝京日录 <i>Jojeong illok</i> (1636) • 燕行日記 <i>Yeonhaeng ilgi</i> (1645) • 記任廷益生還始末 <i>Ki Im Gyeongik Saenghwan Shimal</i> (1656) 	<p>Accounts of Japanese experiences of the end of Ming rule in China</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 寛永漂流記 <i>Kan'ei hyōryūki</i> (between 1704 and 1716)*

⁷⁶The *Kan'ei hyōryūki* was written on the basis of the *Dattan hyōryūki* 鞆鞆漂流記, which, while itself compiled from the oral accounts of castaways by the Tokugawa government, was reworked into a number of popularly distributed texts, including the *Kan'ei hyōryūki*. See Michael S. Wood, 'Literary Subjects Adrift: A Cultural History of Early Modern Japanese Castaway Narratives, ca. 1780–1880', PhD thesis, University of Oregon, 2009, pp. 274–275.

<p>General histories of the Ming or late Ming dynasty</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 國權 <i>Guoque</i> (1657) • 明季遺聞 <i>Mingji yuwen</i> (1657) • 明季北略 <i>Mingji beilue</i> (1667) • 樵史通俗演義 <i>Qiaoshi tongshu yanyi</i> (before 1667) • 三朝野紀 <i>Sanchao yeji</i> (1671) • 罪惟錄 <i>Zuiwei lu</i> (1672) 	<p>Accounts of Korean experiences of the 1627 and 1636 Manchu incursions into Joseon territory as part of the Qing campaign</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 江都日錄 <i>Gangdo illok</i> (1627) • 丁丑日錄 <i>Jeongchuk illok</i> (1637) • 丙子錄 <i>Byeongja rok</i> (before 1642) • 陽九記事 <i>Yanggu gisa</i> (1662)⁷⁷ • 江都夢遊錄 <i>Gangdo mengyurok</i> (seventeenth century) • 南漢解圍錄 <i>Namhan haewirok</i> (seventeenth century) 	<p>Accounts of Japanese experiences of Ming emigrants or messengers to Japan during the Ming-Qing transition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 知耻篇 <i>Chishi hen</i> (before 1677)⁷⁸
<p>Records by individuals that are not centered on specific events or persons but which contain details on the historical period</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 歷年記 <i>Linian ji</i> (1628–1697) • 楊齋見聞錄 <i>Tizhai jianwen lu</i> (1644–1645) • 亂離見聞錄 <i>Luanli jianwen lu</i> (seventeenth century) 	<p>Accounts by Ming emigrants to Korea during the period of the Ming-Qing transition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 楚冠堂公自述 <i>Chugwandang gong zasil</i> (circa 1682)⁷⁹ 	<p>Accounts by Ming emigrants to Japan during the period of the Ming-Qing transition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 朱舜水全集 <i>Shu Shunsui zenshu</i> (17th century)⁸⁰

(Continued)

⁷⁷ Also includes a section on the recent history of the Ming dynasty. However, the sources cited in this section of the text, which includes the *Tongmugwanji* 通文館志 (completed 1720), suggest that this information may have been added to the 1662 edition of the *Yanggu gisa* by the same or a different author. Given that the latest information on the Ming is dated 1661, and that no sources later than the *Tongmugwanji* are cited, the section on the fall of the Ming, while added later than the sections on the Qing invasions, can still be considered 'contemporary'. The 1720 date of the *Tongmugwanji* would still fall within 80 years of 1661.

⁷⁸ The author, Mukai gensho 向井元升 (1609–1677), criticizes Yinyuan Longqi's influence on Japan.

⁷⁹ Description of the Ming-Qing conflict in Liaodong between 1619 and 1625 by a Ming subject, Kang Shijue 康世爵 (1602–1685), who migrated to Korea and spent the remainder of his life there. See Adam Bohnet, 'Migrant and Border Subjects in Late Chosŏn Korea', PhD thesis, University of Toronto, 2008, pp. 303–311.

⁸⁰ Tsuji Zennosuke lists another 43 Ming exiles in Japan in Tsuji Zennosuke 辻善之助, *Kaigai kōtsū shiwa* 海外交通史話 (Tokyo: Naigai shoseki, 1930), pp. 660–680. Jiang Wu also discusses Ming exiles in his monograph on the monk Yinyuan Longqi. See Wu, *Leaving for the Rising Sun*, pp. 107–108.

Table 5: (Continued.)

China	Korea	Japan
Unofficial records written from a Manchu perspective		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="291 1551 334 1604">• <i>Beye-i cooha bade yabuha babe ejehe bithe</i> (1680–1682) 		
Records of Ming encounters with Japanese or Korean individuals or governments		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="463 1551 506 1604">• 日本支那紀 <i>Riben qishi ji</i> (before 1695)⁸¹ 		

Source: Compiled by the author of the article on the basis of a variety of primary and secondary materials.

⁸¹ Masuda, *Japan and China*, p. 151.

is only one surviving unofficial account written from a Manchu perspective in the Manchu language: the *Beye-i cooha bade yabuha babe ejehe bithe*. None that were written in Classical Chinese seem to have survived, a dearth that may perhaps be attributed to a lack of proficiency in the language among Manchu bannermen until the later decades of the seventeenth century.⁸²

Perhaps naturally, Chinese literati were less interested than their counterparts in Korea and Japan as to how the Ming-Qing transition was impacting upon matters in the wider region of East Asia. However, they did, at times, incorporate at least Korea into their consideration of the Ming-Qing transition more generally. The Ming official Ling Yiqu's 凌義渠's *Zou du* 奏牘 (1638) was a collection of memorials that included reports and discussions concerning the Qing invasion of Joseon Korea in 1636.⁸³ Meanwhile, Qian Qianyi's 1652 anthology of Ming-dynasty poetry, the *Liechao shiji*, included extended biographies for three loyalist Korean poets active during the fourteenth-century Koryo-Joseon transition.⁸⁴ The historian Wang Sixiang's examination of the *Liechao shiji* demonstrates that Chinese literati such as Qian Qianyi saw events such as the 1636 invasion of Joseon Korea as integral to the fall of the Ming dynasty. For example, while appraising the Joseon poet Yi Dal's 李達 (1539–1612) *Songok sijip* 蓀穀詩集, Qian Qianyi recalled a poem that he himself had written in 1637 upon learning that Korea had surrendered to the Qing. In that poem, he had bemoaned the escalation of the threat posed to the Ming.⁸⁵

Contemporary unofficial histories of the transition by Chinese subjects can be divided into those that focused on describing specific incidents and individuals, and those that attempted to construct a general trajectory of the transition. Meanwhile, elsewhere in the region, publishers issued annotated editions of Ming records for Japanese and Korean audiences, and writers in both these countries produced their own unofficial, contemporary accounts on the basis of the available information. These latter works often aimed to fulfil the same objectives as that of the Ming records; however, they also offered alternative perspectives on the transition. Such alternative perspectives included records of the cross-border experiences of envoys, soldiers, traders, monks, and emigrants; and accounts of incidents a Ming scholar might consider peripheral to his own experience of the transition, for example, the 1636 Manchu invasion of Joseon Korea. These works also illuminate differing historiographical emphases in the written historiography of the dynastic transition in Japan and Korea. The Manchu invasions of 1627 and 1636, which had the greatest direct impact on Korea, loomed larger in the historiography produced by literate Joseon individuals than in the accounts of contemporary Chinese authors. Meanwhile, history-writers in Tokugawa Japan were fascinated by the activities of the Zheng clan, a family that dominated trade with Nagasaki for a time in the seventeenth century and resisted the Qing until 1683 from Taiwan.⁸⁶

⁸²Suet-Ying Chiu, 'Cultural Hybridity in Manchu Bannermen Tales (Zidishu)', PhD thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 2007, pp. 24–30.

⁸³Lynn Struve, *The Ming-Qing Conflict, 1619–1683: A Historiography and Source Guide* (Ann Arbor: Association for Asian Studies, 1998), pp. 201–202.

⁸⁴Wang, 'Loyalty, History, and Empire', p. 322.

⁸⁵Ibid., pp. 325–326.

⁸⁶Chen Fei, 'Loyalist, Patriot, or Colonizer? The Three Faces of Zheng Chenggong in Meiji Japan and Late Qing China', *Journal of Modern Chinese History* 12, no. 1 (2018), p. 27. See also Xing Hang, 'The

Of course, while the volume of unofficial, contemporary history-writing alone evinces that writers and editors at least perceived the importance of producing and circulating knowledge about contemporary affairs in China, the extent to which their works actually reached domestic or even regional audiences is limited. In both China and Korea, their circulation can be inferred from the prefaces of some text, and from the bodies of others, where authors occasionally appended citations (usually the titles of texts) to statements. An example of the former is in the preface of the late Ming unofficial history, the *Jiashen chuanxin lu* 甲申傳信錄, completed in 1653:

In the winter of the third year of the Shunzhi reign [1646], a guest came from Jiangnan bringing records that had been written since the events of the Jiashen year. The tens of records, which included the *Guobian lu*, *Jiashen jibian*, *Guobian jiwen*, *Jianwen jilüe*, *Guonan duji*, *Bianji quechuan*, *Yandu riji*, Master Chen [Jisheng's] *Zaisheng yuan*, Master Cheng [Yuan's] *Guchen jiku*, and *Cheng Fangce jie*, were many and irregular. Unorthodox ideas were frequently expressed, and for a period of time, it was impossible to pluck what was right from the books.

三年丙戌冬，客從江南携甲申事來，所載國變錄，甲申紀變，國難紀文，見聞紀畧，國難賭紀，變記確傳，燕都日記，陳生再生錄，程源孤臣紀哭，陳方策揭幾十餘家，繁猥不倫。異端茸出一時簡策無所折衷。⁸⁷

Of the texts listed by Qian Shixing, the *Yandu riji*, *Zaisheng yuan*, and *Guchen jiku* were also collected into Feng Menglong's *Jiashen jishi*, which is mentioned in Table 5 above. This suggests that a similar collection of texts may have been circulating between 1645, the compilation date for the *Jiashen jishi*, and 1653, when the *Jiashen chuanxin lu* was completed. As for the second example, the *Mingji beilüe* (1667), also listed in Table 5, names its sources of information in the body of its text, thereby giving an indication as to which texts survived until the time of its compilation. In the author's description of what happened to the Chongzhen emperor's corpse, mentioned are the contemporary unofficial accounts *Jiayi shi* 甲乙史, *Rixing buhui lu* 日星不晦錄, and *Dashiji* 大事紀.⁸⁸ While the *Jiayi shi*, author unknown, and the *Rixing buhui lu*, by Xu Mengde 徐夢得, are difficult to trace, the *Dashiji* was an account completed by Shen Guoyuan circa 1646.

Meanwhile, in Korea, both official documents and contemporary texts suggest which texts were read, circulated, and survived. Official documents, for example, as mentioned earlier, recorded the acquisition of the *Mingji yiwen* by a Korean emissary to the Qing court.⁸⁹ They also provide an intriguing example of an official, Yi Hyeonseok, explaining his desire to write a history of the Ming dynasty. In the explanation, he lists a number of texts:

Shogun's Chinese Partners: The Alliance between Tokugawa Japan and the Zheng Family in Seventeenth-Century Maritime East Asia', *The Journal of Asian Studies* 75, no. 1 (2016), pp. 112–113. See Xing Hang, *Conflict and Commerce in Maritime East Asia: The Zheng Family and the Shaping of the Modern World, c.1620–1720* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015) for further information on the Zheng clan's relationship with Tokugawa Japan.

⁸⁷ Qian Shixing 錢士馨, *Jiashen chuanxin lu* 甲申傳信錄, in Volume 440: *Xuxiu siku quanshu* 續修四庫全書, (ed.) Bianzuan Weiyuan Hui 編纂委員會 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1995), Preface 序: 1a–1b.

⁸⁸ Ji, *Mingji beilüe*, fasc 20: 61a, 62a.

⁸⁹ Hyeonjong sillok 顯宗실록, 2:4a (16/10/20:1).

As I see it, records of the three hundred years of the imperial Ming, are chaotic and lacking in unity. The *Zhaodai dianze*, *Ming zheng tongzong*, *Huang Ming tongji*, *Dazheng ji*, *Mingji biannian*, *Jishi benmo*, and others, are no more than copies of or brief notes of official gazettes. Some of them describe one affair [that happens] across several years, and [therefore it] cannot be understood comprehensively; some of them assign grand headings to trivial affairs, and [therefore] do not indicate what is important. I evaluated these works against the example of [Zhu Xi's] *Ziyang gangmu*, but they are vastly different. As for histories written by the preceding generation in our country, while there is the *Jilüe*, it is too concise and fragmentary, and stops in the middle of the dynasty.

顧自妄，惟皇明三百年史記，雜亂無統，所謂昭代典則·明政統宗·皇明通紀·大政紀·明紀編年·記事本末等書，不過朝報謄筭者也，或一事而散出於數年之間，不能摠會，或微事而錯擬於大題之目，無所標拈，律之以紫陽綱目之凡例，則大有逕庭，至於我國先正之所纂，雖有紀略一書，而太簡以疏，且止中葉⁹⁰

Of the Chinese unofficial histories about which Yi Hyeonseok expresses his dissatisfaction, four of them are earlier texts that describe late sixteenth-century developments: *Zhaodai dianze* (1600), *Ming zheng tongzong* (1615), *Huang Ming tongji* (1555), and *Huang Ming dazheng ji* (皇明) 大政紀 (1602, 1636).⁹¹ The *Mingji biannian* and the *Jishi benmo* are unofficial seventeenth-century accounts of the dynastic transition. As for the *Jilüe*, it is most likely a reference to the *Huang Ming jilüe* 皇明紀略. While the text itself is no longer extant, scholarship has indicated that it was written by the Korean envoy Kim Yuk 金堉 (1580–1658) in his later years.⁹² Outside of government records, some contemporary unofficial Joseon histories also cited recent records of events related to the transition. The *Yanggu gisa* (1662), for example, referenced a number of contemporary Korean accounts of the 1636 invasion, including the *Byeongja rok* 丙子錄 (before 1642) and the *Ilwol rok* 日月錄 (mid-seventeenth century).⁹³

With regard to Japan, seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century book catalogues provide evidence as to which books were known to publishers, and may therefore have been available to those who could afford to buy them. In the unofficial, contemporary records of the Ming–Qing transition, the most commonly mentioned texts in seventeenth-century bookseller catalogues, from 1670 to 1696, are two Japanese-authored texts: *Minshin tōki* and *Sōka kinen*, and a number of imported works: *Minki ibun* (C: *Mingji yiwen*), *Chūko iryaku* (C: *Zhongxing weilüe*, also sold as *Dai Min gunki*), and *Buke kaisō* (C: *Wujing kaizong*).⁹⁴ By the early eighteenth century, a 1729 catalogue also

⁹⁰Seungjeongwon ilgi 승정원일기, 375:113a–113b (Sukjong 23/12/17:18/19).

⁹¹The earlier of the two possible two texts is a 1602 publication written by Lei Li 雷禮. There is another text with the same name by Zhu Guozhen 朱國禎, which was published in 1636 and covers events from 1368–1572.

⁹²Wu Zhengwei 吳政緯, *Juanjuan Ming chao: Chaoxian shiren de Zhongguo lunsu yu wenhua xintai 1600–1800* 眷眷明朝 – 朝鮮士人的中國論述與文化心態1600–1800 (Taipei: Xiuwei zhixun, 2015), p. 190.

⁹³Yangjiu jishi 陽九記事, in *Zhong Han guanxi shiliao xuanji* 中韓關係史料選輯 (Taipei: Guiting chuban she, 1980), Vol. 6, pp. 83, 90.

⁹⁴These bookseller catalogues include a few that were mentioned above: the *Kōeki shojaku mokuroku taizen* 廣益書籍目錄大全 (1692), the *Zōeki shojaku mokuroku* 增益書籍目錄 (1696), and the *Kanbanban shojaku mokuroku* 寬文板書籍目錄 (1670). Also consulted were *Shin zō shojaku mokuroku* 新增書籍目錄 (Edo: Yamada Kihee, 1681), and the *Shin shojaku mokuroku* 新書籍目錄 (Kyōto: Nagata Chōbei, 1729).

mentions the *Tsūzoku genmin gundan* 通俗元明軍談 (1705), *Minshin gundan kokusen'ya chūgiden* 明清軍談國姓爺忠義傳 (1717), and *Tsūzoku taiwan gundan* 通俗臺灣軍談 (1723).⁹⁵

From the above sources of information, it is possible to surmise which unofficial, contemporary accounts of the Ming-Qing transition circulated in China among literate individuals, and which were obtained and imported into Korea and Japan. Certainly, as discussed previously in the article, the number of people in all three countries able to obtain and read these accounts was restricted to the educated elite. Nonetheless, the proliferation of such writings in the mid-seventeenth century points to the emergence of a limited sense of contemporaneity, one expressed through the construction of an unofficial, contemporary corpus of knowledge about recent events.

To illuminate the significance of this seventeenth-century phenomenon in East Asia, it is necessary to note that, before the fall of the Ming dynasty, there are not many examples of histories specifically written to narrate current Chinese history for the benefit of Korean and Japanese audiences. In Japan, knowledge produced and circulated about China was generally limited to imported Chinese texts: editions of classics, and Buddhist and medical texts.⁹⁶ This does not mean that China did not figure in the Japanese imagination before the seventeenth century, but aside from a small number of works, its existence as a current political entity was less important than its cultural and historical significance.⁹⁷ Conversely, while China as a concrete political force was certainly much more in the forefront of Korean minds, as demonstrated by the production of records and manuals concerning diplomatic interaction, and the use of Chinese chronology to frame Korean medieval and early modern records of the past, there was less interest in writing histories of China outside of a diplomatic context.⁹⁸ As Sun Weiguo has evinced in a study of histories of China written in Korea during the Joseon dynasty, most of these were produced from the seventeenth century onwards.⁹⁹ Hence, works by Korean and Japanese writers about the Ming-Qing transition are significant not only because they illustrated the diverging experiences of the transition as recalled

⁹⁵ *Shin shojaku mokuroku*, 38a–38b.

⁹⁶ Ivo B. Smits, 'China as Classic Text: Chinese Books and Twelfth-Century Japanese Collectors', in *Tools of Culture: Japan's Cultural, Intellectual, Medical, and Technological Contacts in East Asia, 1000–1500s*, (eds) Andrew Goble, Kenneth Robinson and Haruko Wakabayashi (Ann Arbor: Association of Asian Studies, 2009), pp. 187–188. See also Andrew Goble, *Confluences of Medicine in Medieval Japan: Buddhist Healing, Chinese Knowledge, Islamic Formulas, and Wounds of War* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011), pp. 4–5.

⁹⁷ See Erin Brightwell, "'The Mirror of China': Language Selection, Images of China, and Narrating Japan in the Kamakura Period (1185–1333)', PhD thesis, Princeton University, 2014, pp. 64, 233–234. Also see Chi Zhang, 'Loyalty, Filial Piety, and Multiple "Chinas" in the Japanese Cultural Imagination, 12th–16th Centuries', PhD thesis, Columbia University, 2019; and William Hedberg, *The Japanese Discovery of Chinese Fiction: The Water Margin and the Making of a National Canon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2020), pp. 49–50.

⁹⁸ Wang Sixiang, 'Co-constructing Empire in Early Chosŏn Korea: Knowledge Production and the Culture of Diplomacy, 1392–1592', PhD thesis, Columbia University, 2015, pp. 203–207. See also Fitzgerald, 'Ming Open Archive', pp. 283–285; and Remco Breuker, Grace Koh and James B. Lewis, 'The Tradition of Historical Writing in Korea', in *The Oxford History of Historical Writing. Volume 2: 400–1400*, (eds) Sarah Foot and Chase F. Robinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 127–128.

⁹⁹ Sun Weiguo 孫衛國, 'Chaoxian wangchao suobian zhi Zhongguo shishu' 朝鮮王朝所編之中國史書, *Shixue shi yanjiu* 史學史研究2 (2002), p. 69.

by contemporaries, but also because they represented an early modern shift in knowledge production and transmission about China in these two countries. While literate Japanese individuals showed growing interest in China as a current political entity, their Korean contemporaries perceived a new demand for information about China outside of its context as a diplomatic partner and source of cultural authority, rather as a historical subject. In both cases, the dynastic transition prompted Japanese and Korean history-writers to situate the Ming dynasty within the framework of present developments.

As can be seen from the above, the historiographies of the Ming-Qing transition in China, Korea, and Japan differed to some extent in historical perspective and historiographical emphasis, and as such provide a window into the transition as it was observed and experienced across different locales in the region. In their common commitment to depicting recent incidents in the dynastic transition, they indicate not only the significance of unofficial, contemporary history as a genre for recording present developments across East Asia, but also the flourishing of a regional trend among the educated elite: towards an intellectual culture of contemporaneity.

Intellectual culture of contemporaneity in East Asia

Not two months after the disaster in the capital, a *Jiaochuang xiaoshuo* was being sold that told of the loss of the capital and of the previous emperor killing the empress and princess with his own hands, and then leaving through Houzai Gate to hang himself on Mei mountain.

京师之变，未及两月，即有卖剿闯小说一部，备言京师失陷，先帝将国母及公主俱手刃，然后出后斋门自缢于煤山。

—*Linian ji* 歷年記, chronicle by Yao Tinglin 姚廷遴 (1628–circa 1698).¹⁰⁰

Many of the works written about incidents and individuals related to the Ming-Qing transition were contemporary writings about an ongoing seismic political shift. Their writing, and subsequent circulation both domestically and also across borders (in the case of some Chinese texts), took place within a historical context where demand was increasing for practical information about the contemporary world. This was not limited to news of current or recent events, though, as Yao Tinglin's diary indicates, these histories had certainly grown in volume, diversified in their provenance, and quickened in their pace of production since the late sixteenth century. Rather, the intellectual culture of contemporaneity in seventeenth-century East Asia, defined as 'the perception, shared by a number of human beings, of experiencing a particular event at more or less the same time', which 'may add to a notion of participating in a shared present', extended to many other aspects of society in China, Korea, and Japan.¹⁰¹

In China, an intellectual culture of contemporaneity made itself known through a shift in the authority of knowledge-production from the court and the texts of

¹⁰⁰Yao, 'Linian ji' 歷年記, p. 54.

¹⁰¹Dooley, 'Preface', p. xiii.

antiquity to contemporary scholarship.¹⁰² Even in the case of philology, a discipline of study central to evidential learning or *kaozheng* 考證, which was the critical study of the ancient classics, it was in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that citation became more common, and by the early eighteenth century that it was recommended by court compilers, most likely due to the increased volume of contemporary scholarship and therefore the need to ground one's study within that scholarship.¹⁰³ In this sense, the notion of a present community was an important one in knowledge-production in seventeenth-century China. Bearing out this idea, from the mid-Ming dynasty onwards, was a burgeoning of the book market for texts on contemporary, practical matters, including: painting primers, route books, household and ritual manuals, and daily-use compendia on agriculture, writing skills, topography, mathematics, and so on.¹⁰⁴ Also popular were large-scale compilations of recent works, which 'dealt with contemporary topics of elite concern', including current politics, news, culture, fashion, manners, and games.¹⁰⁵ Examples include the two collectanea: the *Tanji congshu* 檀几叢書 (1695–1697) and the *Zhaodai congshu* 昭代叢書 (1697–1702).¹⁰⁶

Meanwhile, in Japan, from the seventeenth-century onwards, there was the widespread production and circulation not only of records of recent disasters, but also practical information on how to navigate contemporary society: letter-writing handbooks, maps, travel records, and instruction manuals.¹⁰⁷ These ephemera were produced with 'timeliness' in mind; they needed to be constantly updated and revised to reflect the latest available information.¹⁰⁸ The emphasis on the contemporary extended to an interest in vernacular Chinese language and culture among Japanese literati.¹⁰⁹ Intellectual trends that called for a return to ancient Chinese classics, such as *kogaku* 古学, considered the study of contemporary China to be a key route to understanding the meaning of the classics.¹¹⁰

Joseon Korea also saw the elevation of the knowledge of recent times, and of how to navigate the contemporary in the seventeenth century. While *munjip* 文集, or collections of an individual's works, had historically been printed by the descendants or disciples of those who were already deceased, in the seventeenth century Korean

¹⁰²Nathan Vedal, 'From Tradition to Community: The Rise of Contemporary Knowledge in Late Imperial China', *The Journal of Asian Studies* 79, no. 1 (2020), p. 77.

¹⁰³*Ibid.*, pp. 84–85. Nathan Vedal, 'Scholarly Culture in Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century China', PhD thesis, Harvard University, 2017, p. 281. For a description of *kaozheng*, see Q. Edward Wang, 'Beyond East and West: Antiquarianism, Evidential Learning, and Global Trends in Historical Study', *Journal of World History* 19, no. 4 (2008), pp. 505–507.

¹⁰⁴Benjamin Elman, 'Collecting and Classifying: Ming Dynasty Compendia and Encyclopedias (Leishu)', *Extrême-Orient Extrême-Occident* 1, no. 1 (2007), pp. 134–136. Also see Tobie Meyer-Fong, 'The Printed World: Books, Publishing Culture, and Society in Late Imperial China', *The Journal of Asian Studies* 66, no. 3 (2007), p. 795. The production of painting manuals is discussed in Park, *Art by the Book*.

¹⁰⁵Son Suyoung, *Writing for Print: Publishing and the Making of Textual Authority in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2018), pp. 121–123.

¹⁰⁶*Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹⁰⁷Moretti, *Pleasure in Profit*, pp. 294–295. Berry, *Japan in Print*, pp. 14–18.

¹⁰⁸Berry, *Japan in Print*, p. 19.

¹⁰⁹Rebekah Clements, 'Speaking in Tongues? Daimyo, Zen Monks, and Spoken Chinese in Japan, 1661–1711', *The Journal of Asian Studies* 76, no. 3 (2017), p. 618. Hedberg, *Japanese Discovery*, pp. 29–30.

¹¹⁰Olof G. Lidin, 'Vernacular Chinese in Tokugawa Japan: The Inquiries of Ogyū Sorai', *Japonica Humboldtiana* 14 (2011), p. 14.

literati began to compile and publish their writings during their own lifetimes.¹¹¹ In other words, the writings of the contemporary era, and not just the works of the past, were starting to be given emphasis. Combined with embassies that went to Qing China and returned with Chinese books, including recent titles, the eighteenth century saw the emergence of a ‘sociability of contemporaneity’, which Park defines as ‘[centred] on a sense of belonging to the same epoch...whereby people of varying origins and with similar interests recognised one another as fellow beings belonging to the present epoch’.¹¹² The implications of this ‘sociability’ further extended beyond interactions between individuals to the knowledge they produced: historiography, literature, and philosophy, and as such may be better understood as an intellectual culture of contemporaneity. For example, *silhak* 實學, the Korean study of ancient texts, has been associated with an enduring narrative of an eighteenth-century rupture in Korea, when Chosŏn intellectuals developed more expansive ways of perceiving the world around them: a greater awareness of East Asia as a socio-cultural sphere, and more encyclopedic methods of handling information.¹¹³ However, these eighteenth-century developments were the ‘continuation’ of earlier trends towards cosmopolitan intellectual culture.¹¹⁴ This suggests that, as with *kogaku* and *kaozheng*, even those intellectual trends that were directed at the exegetical study of ancient and classical texts were firmly embedded in a culture of contemporaneity, either through the citation of contemporary scholarship, an emphasis on contemporary language, or the perception of a shared socio-cultural community.

Individuals in China, Japan, and Korea participated in, and were influenced by, an intellectual culture of contemporaneity, characterized by their recognition that they were experiencing similar events contemporaneously, and in that way, shared a common present. This manifested in many forms: the acknowledgement of contemporary scholars and other notable figures, the proliferation of manuals on how to navigate contemporary life through rituals, letter-writing, and guidebooks; the emergence of a cosmopolitan interest in the world; and a demand for knowledge about recent events not just in one’s own country but in the wider region. It is the latter that has been the concern of this article.

As elaborated in earlier sections, the production of knowledge about recent events was a feature of the seventeenth-century landscape of historiography in all three countries in East Asia. Modern historians have called such works written by Chinese literate individuals *shishi xiaoshuo* 時事小說 or ‘current-events novels’, while other historians have noted that the preoccupation with current events applied to a wide range of works, including those labelled as *yeshi*, memoirs, private compilations of official documents, and dream records. With regard to Japan, seventeenth-century writers of war chronicles adapted the form in order to author histories of recent events, thereby combining education on military tactics and strategy with information about contemporary conflicts.¹¹⁵ Narratives that described not war, but other major events, such as

¹¹¹Park, *Korean Vernacular Story*, pp. 173–174.

¹¹²*Ibid.*, pp. 43, 47.

¹¹³Ahn Kanghun, ‘Beyond the Discourse of Practical Learning: Rethinking Chosŏn Intellectual History in a Broader Context’, *Seoul Journal of Korean Studies* 31, no. 2 (2018), p. 144.

¹¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 164.

¹¹⁵Inoue, *Kinsei kankō*, pp. 37–38.

the 1611 *Musashi abumi*, which recounted the Meireki Fire of 1657, were produced with relative rapidity at a time when *kawaraban* 瓦版 or news broadsheets had yet to flourish in society.¹¹⁶ Laura Moretti has argued that narratives such as these ‘[reported] the present to construct history’.¹¹⁷

The article has argued, on the basis of writing about the Ming-Qing transition, that reporting the present to construct history was an epistemic shift in perceptions of the nature and purpose of historical writing, one that took place against the background not just of changes in print and the diversification of reading audiences, but also the flourishing of an intellectual culture of contemporaneity. Of course, as can be seen from the limited readership of unofficial historical works suggested by both the language and script in which they were written, and the prices at which they were sold, this culture of contemporaneity flourished among differing circles of literate individuals. In the case of unofficial, contemporary history about the Ming-Qing transition, it is arguable that the readership was restricted to the educated elite capable both of reading a more literary script and of paying relatively expensive prices to obtain books. Nonetheless, it is hoped that the article has demonstrated, in the discussion above, the existence of a phenomenon whereby seventeenth-century literati in China, Japan, and Korea chose not only to write about recent events in an unofficial mode, but also to turn their attention to a dynastic transition which itself could be considered a transnational event.

Having considered the historiographical shift towards the writing of recent history from the late sixteenth century in China, Korea, and Japan, the article has argued that this trend blossomed during the time of the Ming-Qing transition. Furthermore, as a transnational event spanning much of a century, the nature of the historiography is best characterized as a transnationally written record compiled against the background of a regionally shared, if participation-restricted, intellectual culture of contemporaneity.

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¹¹⁶Moretti, *Pleasure in Profit*, p. 237.

¹¹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 254.

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