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SAVING THE STATE THROUGH ENLIGHTENMENT: THE *INDEPENDENT*'S STATIST VIEW OF WOMEN'S AND CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

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In 1876, Japan forced the Chosŏn government—the dynasty that ruled the Korean Peninsula from 1392 to 1897—to sign the unequal Kangwha Treaty (*Kanghwato Choyak*), which imposed Japanese extraterritoriality and coerced the Korean state to become Japan's most-favored-nation for foreign trade. Japan had enforced on Chosŏn the same unequal treaties that the West had imposed on it: an imperialistic act for eventual colonization. Such severe foreign intervention and pressure caused the Korean state to suffer greatly from political instability in the late nineteenth century. Desperate to save the Korean state from the hands of imperialism, various individuals, factions, associations, and entities embracing different political ideologies rose to encourage the government to initiate reforms across the country. *The Independent*, the first Korean private, vernacular, and bilingual newspaper, was one of such entities founded in 1896 that argued for rapid and far-reaching reform—especially in education. The newspaper asserted that compulsory education would save the Korean state from imperialism and protect its sovereignty by enlightening the population. Moreover, it stated that women should not be excluded from educational opportunities; as educated wives and mothers, women would foster harmony in their households and properly raise their children to become intellectual, patriotic, faithful, and dutiful citizens—willing to sacrifice themselves for the common, greater good—of the state. This thesis analyzes such perspectives of *The Independent* on women's education and what it meant by proper guidance and parental responsibilities. Through this analysis, it argues that the newspaper's outlook on educational reforms—appearing to be progressive on the surface—did not uphold individualism and but embraced statist ideals, as it fundamentally advocated for the introduction of compulsory education for women to sponsor state interests and push the population to a generic goal.