

Carlo Rossetti : Corea e Coreani Volume 2

Complete English translation by J. M. Russell

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The history of Korea's relations with the peoples of the West is a history of recent times. When discussing the Emperor and his Court in the first volume of this work, I briefly mentioned the most important political events of this unfortunate sovereign's reign, in itself a summary of the contemporary history of the Korean peninsula. However, this historical period is, it must be said, of worldwide importance (as current events in the Far East prove), and as such deserves a more extensive treatment which should not be unwelcome to anyone who, after reading the first part of this work, is still sufficiently interested to read this second part.

The young Ik Syeng had just ascended the throne, under his father's regency, when, in 1866, a new persecution of Christians soaked the peninsula in blood and brought about the intervention of France.

A first wave of persecutions had occurred earlier, during the reign of Sien Gio [Sunjo 순조 純祖, 1800-34], followed by a second wave, in which three French subjects lost their lives, Fathers Maubant and Chastan and Bishop Imbert, [Pierre-Philibert Maubant, Jacques-Honoré Chastan, Laurent-Marie-Joseph Imbert] during the reign of Heng Giong [Heonjong 헌종 憲宗, 1834-49].

The French admiral Cécile, as soon as he heard of this second massacre in 1846, had stationed his squadron off the island of Ol-yen Do [???] and transmitted a letter to the local Korean magistrate, asking the government in Seoul to explain the assassination of the French subjects. It seems the letter, and especially the presence of the warships under his command, made a deep impression on the minds of the Koreans, but the Admiral left without waiting for a reply and returned to China.

This happened in June 1846, and in August of the same year Captain Lapierre, who had replaced Cécile, commanding the two frigates *La Gloire* and *La Victorieuse*, returned to the coast of Korea to seek the answer to the letter left by his predecessor.

The lack of reliable charts of the area caused the grounding of the two frigates on the island of Ko-Kem Do [Gogunsan-do 고군산도 古郡山島] and forced the crews of the two ships to land on the island, where they remained for about a month, without being able to contact the local population. Two officers commanding two of the frigates' smaller boats were quickly despatched to Shang-hai in search of rescue and their mission, brilliantly accomplished, led to the departure for Korea of an English expedition commanded by Lord Marqu'han, and composed of the frigate *Doedalies* and two brigantines.

With the help of these ships the two French frigates were promptly refloated and on September 12, having completely failed to accomplish their mission, they left Korea for good.

Meanwhile, the Korean government, emboldened by the failure of the western barbarians, but still fearful that they might attack at any moment, decided to respond to Admiral Cécile's letter. To this end a formal note was sent to Beijing, in a haughty and provocative style, even describing the wretched missionaries who had been slaughtered as "rascals associated with rebels, impious and wicked".

Upon receiving this note through the Court of Beijing, Commander Lapierre replied, via the same channels, that the reasons given by the Koreans to justify the murder of the three French subjects could not be accepted, and announced that another warship would be sent to Korean waters in the early months of 1848.

But those were years in which the most serious events were happening in Europe, and France, where revolution had broken out, was facing far more urgent problems than the small Korean question.

For some time the Government in Seoul waited with great anxiety, but in vain, for the warship to arrive. Then, since it did not arrive, they became convinced that only fear could keep the *barbarians of the West* away, and the Korean government's treatment of foreigners who tried to enter the peninsula and Christians who gathered around them grew ever harsher.

However, rumors of the successes achieved at that moment by British and French arms in China,

striking its capital, the very heart of the Middle Empire, caused panic among the Koreans, who feared that their land would fall prey at any moment to the invaders from the West. This led them to adopt a prudent policy, so as not to attract the attention of the same foreigners to the peninsula who had entered Beijing victoriously.

But Korean memories are short. In a few months the Western feats of arms had been forgotten, and hatred of foreigners and Christians reached new heights in government circles in Seoul when the Tai Uen Kun [Daewongun 대원군 大院君 1820-99] came to power.

Another false move by Westerners was to bring about the crisis.

A Russian ship anchored near Uen-san (Ghen-san) [Wonsan = Korean / Gensan = Japanese pronunciation 원산 元山] sent a letter to the Korean government asking Korea to open the country to Russian trade.

This sudden appearance of the feared Westerners on their shores shook the Koreans, who, always faithful to their political tradition, replied that "Korea being a tributary state of China, they were not allowed to enter into any treaty without the prior consent of the Beijing government."

In this way, they tried to buy time while remaining deeply concerned about the possible consequences of their refusal.

Naturally they never expected that the Russian ship, satisfied with the reply received, would leave Uen-san, never to be seen again on the coast of the peninsula.

The Koreans firmly believed they had won a new victory and celebrated their success by launching a new and even crueller massacre, during which, in addition to various Korean missionaries and catechumens, the French bishop Berneux [Simeon Francois Berneux, Bishop 1814-1866] and the missionaries Ranfer, Beaulieu and Dorie were tortured to death on the orders of the Tai Uen Kun himself.

This took place on March 8, 1866.

A few days later, on the 11th of the same month, two other French missionaries, Petitnicolas and Pourthié [Marie-Alexandre Petitnicolas, Charles-Antoine Pourthié], were beheaded and finally on the 30th Bishop Daveluy [Marie Antoine Nicholas Daveluy 1818-1866] and Fathers Huin and Aumaitoc [Martin Huin, Pierre Aumaitre] suffered the same cruel fate.

Of the entire French Catholic mission, only three had managed to escape, among them Father Ridet [Félix-Claire Ridet], who was then Bishop of Korea. After fleeing on a native junk, Father Ridet brought news of the latest events on the Korean peninsula to Tientsin [Tianjin].

The Chinese government, shaken by the news, immediately requested explanations from the Seoul Court, but the Tai Uen Kun replied arrogantly that "it was not the first time that French subjects had been killed in Korea and no one had ever complained."

Admiral Roze, commander of the French squadron in the Far East, then decided to move to Korea and obtain prompt reparation for the wrong done to the French nation.

But this expedition produced no better results than the previous one conducted by Lapierre.

On 11 October of that same year 1866, the entire squadron composed of the frigate *La Guerriere*, the propeller-driven corvettes *Le Laplace* and *Le Primauguet*, *Le Deroulède* and *Le Kien Chan*, and the gunboats *Le Tardif* and *Le Lebreton*, left Cefù [Zhifu / Chefoo, Yantai, China] and headed for the mouth of the Han.

Two days later the flotilla dropped anchor off Boisée island and on the 14th the landing squads occupied the island of Kang-wha [Ganghwa-do 강화도] without meeting any resistance.

This short-lived occupation was destined to be the expedition's sole achievement, for when Admiral Roze ventured to send a body of 120 men to the mainland in order to occupy the village of Tong-tsin, they had to retire in the face of Korean fire [this is not historically correct].

A few days later, 300 tiger hunters, evading the vigilance of the French, managed to reach the island and fortify their position. Hearing of this, the admiral ordered an expedition against them, but this new operation was also unsuccessful. Unable to obtain any real result, both for lack of adequate means and scant knowledge of the country, Admiral Roze considered it more prudent to abandon the campaign; he withdrew his men from the island of Kang-wha, and on October 28 the whole squadron left Korean waters and returned to Cefù.

The Koreans soon had another success to add to this one, becoming increasingly convinced of their superiority over the Westerners as a result.

On 28 October 1867, an American brig, the *General Sherman*, loaded with various kinds of

merchandise, had gone some way up the Ta-tong river in the hope of establishing trade with the inhabitants of those regions, but, stranded in the vicinity of Pyeng-yang [Pyongyang 평양] and attacked by the Koreans, the entire crew was slaughtered.

Four years later, in 1871, the United States sent a squadron under the command of Admiral Rodgers to Korean waters, but the Americans were no luckier than the French had been: they also occupied Kang-wha, but after waiting in vain for a few days for a response from the Seoul government, they too withdrew.

These French and American expeditions undoubtedly did little to enhance the prestige of Westerners in Korea. If, despite the sorry figure the barbarians of the West had cut in Korean eyes on these occasions, they finally managed to impose their treaties on Korea and lift forever the veil of mystery surrounding the Hermit Nation, this should be attributed, not so much to our own merits as to the influence exercised by China, which feared that the obstinate isolation of Korea could bring her trouble with the nations whose power and strength she had very recently experienced.

It was therefore China, and her representative Li Hung Ciang [Li Hongzhang, 李鴻章], the astute Viceroy of Ci-li [Zhili], who advised the Government of Seoul to sign the trade treaties which the various nations had been waiting for for so long.

Korea now found itself forced to sign a trade treaty with Japan for fear of a new invasion.

In 1868, the celebrated year of the great Japanese reform, when, after the collapse of the feudal system, all power was concentrated in the hands of the Mikado, and the glorious era of the *Meigi* [Meiji] began, one of the first acts of the restored power had been to request Korea to resume the annual embassy to Japan, a custom neglected by the Koreans since 1811.

The Tai Uen Kun replied contemptuously to this proposal, and when, in 1872, Japan sent a new embassy with the same request, his son, the current Emperor, having reached his majority, refused to receive it.

Such an affront provoked Japan's immediate declaration of war. And war there certainly would have been had the long years of internal strife not greatly exhausted the Japanese empire and inclined it to heed better advice. There was also the danger that China, which Japan feared far more than now, might enter the scene, and so the Japanese decided to wait for a more favourable opportunity to resolve the conflict peacefully.

Meanwhile in 1875, when a Japanese warship approached the island of Kangwha to carry out hydrographic operations, the inhabitants fired on the crew.

In response to this new provocation, the Japanese government immediately sent an embassy to Beijing headed by Mr. Arinori Mori, and another to Seoul with Mr. Kusoda Kiotaka, the latter escorted by a small fleet consisting of two gunboats and three transports.

The mission of the first of these gentlemen was to ask for formal explanations regarding the conduct of the Korean government and the relations between the Beijing Court and that of Seoul; that of the second to ensure for Japan a treaty of trade with Korea.

Both these missions had the desired outcome. China first of all declined any responsibility for events on the Korean peninsula, thus giving Japan the right to consider Korea as a sovereign and independent state, and secondly, fearful as always of the possible consequences for the tranquility of its empire, promptly sent a messenger to the Seoul Court with orders to facilitate the conclusion of the treaty.

So it was that on February 26, 1876, on the island of Kang-wha, the Japanese-Korean trade treaty was solemnly signed by the Japanese minister Kusoda Kiotaka and Mr. Inouye Kaoru on the one hand and the Korean dignitaries Sin Hou [Shin Heon 신헌 申穗, 1810-1884] and In Gia Syng [Yun Ja-seung 윤자승 尹滋承] on the other - the first step of the hermit nation towards a new civilization.

With the treaty of Kang-wha Japan recognized the independence of Korea and it was agreed that, in addition to Fusan, two other ports (later designated as Cemulpo [Jemulpo, 濟物浦 제물포] and Ghensan) would be opened to Japanese trade.

It must be said in fairness that the happy outcome of the Japanese negotiations was largely due to the influence of the young King who, unlike his father the Tai Uen Kun, would himself have been very willing to open his country to international trade and put an end to its centuries-old seclusion once and for all, but the reactionary parties were constantly obstructing his work.

In the early months of 1880 some French, Russian and American ships, anchoring off different points of the peninsula, tried to establish relations with the Government of Seoul and lay the foundations of a commercial agreement, but all failed in the enterprise.

In August of that same year it was the turn of an Italian ship.

His Excellency the Duke of Genoa, commanding the pyro-corvette *Vettor Pisani*, had the honour of being the first to fly the Italian flag in the waters of that distant peninsula and the equally interesting honour of being the first European to establish cordial relations with the inhabitants and authorities of the ports visited. The letter he sent from Fusan [Busan 부산] to the prefect of the city of Tungnai [Dongnae 동내], in contrast with previous refusals, received a prompt reply from that official; and in September, when the *Pisani* stayed for a few days in the port of Ghensan, although his attempt to begin commercial negotiations failed, the Duke was very warmly received by the city's magistrate, who accepted an invitation from him to visit our ship.

It was not much, admittedly, but they were the first and sure signs that the times were ripe.

In the following year, the British and French returned to knock on the door of the hermit state, but the result was no better. Yet the great day was near. China saw its influence continually wane on the Korean peninsula: the comparison between the serious losses inflicted on it by the allies and the successes the Koreans reckoned they had achieved against the westerners, made the Koreans increasingly proud of themselves and gradually led them to abandon that blind submission to the Middle Empire which their country had professed for so many centuries.

China's influence was about to disappear. Li Hung Ciang saw the danger and reckoned that he could avoid it by fostering the development of new interests in the peninsula, so that the preponderance Japan was gradually gaining could be counterbalanced, and China's position continually strengthened as a result of the conflict of different interests.

He himself went to Seoul as an imperial commissioner to closely monitor the work of the Koreans, and his first act was to recommend the conclusion of the treaty with the United States of America, which Admiral Shuffeldt had hitherto requested in vain. Li Hung Ciang hoped, in return for his good offices, to have a clause included in the treaty stating that the United States would recognize China's tutelage over Korea, thereby largely nullifying the effects of article 1 of the Japanese treaty which proclaimed Korea's independence. But Admiral Shuffeldt would have none of it, and then Li Hung Ciang, without insisting on this detail, thought he had found a solution by persuading the King of Korea to send a dispatch, on the day the treaty was signed, to the President of the United States by which the sovereign recognized his dependence on China; and a similar dispatch was always sent on the occasion of subsequent treaties.

The treaty was solemnly signed in Cemulpo on 22 May 1882. It guaranteed North American citizens the right to trade in ports already open to Japanese trade, and to settle in those ports with special privileges, enjoying a regime of extra-territoriality under consular jurisdiction. The two high contracting parties agreed to grant each other the right to maintain stable representations in their respective capitals, and so on. In short, the treaty was substantially similar to those which until then linked the western powers to China.

The great fact was accomplished, Korea ceased to be a closed country and a centuries-old mystery was forever revealed.

The treaty with the United States was soon followed by others: treaties were signed with England and Germany in 1883, with Italy in 1884, with Russia in 1885 and with France in 86, followed in recent years by treaties with Austria, Belgium and Denmark.

Each of them naturally contains the most favored nation clause and by virtue of them, various other ports besides Cemulpo, Fusan and Ghensan were opened to international trade.

To give an idea of the rights granted to foreigners by these treaties, which are very similar to one another, I reproduce in the appendix the text of the treaty signed with Italy.

THE REACTION

Agitation of the Tai Uen Kun - The uprisings of July 1882 - The odyssey of Japanese refugees – Japan's demands - Exile of the Tai Uen Kun - Conspiracy of 84 - Iron and fire in the streets of Seoul - Chinese and Japanese in Korea - Li-Ito Agreement - Return of the Tai Uen Kun - Port Hamilton Incident - Tong-hak

Treaties of friendship, trade and navigation between Korea and the western nations were thus signed in rapid succession, but such a radical change in the direction of government could not reasonably be expected to win popular support.

A people accustomed to so many centuries of isolation, in whom traditional policy had sought to inculcate the most blind hatred of everything foreign, and accustomed to thinking of a foreigner as an enemy, naturally took exception to this influx of barbarians into its homeland, and looked on the agreements made by the Government with the various powers as something very similar to an act of high treason.

The reactionary party headed by the Tai Uen Kun could not remain passive. Ever since the signing of the treaty with Japan, it had tried to stir up the people against the King and the Government; and subsequently, while the terms of the treaty with the United States were being negotiated, a petition signed by a large number of influential people in the capital had been presented to the throne, requesting that no treaty be signed. The petition, as we have seen, had no effect; the treaty with the United States was duly signed and a steady stream of foreigners, especially Japanese, began to arrive in Seoul. But the Tai Uen Kun could not remain inactive: thousands of leaflets were distributed throughout the peninsula, informing the people that the barbarians of the west were invading their land, and that there were only two paths still open to Korea - either to accept war or try and avoid it by eliminating its causes. To do otherwise would mean selling one's country to the enemy, and so every good Korean should resort to arms. The reactionary party tried by every possible means to stir up the people, who in its profound ignorance necessarily believed these warnings that came incessantly from above.

Now it so happened that the harvests that year were very poor, the rains failed, and a fierce epidemic began to claim victims both in the capital and in the provinces. The Tai Uen Kun and his accomplices immediately took advantage of this, and, having won over the most prestigious soothsayers and sorcerers, made them declare to the people that these were the first and most natural consequences of the new state of affairs, the result of the fatal influence of the western barbarians and their worshippers, the Japanese, which threatened to ruin the offspring of the legendary Tan-gun, the good people of Ciu-sen.

And then, one fine day, on July 23 of that same year 1882, when the King went to the Temple of Heaven to pray for rain, a handful of conspirators attempted to capture him. The King however managed to escape by returning to his palace. The Queen, the target too of the Tai Uen Kun who saw in her the greatest obstacle to the realization of his plans, also managed to foil the schemes of her persecutors: helped by her women, she escaped to the provinces and disappeared, and everyone believed she had fallen victim to the conspiracy.

In the meantime, the rumor was spreading that the King had been attacked by the Japanese in his palace, that the city's royal guard had been powerless to repel the assault and that it was the sacred duty of every good citizen to take up arms and rush to defend his sovereign. Over four thousand troublemakers responded to the call; spurred on by the emissaries of the Tai Uen Kun, they fell to roaming the streets of the capital, killing every Japanese person they came across, attacking and destroying the houses of all those ministers or public officials who they were told were partisans of the progressive policy, among whom were members of the

Min family, relatives of the Queen.

The gang of rioters then headed towards the Japanese Legation, where the Minister Mr. Hanabusa, the staff of the Legation, various private citizens and a number of gendarmes, forty in all, had just heard of an imminent attack and were preparing their defense.

Arriving at the Legation gate, the Korean crowd dared not face the revolvers of the Japanese gendarmes who kept guard there. At first they restricted themselves to throwing stones at the guards, and then they set fire to some of the surrounding houses; helped by the strong wind which blew that day, the fire spread rapidly to the whole Legation, which was soon in flames.

The Japanese, with their minister at their head and sabres in hand, then rushed against the crowd of rioters and managed to break through them. First they went to the royal palace; finding the doors barred, they decided to make their way to Cemulpo. In torrential rain, they reached the river around midnight, but the boatmen refused to transport them to the other shore. They had to seize the boats by force, and it was by the greatest good fortune that, in the dark of night, and with no experience of the difficulties involved in navigating the river, they managed to reach the other shore safely. Without food and without rest, they walked all night and most of the following day, until around 3 pm, completely exhausted and undone, they arrived in Yen-ciuan [Incheon], the Korean city near the port of Cemulpo.

There the prefect received them kindly and gave them what they most needed, food and rest. The staff of the Legation and the Japanese officials were put up in the prefect's *a-mun*, while the servants and gendarmes found accommodation in a house nearby.

But the torments of that small handful of fugitives were not yet over. In the middle of the night the minister and his companions were awakened by a very loud noise, as several blood-stained Japanese rushed into the *a-mun*, hotly pursued by a crowd of Koreans, who had been joined by about forty soldiers armed with rifles.

In the blink of an eye the Japanese were out and taking a side road they managed to reach the port of Cemulpo where, as soon as they arrived, they crossed the water and sheltered on the island of Roze, which was uninhabited, and therefore safe from new pitfalls. Their number was reduced to 26.

After renting a junk, they abandoned themselves to the sea, and on the 26th, after spending more hours lost in the fog, they were picked up by the English warship *Flying Fish*, which transported them to Nagasaki, thus ending their terrible odyssey.

As soon as Japan heard what had happened to its representative in Seoul and its subjects in Korea, it straightway mobilized its fleet and gathered an army in Simonoseki. War would certainly have broken out if the Korean Government, powerless to resist, had not hastened to comply with Japan's demands.

While a Chinese squadron was stationed in the port of Cemulpo, it was Mr Hanabusa himself, with an armed escort, who brought the demands of his government to the Korean capital. These comprised: the arrest within twenty days of the perpetrators of the attack on the Legation and its staff; their immediate punishment, following a regular trial to be attended by representatives of the Japanese government; the payment of an allowance of 50,000 yen to the families of the victims; the payment of 500,000 yen as a war indemnity to Japan; permission for Japan to maintain a garrison of soldiers in Seoul to protect its Legation; the dispatch of an embassy to Japan to present the due apologies of the Korean government, and finally the grant of new commercial privileges.

Upon his arrival in Seoul, the Japanese minister found the Tai Uen Kun in charge of the situation. The leader of the reactionary party tried to explain away the attack on the Legation as an arbitrary move by soldiers demanding arrears from the Korean government, which had no control over them. He affected to dismiss the incident as unimportant and appeared disposed

to accept Japan's demands.

However, as the days passed and a settlement of the dispute seemed more and more distant, Mr. Hanabusa suddenly left Seoul and returned to Cemulpo, where he boarded the vessel that had brought him to Korea. This unexpected move by the Japanese envoy made the Tai Uen Kun understand how futile his delaying tactics had been, and the demands of the Japanese government were immediately granted.

Meanwhile, the Chinese government, which observed this consolidation of the Japanese in Korea with misgivings, and considered the Tai Uen Kun to be the prime cause of all these events, found some false pretext to have him board a gunboat that was waiting in the port of Cemulpo, which then transported him to China, where he was banished to Pao-ting-fu. Subsequently, fearing that the events in Korea could provoke a decisive action by Japan, five thousand Chinese soldiers, under the leadership of Yuen Ci Kai and two other generals, were sent to Korea, and on 9 October they camped near Seoul, where a guard of about 700 Japanese soldiers had already arrived to protect their Legation.

As soon as her worst and deadliest enemy had left, the Queen, for whom solemn funeral rites had already been performed, returned to the scene of Korean politics. She began by removing from power all those who directly or indirectly could be held responsible for the events of July, but on considering that it was China which had removed the Tai Uen Kun, she became from then on the most fervent partisan of Chinese influence in the peninsula.

Two years of relative calm passed, during which, under the skilful direction of Yuen Ci Kai, the Chinese Resident at the Court of Seoul, who received direct instructions from the astute viceroy of Ci-li, the famous Li Hung Ciang, it seemed that, despite the treaties that were being signed, and perhaps even because of them, China's influence was increasing all the time.

Then came 1884, the year of the war with France. China's whole attention and all her armed forces were then concentrated in Tonkin. A Chinese intervention in the affairs of the peninsula was considered to be very improbable, all the more so as it would entail a break in good relations with Japan; so there was a new uprising in Seoul. What actually were the causes of this new insurrection is very difficult to say: it has been suggested that it was organized by Japanese emissaries, who, being aware of the deep hostility which characterized the Korean people's attitude to Japan, tried to mask their true aims by spreading the word that the Tai Uen Kun, through his supporters, was attempting a new uprising, in order to provoke a movement of revolt in the reform party. The fact is that this movement, which started with decidedly anti-Chinese tendencies, was soon to turn against the Japanese themselves; if they did gain any advantage from it, it was at the price of considerable sacrifices.

At the head of the conspiracy was Kim Ok Kiun, a Korean nobleman who had fled to Japan in 1875 and then returned to Korea in 1882. He was considered to be the head of the reformist party loyal to Japan, and the plan which he and his followers devised must have consisted first of all in removing the pro-China ministers and replacing them with the same number of members of the pro-Japan party, thus obliging the King to accept the programme of reforms which the new ministers would present to him.

To implement this plan, December 4 was chosen, the day scheduled for the solemn inauguration of the Seoul post office, then established under the direction of Hong Yong Sik, a member of the reform party.

On the premises of the new post office, a grand gala dinner took place that day, to which the new director had invited all the ministers, foreign envoys and other notables of the capital. During lunch, the slow peal of the bell announcing a fire rang out, and Min Yong Ik, Minister of State and a relative of the Queen, who was believed to be one of the most influential members of the pro-China party, came out promptly to ascertain where the fire was. He was treacherously attacked by an unknown person who with his sabre in his hand inflicted a deep

wound to the minister's head. Alarmed by the shouts of the servants who accompanied him, the other guests panicked and fled, while the dying Min Yong Ik was carried back inside the post office.

Meanwhile, either before, during or after the incident (all three versions exist), the Japanese minister, accompanied by a company of 150 men of the Legation guard, presented himself at the Royal Palace, where Korean soldiers offered no resistance to his passage. Presenting himself to the King, he informed him that the city was in the throes of revolt and that he had come to take him under his protection. The leaders of the reformist party also rushed to the palace. Kim Ok Kiun, having seized the royal seal, sent orders in the name of the King to all ministers and other important figures of the opposing party to come to him immediately. Answering the summons, they had not even passed the gates of the palace when, to use Griffis' phrase, they were relieved of their heads. Eleven people were beheaded that night. A new cabinet led by Kim Ok Kiun was immediately formed and important edicts prepared the same night.

The following morning the Chinese imperial commissioner tried to get an audience with the King, but was refused. Then General Yuan, at the head of 1500 Chinese soldiers and over 3000 Koreans, launched an assault on the palace which the Japanese garrison was defending; after an hour of intense fighting they managed to enter the palace, but only after the Japanese, under the brilliant conduct of Captain Murakami, had opened a passage through the ranks of the attackers and regained the Japanese Legation, which the twenty or so soldiers on guard had managed with great difficulty to defend against the attacks of the Koreans. The presence of the Japanese in the Royal Palace immediately led the population of the capital to believe that the new coup d'état was the work of their centuries-old enemies, and on the morning of that day, December 6, the cry of "Death to the Japanese!" echoed through the streets of Seoul. For several hours the city was prey to the bloodiest confusion; the peaceful Koreans, transformed into beasts, were seen going through the various districts of the capital in search of the Japanese and their accomplices, setting fire, plundering and killing wherever they met them.

The King, protected by the Chinese, fled to their camp near the city. The members of the new Cabinet found a way to escape, while Hong Yong Sik, who had not wanted to abandon the King, was also taken to the Chinese camp, and beheaded.

Meanwhile, in the morning, the Japanese soldiers and citizens, organized in military formation under the direction of Captain Murakami, attacked from all sides and, pursued by the crowd of rioters, headed for Cemulpo. With admirable discipline and level-headedness, having overcome all sorts of difficulties, they arrived on the morning of the following day, and from there, by means of a Japanese steamer, which fortunately for them was in the port, they continued to Nagasaki. Two years later, this was the second adventurous journey that Mr. Hanabusa had had to make in almost identical conditions.

In Seoul, meanwhile, the old party had taken over. The perpetrators of the insurrectional movement of December 4 were immediately punished in an exemplary fashion: twelve were put to death in the course of the following days after suffering the most barbaric tortures; eleven others, sent to trial, after endless tortures, were beheaded, mutilated and quartered, and their remains thrown to the dogs on the streets of Seoul.

Kim Ok Kiun and his main accomplices, who fled to Japan under Japanese escort, were declared rebels, and a reward placed on their heads. Of these rebels, only Kim Ok Kiun remained in Japan, protected by the authorities who refused a request from the Korean Cabinet to hand him over; the rest fled to America.

The government of the Mikado then asked for compensation from Korea for the massacre of Japanese subjects, and Count Inouye arrived in Seoul for this special mission

accompanied by 2,500 soldiers. The Korean government agreed to send a new embassy to Japan to apologize for what had happened; it also agreed to make a compensatory payment of 130,000 yen to the families of the victims, and to rebuild the destroyed Legation at its own expense.

Count Ito was then sent to China to reach an agreement with the Chinese government on Korean affairs. The plenipotentiary of China was Viceroy Li Hung Ciang, and between the two a convention was concluded; it was signed in Tientsin on April 18, 1885. Known as the *Li-Ito agreement*, the convention stipulated that the two Governments of Japan and China agree to withdraw their troops from Korea simultaneously and refrain from sending their own military instructors to train Korean troops; in the event that new events led one or the other to believe that an armed intervention in the peninsula would be appropriate, the State which believed it had to intervene should not do so without first giving notice to the other and obtaining its consent. Subsequently a dispute arose about the observance of this convention; it was this dispute that officially caused the war of 1894-95.

On 21 May 1885, the Chinese and Japanese troops left the Korean capital to return to their respective countries.

In the autumn of the same year, the Tai Uen Kun returned to Korea, recalled by the district leaders of his party, who, after the latest events, had taken over the conduct of affairs.

It was feared at first for some time that this move was aimed at the dismissal of the King and his replacement by the Tai Uen Kun. However, although the latter missed no opportunity to regain his earlier ascendancy over his son and his former preeminence in the decisions of the Government, which he had lost forever to Queen Min since her entrance to the Court, Korea enjoyed several years of relative tranquility. It was not until 1894 that passions took over again, popular unrest led to violence and blood flowed once more on the streets.

In the meantime the only noteworthy events were the occupation and return of Port Hamilton by England and the agitation of the *Tong-hak*.

On 14 April 1885, without apparent cause, the British had raised their flag on the small group of islands of Port Hamilton, and the Koreans, on hearing of this, had immediately sent a mission to Port Hamilton to protest vigorously against this violation of their territory. Lord Curzon in his *Problems of the Far East*, already mentioned elsewhere, states that Russia was necessarily behind the events of 4 December and that there was a secret treaty between Russia and Korea, according to which Russia would support Korea's claims to the island of Tsu-shima and in return Korea would cede the islands of Port Hamilton to Russia: hence the British move to prevent the plan from being carried out. With all due respect to Lord Curzon's views, and without going into the merits of the second part of his explanations, I would point out that his book is the only one where Russia is mentioned in relation to the events of 4 December, and that I have never found the slightest trace of a similar supposition in any other written or verbal report of the same events.

This occupation, however, caused a lot of diplomatic trouble, and it was only after Russia had agreed to make a formal declaration that it would never attempt to annex any part of Korea's territory, that the English flag was lowered from the islands.

It was also around this time that the *Tong-hak*, "the disciples of oriental science", began a fresh series of protests which gave the Government cause for concern. They were the followers of a certain Cì Gè U, who since the year 1859 had begun to preach, in the Kieng-giu district, Kieng-song Do, a strange doctrine mixing Christian principles, Buddhist elements and Confucianist precepts, explained by the founder himself in his book *Sieng-yeng-dai-giong*. In his book Cì tells how, seeing so many Catholic missionaries come from afar and suffer the most atrocious martyrdom for the propagation of their faith, he began to have serious doubts, thinking that there must be something good in this doctrine if its followers were prepared to

make such hard sacrifices. Wracked by these doubts, he fell ill and no medicine in this world could cure him. When one day he was a prey to new pains, a mysterious being appeared to him and said to him: "Get up, o Cìò! Do you know who is speaking to you?" He was terrified, and answered "No, who are you?" – "I am San-gé, the Dominator of Heaven, adore me and you will have power over the people." - He adored him and went on: "San-gé, Dominator of Heaven, I am in great doubt: is the Catholic religion the true religion?" – "No", replied San-gé, "the letter is good, but the spirit is far from the truth," and disappeared.

Cìò Gè U, seeing ink and brush next to him, began to inscribe a prayer on a piece of paper, swallowed it, and was suddenly healed. He understood then that he had been called to preach a new faith and immediately set about gathering converts.

The new religion took the name of *Tong-hak* (oriental science), as opposed to *Sie-hak* (western science), as Catholicism was called. The number of converts gradually increased, until in 1866, when the great persecution of Catholics took place, they were confused with them and a large number lost their lives during the massacres ordered by the Tai Uen Kun. Cìò Gè U himself was beheaded in Tai-ku and the new doctrine was banned.

However, it was not totally extinguished and the Tong-Hak sect continued to expand in the south of the peninsula, attracting all the most combative elements and the many discontents who were unhappy with the abuses of the Government of Seoul. So although this movement started as a religious one, it assumed a political and social character which was later, albeit indirectly, to lead to the great war of 1894 between China and Japan.

In March 1892 about forty Tong-Haks appeared in front of the Royal Palace of Seoul and sent a petition to the King calling for an end to foreign interference in the affairs of the peninsula. A few days later, in April, the King issued a number of decrees against them, and at the end of the same month the Tong-Haks began to create disturbances in the southern provinces.

JAPANESE HEGEMONY

Assassination of Hong Ciong U - The Tong-Hak uprising - China's intervention - Japanese claims – Outbreak of Sino-Japanese war - Occupation of Seoul - Start of reforms - Minister Otori and the Legislative Assembly - Count Inouye - Viscount Miura - Assassination of the Queen – Judgment of Hiroshima.

Everyone knows the events that took place, nine years ago, during the Sino-Japanese war; even the details of the conflict are well known, thanks to the excellent studies which have been published, including in Italy, on the subject. What is not generally known or imperfectly known is the sequence of events that led to the war, and even less is known about the internal struggles that troubled Korea when it found itself for some time at the complete mercy of the Japanese.

Proud of the new culture which they could parade before the neighbouring peoples of Asia, and of the undisputed military successes they had achieved during the campaign, the Japanese also believed the time had come to assert themselves in the eyes of the world not only as a civilized nation, but as a civilizing one. Korea lent itself to the experiment and Japan did not want to miss the opportunity. While the military exploits of Japanese generals and admirals in China had attracted everyone's attention in the West, the work of its diplomats and statesmen in Korea, which Japan intended to be a work of peace, attracted no one's attention; at most the occasional laconic telegram, relegated between unimportant news items, announced the assassination of the Queen of Korea or the King's escape to a foreign Legation – dismissed as just the usual intrigues of those Eastern Courts; no comment; the audience smiled and lost interest.

Yet, if it is true that civil institutions, much more than military ones, are a reliable guide to the nature of a people, the experiment of this new young Japan was in itself entirely worthy of greater attention. If nothing else, there would be more material available today to help us make a calm assessment of the conflicting interests. There are many of these, but in daily discussion, they are usually considered quite separately from the interests of Korea – the interests of a nation of over 12 million human beings which has suffered right up to the present day from a corrupt and despotic regime, and still more from the arrogance of its neighbours, and whose future is now looking more than ever troubled and uncertain.

The year 1894 arrived and the political situation in the Far East in the early months of the year was such as to fear that great complications in the international field would soon arise. Korea's internal situation was very bad, intrigues followed one another and a crisis was deemed inevitable. Kim Ok Kyung, the leader of the revolt which broke out in Seoul in 1884 under the auspices of Japan, condemned for political crimes, was suddenly assassinated on 27 March in a Japanese hotel in Shanghai by Hong Ciong U, and his corpse transported to Korea on a Chinese warship. Once there, in accordance with old-established custom and despite all the protests of the diplomatic corps, the corpse was quartered and the different parts of the mutilated body sent through the eight provinces as a terrible warning to all traitors. The assassin, Hong Ciong U, was showered with honours by the Korean government. The whole business inevitably displeased Japan, which had supported that very same Kim Ok Kyung and protected him for about ten years.

Meanwhile, another revolt had broken out in the south of the peninsula. The Tong-Hak sect had gathered around it all the discontented elements in the southern provinces and led them to revolt. In May the Tong-Haks made an appeal to the nation; fighting, looting, assassinations of unpopular officials followed, and the movement threatened to spread. The situation was very serious. The Queen's party, the powerful Min, urged the King to seek help from China, but the King resisted, while Cieng-ciong, the capital of the province of Ciul-la Do, fell into the hands of the insurgents. It was feared that Seoul itself would end up falling into their power, and at that point the King, yielding to pressure from the Min, agreed to turn to China.

On 7 June China, having decided to comply with the request of the Korean monarch and send a body of troops to the peninsula, in accordance with the Li-Ito convention (Tientsin 1885), notified Japan of its intention. On the same day the Japanese minister in Beijing warned the Chinese government

that a similar measure would be taken by Japan; and in fact the following day, two thousand Chinese soldiers under the command of General Yi landed in A-san in Korea, followed very soon after by six hundred soldiers of the Japanese navy who landed on 10 June at Cemulpo and proceeded immediately to Seoul. There, however, they were soon replaced by 800 infantry soldiers who arrived on the 13th together with the Japanese minister Mr. Otori. As soon as the Japanese soldiers appeared in Cemulpo, the King of Korea realized the great mistake he had made when invoking the help of China, and immediately turned to the representatives of the powers asking for their good offices, by virtue of an explicit clause contained in the treaties, to obtain the prompt withdrawal from Korea of both the Chinese and Japanese troops. The representatives of the various powers quickly agreed to do so, and sent a communication to the Chinese and Japanese Legations respectively, proposing the simultaneous withdrawal of the troops of the two nations. The Chinese representative replied that his government agreed to the proposed evacuation, but the Japanese minister declared that he must first consult his government. The result of this consultation was a request addressed by Mr. Otori to the Korean government on 20 June, to allow two days for the immediate withdrawal of Chinese troops, failing which decisive measures would be taken. The King found himself in a very embarrassing position: he had requested the despatch of the Chinese troops and now he did not know how he could justifiably send them back while keeping the Japanese. Meanwhile, on 25 June another 5000 Japanese troops arrived in Seoul, and the following day Mr. Otori presented the King with a memorandum, which demanded the carrying out of important and radical internal reforms. On 18 July, 15,000 Japanese soldiers and 3000 *coolies* arrived in Cemulpo and on the 25th of the same month the decisive retaliatory measures which had been announced were carried out.

At 5 o'clock in the morning the Japanese troops marched towards the Royal Palace. The palace was surrounded, and its walls were breached in two places, at the eastern gate and to the rear of the palace in the so-called Quagga, the "Field of exams." While the Japanese coming from this second breach were heading towards the north gate they came face to face with the braves of Pyeng-yang and for a few minutes firing was fierce on both sides. Then the King himself, realizing that further resistance would be futile, ordered a cease-fire, and the Royal Palace fell into the hands of the Japanese. In a few hours they were masters of the city. The Min party, hostile to the Japanese, was defeated and the Tai Uen Kun, restored to his former power, was placed by the Japanese alongside the King.

The first naval engagement between China and Japan took place on the island of Phung Do on 25 July, followed shortly after by fighting at A-san, on 29 July. The Japanese won both battles. At the same time the King of Korea, forced by Japan, publicly renounced his subservience to China, and on 1 August, the day when war between China and Japan was officially declared, he announced his intention to inaugurate a new government, promising extensive reforms.

It would be beyond the scope of these pages to retrace the events of the Sino-Japanese war in any great detail. I will therefore limit myself to recalling that the great battle of Pyeng-yang took place on 15 September and that once this important fortress fell into the hands of the Japanese and the Chinese subsequently fled to safety north of Yalù, the war on the Korean peninsula came to an end.

With Korea's independence declared, and the ambitions of the Min and their supporters curbed, the promised reforms of the administration began, starting with the suppression of the emoluments paid to over 17,000 people, including palace ladies, eunuchs, dancers, storytellers, fortune tellers, junior government officials, etc., which weighed heavily on the finances of the nation. The Korean liberal party, known as the Independence Party, welcomed the intervention of the Japanese government with open arms, counting on its support to successfully carry out the whole scheme of reforms they had designed. The aims of this party coincided exactly with those of the rulers of the nearby empire, but both lacked suitable means and above all men.

At the request of the Japanese minister Mr. Otori, various royal edicts were subsequently promulgated. These were intended to bring about radical change not only in the administration of the state, but also in the customs and habits of the people. A Legislative Assembly was appointed by the King, again at the request of the Japanese minister, to prepare and decide on the reforms to be introduced. The Assembly was assisted by some 50 or 60 Japanese civil servants, attached to all government departments as "advisers". It has to be said that this 17-member legislative body took its mission seriously, since from 30 July to 29 October 1894 no less than 208 decrees were issued [for the complete list of all the Assembly's deliberations and more extensive details of the reforms carried out, see : W.

H. Wilkinson, *The Korean Government: Constitutional Changes, July 1894 to October 1895, with an Appendix on Subsequent Enactments to 30th June 1896*, a fine publication of the Statistical Office of the Inspectorate General of Chinese Maritime Customs]. By means of these decrees, attempts were made to model the organization of the Korean state on that of neighbouring Japan, although the legislative function, represented in Japan by the national Parliament, was entrusted to the Assembly appointed by the King "for the discussion of all matters of great and small importance, concerning the internal affairs of the Kingdom". This is not to say that the ideas expressed in the provisions contained in all these decrees were not excellent; on the contrary, the original flaw of the whole system was precisely that, for the people to whom they were directed, these laws suffered from an excess of quantity and of quality: there were too many of them and they were too good, in the way we Westerners understand what is meant by the term "good" when applied to a law. The Japanese took no account of the fact that it had taken them no less than forty years of tenacious work to adopt the new culture forced upon them by the Shimonoseki cannonades and which today they seem to have assimilated; nor did they take any account of the advantage they enjoyed in being able to build on the labours of an earlier civilization which was far more complex and complete than the Koreans' present one. The changes they had made in forty years, they hoped to impose on the Koreans in the space of a few months; it was natural that the attempt failed.

In mid-September Mr. Otori was recalled and was replaced in Seoul as extraordinary envoy and plenipotentiary minister of HM the Emperor of Japan, by Count Inouye, a consummate diplomat who left excellent memories of his time in Korea, although more perhaps for the stark difference between his work and that of his successor, which we will see later, than for his own merits. In fact, it is strange that Count Inouye, whose sound judgement is still being talked about, did not understand from the beginning the absurdity of the policy followed until then with this system of reforms and did not use his authority and great influence to curb the innovating zeal of the Japanese advisers to the Korean government and the small number of officials in whose hands power was then concentrated. Instead, he not only continued to follow the same course as his predecessor, but went further and sanctioned excesses that could only compromise the whole enterprise and, more seriously for Japan, alienate the sympathies of all Koreans.

It seems, moreover, that he did not look very favorably on the aforementioned Legislative Assembly. Count Inouye arrived in Seoul on October 26 and the Assembly met for the last time on the 29th of the same month. Indeed, two days later, Kim Hak U, deputy minister of justice and one of the most hardworking members of the assembly itself, was mysteriously murdered, allegedly by the reactionary party. Another of the early acts of Count Inouye, and he is to be praised for this, was the removal of the Tai Uen Kun from the palace. He then prepared and presented to the King a memorandum setting out, in twenty different clauses, the most urgent reforms to be carried out. Briefly summarizing them, they included: concentration of political power in the person of the King, and the consequent exclusion from state affairs of the Queen, the Tai Uen Kun, etc.; an obligation on the King to attend to state affairs and firstly to observe the laws of the nation; the exclusion of the Royal Household from state affairs; organization of the Royal Household; exact definition of the different duties and powers of the Cabinet and the various departments; regulation of taxes by the Ministry of Finance in accordance with appropriate laws; preparation and publication of financial statements; reorganization of the army; reduction of the ruinous expense and useless pomp of the royal family; codification of criminal laws; unification of police forces; review of the disciplinary rules for officials; limitation of the powers of local authorities and their consequent transfer to central government offices; compilation of the laws governing the status of employees; centralization of the public works department in the Ministry of agriculture; re-establishment of the Council of State; employment of technicians as advisers to the various ministries; and the establishment of overseas study programmes for young Koreans.

Excellent and sensible reforms, all of them, as can be readily seen; but, as I said before, the means and the men to implement them were lacking. Instead of simply insisting on the main thrust of the scheme, they immediately went into the details, revealing once again the inherent inability to master far-reaching concepts which, together with infinite attention to detail, is characteristic of the Japanese race. It became ridiculous: an edict was published on 23 April, requiring all Koreans to stop wearing their national costume, which was white, and instead adopt black clothes "more worthy of a civilized people"; a police order prohibited the use on the streets of the very long Korean pipes, prescribing a

shorter length as being "more worthy of a civilized people". In short, these laws were intended to abolish very ancient popular customs, which might well seem ridiculous to a foreigner, but which nevertheless are as firmly rooted in the everyday life of the people as their national language – customs which can only be changed with the passage of time, and certainly not by the mere decree of a foreign legislator. Naturally, discontent with all these innovations began in the provinces, and this discontent was fuelled by the machinations of the reactionary party and even more by the provocative behaviour of Japanese subjects towards the Koreans.

Count Inouye himself complained of this behaviour, and in a report to his government he expressed himself as follows: "The Japanese are not only rude to Koreans, but often insult them. In their dealings with Korean customers, they are rude, and as soon as any dispute arises with them, they do not hesitate to resort to violence and sometimes even go so far as to throw Koreans into the rivers or use offensive weapons against them. Those who are not merchants are even more rude and violent: they say they have given independence to Korea, they have suppressed the Tong-Haks, and those Koreans who dare to disobey them or oppose their will are accused of ingratitude. So how can we expect the Koreans not to be afraid of the Japanese? Fright turns to flight and dislike to hatred." And the hatred grew to such an extent that in the provinces and in the capital itself several Japanese were murdered by Koreans.

Things were at this point when, for reasons unknown, or perhaps because Count Inouye was beginning to understand the absurdity of the system followed until then and had suggested a change of direction, he was suddenly replaced and on the 1st of September Viscount Miura Goro, General of the reserves, arrived in Seoul to take over from him. This was a mortal blow to Japanese influence in Korea. The account of what he undertook during the short period in which he held office from 10 September to 20 October, deserves more widespread discussion. I have in front of me the translation of the official report which the deputy minister of justice Ko Teung Ciai submitted to the Korean Government at the end of the rigorous investigation ordered by the King, at the insistence of the foreign representatives to the Seoul Court, into the events that occurred in the capital during that period. I wish I had the space to reproduce this document – which has been published - in its entirety: the reader would then see very clearly to what extent the work of the Japanese was a civilizing work. However, since I do not have the necessary space, I shall try to summarize the facts which emerged from this investigation, carried out by members of the commission of enquiry with the help, as witnesses, of Europeans and Americans of indubitable integrity residing in Korea [it is enough to mention one of them, Mr. C. R. Greathouse, an American citizen, and private adviser to the King of Korea, who by special request of His Majesty was present throughout the proceedings and was required to declare publicly that they were conducted correctly and impartially].

Viscount Miura officially took up office as Head of the Japanese Legation on 3 September, with Mr. Sigimura Fukashi as First Secretary. The Viscount was assisted in his work by about fifty Japanese people in the service and on the payroll of the Korean government, most notably Okamoto Ryunosuke, adviser to the ministries of war and the Royal Household.

To understand more clearly what follows, it should be borne in mind that Seoul is connected with Japan, and was then, by a Japanese telegraph line, so that Viscount Miura cannot logically be held solely responsible for what happened. As Sir Rutherford Alcock aptly said, the telegraph has killed diplomacy nowadays.

Little more than a month had passed since Viscount Miura had taken over the direction of affairs, when one fine morning, on October the 8th, the people of Seoul woke up to find that the Royal Palace had been attacked, several ministers killed, a new cabinet formed, and the Tai Uen Kun restored to power. The strangest rumors then circulated about the fate of the Queen - some said she had fled, others that she had been murdered by the Japanese - but nothing was known for certain. A great mystery surrounded the tragic events.

Mr. Waeber, the Russian chargé d'affaires, and Dr. Allen, the acting American chargé d'affaires, went to the palace immediately, where they found that Viscount Miura had already preceded them. They were received by Yi Chi Miun, the new minister of the Royal Household, appointed the same morning, who told them that His Majesty was too agitated to receive them. However, Mr. Waeber insisted and drew the minister's attention to the fact that the Japanese minister's sedan was standing in front of the audience pavilion. The hearing was finally granted and His Majesty told them that he did not know for certain what had happened to the Queen, and that he understood that an attempt had been made to

capture and harm his august consort, but he still held out hope that she had managed to escape to safety. At the same time he asked the two representatives, who were his personal friends, to use their good offices to prevent further violence and outrages.

The people and the foreign representatives were even more astonished when two days later a royal proclamation was published, signed by an entirely new Cabinet, declaring that the Queen, who was said to have fled, had been degraded to the level of a woman of the lowest social class .

Meanwhile, it was rumoured more and more persistently that the attack on the palace, carried out in the early hours of the morning of 8 October, had been the work of the Japanese and that the Queen had perished by their hands. It was said that His Majesty that same morning, about three or four o'clock, having heard of an unusual movement of Japanese troops, had sent a message to Viscount Miura, asking for explanations on the subject. The message, despite the excessively early hour, had found the Viscount, his secretary and an interpreter up and ready to go out, with three sedans waiting for them at the door of the Legation.

In a dispatch to the Korean Minister of Foreign Affairs, on 9 October, Miura, in order to explain to the foreign representatives his early morning visit to the palace and the presence of Japanese soldiers there, stated that as soon as he received the message from His Majesty he set off for the palace, but when he arrived he found that the Japanese garrison in Seoul had already gone there to restore order. When he then inquired what had caused the revolt, he learned that it was due to a conflict between Korean *kunrentai* troops who wished to enter the palace to express some of their complaints, and the palace police who wanted to prevent them doing so.

An attempt was thus made to corroborate the version maintained by the Japanese and the new Korean Cabinet, that the attack on the palace was the exclusive work of the Koreans and that the Japanese had intervened only to restore order. To make this version more credible, an exchange of notes followed between Miura and the Korean Foreign Minister, in which the former alluded to a report, which he said had reached his ears, that a certain number of Japanese citizens had been found mixed in amongst the Korean soldiers and had taken part in the disturbance; Viscount Miura formally requested a prompt and official denial, which the Foreign Minister was quick to send, explaining that what had given rise to the report was the fact that the Korean soldiers, to facilitate their entry into the palace, had disguised themselves as Japanese!

In spite of these official documents, intended no doubt to serve as proof of Viscount Miura's complete innocence as regards the events of October 8, the Japanese government soon realized that the position was untenable, and that it was madness to continue to deny, for the benefit of the representatives of other nations, the involvement of its own representatives in those events. And so to save face, it resorted to the pretence of immediately recalling Miura, the first secretary of the Legation Sigimura, the adviser Okamoto Ryunosuke and forty-five other Japanese involved in the affair, and upon their arrival in Japan had them arrested and sent to Hiroshima to stand trial in the local court.

It was to be expected that they would be acquitted of all charges, but certainly no one imagined that the Court would come out with such a grotesque document as the one I have before me. I reproduce here the English translation that appeared in the *Korean Repository*. (*The following is the English original, not translated from the Italian.*)

JUDGMENT OF THE COURT OF HIROSHIMA IN THE TRIAL OF VISCOUNT MIURA AND COMPANIONS, ACCUSED OF ASSASSINATING H. M. THE QUEEN OF KOREA

Okamoto Ryunosuke, Adviser to the Korean Departments of War and the Household, etc.

Miura Goro, Vicount, Sho Sammi, First class order, Lieutenant General, etc.

Sugimura Fukashi, Sho Rokui, First Secretary of Legation, and forty-five others.

Having, in compliance with the request of the Public Procurator conducted preliminary examinations in the case of murder and sedition brought against the above-mentioned Okamoto Ryunosuke and forty-seven others and that of wilful homicide brought against Hirayama Iwawo, we find as follows:—

The accused, Miura Goro, assumed his official duties as His Imperial Majesty's Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary at Seoul on Sept. 1st, 1895. According to his observations, things in Korea were tending in the wrong direction. The court was daily growing more and more arbitrary, and attempting wanton interference with the conduct of state affairs. Disorder and confusion were in this way introduced into the system of administration that had just been reorganized under the guidance and advice of the Imperial government. The

court went so far in turning its face upon Japan that a project was mooted for disbanding the *Kunrentai* troops, drilled by Japanese officers, and for punishing their officers. Moreover a report came to the knowledge of the said Miura that the court had under contemplation a scheme for usurping all political power by degrading some and killing others of the Cabinet Ministers suspected of devotion to the cause of progress and independence.

Under these circumstances he was greatly perturbed inasmuch as he thought that the attitude assumed by the court not only showed remarkable ingratitude toward this country which had spent labor and money for Korea, but was also calculated to thwart the work of internal reform and jeopardize the independence of the kingdom. The policy pursued by the court was consequently considered to be injurious to Korea, as well as prejudicial in no small degree to the interests of this country. The accused felt it to be of urgent importance to apply an effective remedy to this state of affairs, so as on the one hand to secure the independence of the Korean kingdom and on the other to maintain the prestige of this empire in that country. While thoughts like these agitated his mind, he was secretly approached by the Tā-wūn-gun with a request for assistance, the Prince being indignant at the untoward turn that events were taking and having determined to undertake the reform of the court and thus discharge his duty of advising the king. The accused then held at the legation a conference with Sugimura Fukushima and Okamoto Ryunosuke on the 3rd of October. The decision arrived at was that assistance should be rendered to the Tā-wūn-gun's entrance into the palace by making use of the Japanese drilled Korean soldiers who being hated by the court felt themselves in danger, and of the young men who deeply lamented the course of events, and also by causing the Japanese troops stationed in Seoul to offer their support to the enterprise. It was further resolved that this opportunity should be availed of for taking the life of the queen, who exercised overwhelming influence in the court. They at the same time thought it necessary to provide against the possible danger of the Tā-wūn-gun's interfering with the conduct of State affairs in future—an interference that might prove of a more evil character than that which it was now sought to overturn. To this end, a document containing pledges required of the Ta-wun-gun on four points was drawn by Sigimura Fukushima. The document was carried to the country residence of the Ta-wun-gun on the 15th of the month by Okamoto Ryunosuke, the latter being on intimate terms with His Highness. After informing the Ta-wun-gun that the turn of events demanded His Highness' intervention once more, Okamoto presented the document to the Prince saying that it embodied what Minister Miura expected from him. The Ta-wun-gun, together with his son and grandson gladly consented to the conditions proposed and also wrote a letter guaranteeing his good faith. Miura Goro and others decided to carry out the concerted plan by the middle of the month. Fearing lest Okamoto's visit to the Ta-wun-gun's residence should excite suspicion and lead to the exposure of their plan, it was given out that he had proceeded thither simply for the purpose of taking leave of the Prince before departing for home, and to impart an appearance of probability to this report, it was decided that Okamoto should leave Seoul for Chemulpo and he took his departure from the capital on the sixth. On the following day An Kyung-su, the Minister of War, visited the Japanese Legation by order of the court. Referring to the projected disbanding of the Japanese drilled Korean soldiers, he asked the Japanese Minister's views on the subject. It was now evident that the moment had arrived, and that no more delay should be made. Miura Goro and Sugimura Fukushima consequently determined to carry out the plot on the night of that very day. On the one hand, a telegram was sent to Okamoto requesting him to come back to Seoul at once, and on the other, they delivered to Horiguchi Kumaichi a paper containing a detailed program concerning the entry of the Ta-wun-gun into the palace and caused him to meet Okamoto at Yong-san so that they might proceed to enter the palace. Miura Goro further issued instructions to Umayabara Muhon, commander of the Japanese battalion in Seoul, ordering him to facilitate the Ta-wun-gun's entry into the palace by directing the disposition of the Japanese drilled Korean troops and by calling out the Imperial force for their support. Miura also summoned the accused Adachi Kenzo and Kunitomo Shigeakira, and requested them to collect their friends, meeting Okamoto at Yong-san, and act as the Ta-wun-gun's body-guard on the occasion of His Highness' entrance into the palace. Miura told them that on the success of the enterprise depended the eradication of the evils that had done so much mischief to the kingdom for the past twenty years, and instigated them to dispatch the Queen when they entered the palace. Miura ordered the accused Ogiyara Hidejiro to proceed to Yong-san, at the head of the police force under him, and after consultation with Okamoto to take such steps as might be necessary to expedite the Ta-wun-gun's entry into the palace.

The accused, Sugimura Fukushima, summoned Suzuki Shigemoto and Asayama Kenzo to the Legation and acquainted them with the projected enterprise, directed the former to send the accused, Suzuki Junken, to Yong-san to act as interpreter and the latter to carry the news to a Korean named Yi Chu-whe, who was known to be a warm advocate of the Ta-wun-gun's return to the palace. Sugimura further drew up a manifesto, explaining the reasons of the Ta-wun-gun's entrance into the palace and charged Ogiwara Hidejiro to deliver to Horiguchi Kumaichi.

The accused Horiguchi Kumaichi at once departed for Yong-san on horse-back. Ogiwara Hidejiro issued orders to the policemen that were off duty to put on civilian dress, provide themselves with swords and proceed to Yong-san. Ogiwara also himself went to the same place.

Thither also, repaired by his order the accused Watanabe Takajiro, Oda Yoshimitsu, Nariai Kishiro, Kiwaki

Sukunori and Sakai Masataro.

The accused Yokowo Yutaro joined the party at Yong-san. Asayama Kenzo saw Yi Chu-whe and informed him of the projected enterprise against the palace that night. Having ascertained that Yi had then collected a few other Koreans and proceeded toward the Ta-wun-gun's place Asama at once left for Yong-san. Suzuki Shigemoto went to Yong-san in company with Suzuki Junken. The accused Adachi Kenzo and Kunitomo Shigeakira, at the instigation of Miura, decided to murder the Queen and took steps to collect accomplices. Twenty-four others (names here inserted) responded to the call, by Miura's order, to act as body-guard to the Ta-wun-gun on the occasion of his entrance into the palace. Hirayama Iwahiko and more than ten others were directed by Adachi Kenzo and others to do away with the Queen and they decided to follow the advice. The others who were not admitted into the secret but who joined the party from mere curiosity also carried weapons. With the exception of Kunitomo Shigeakira Tsukinori and two others all the accused went to Yong-san in company with Adachi Kenzo.

The accused Okamoto Ryunosuke on receipt of a telegram saying that time was urgent at once left Chemulpo for Seoul. Being informed on his way, at about midnight, that Hoshiguchi Kennaichi was waiting for him at Mapo he proceeded thither and met the persons assembled there. There he received from Miura Goro the draft manifesto already alluded to, and other documents. After he had consulted with two or three others about the method of effecting an entrance into the palace the whole party started for the Ta-wun-gun's place with Okamoto as their leader. At about three o'clock A. M. on the eighth of October they left the Prince's place escorting him in his palanquin, with Yi Chu-whe and other Koreans. When on the point of departure, Okamoto assembled the whole party outside the gate of the Prince's residence and declared that on entering the palace the "Fox" should be dealt with according as exigency might require, the obvious purport of this declaration to instigate his followers to murder Her Majesty the Queen. As the result of this declaration, Sakai Marataro and a few others, who had not yet been initiated into the secret, resolved to act in accordance with the suggestion. Then slowly proceeding toward Seoul, the party met the Japanese drilled Korean troops outside the West Gate where they waited some time for the arrival of the Japanese troops. With the Korean troops as vanguard the party then proceeded toward the palace at a more rapid rate. On the way they were joined by Kunitomo Shigeakira and four others. The accused Husamoto, Yasumaru and Oura Shigehiko also joined the party having been requested by Umagabara Muhon to accompany as interpreters the military officers charged with the supervision of the Korean troops. About dawn the whole party entered the palace through the Kwang-wha Gate and at once proceeded to enter the inner chambers."

Notwithstanding these facts, there is no sufficient evidence to prove that any of the accused actually committed the crime originally meditated by them. Neither is there sufficient evidence to establish the charge that Hirayama Iwahiko killed Li Koshoku, the Korean Minister of the Household, in front of the Kon-Chong palace.

As to the accused, Shiba Shiro, Osaki Masakichi, Yoshida Hanji, Mayeda Shunzo, Hirayama Katsukuma, and Hiraishi Yoshitarom there is not sufficient evidence to show that they were in any way connected with the affair.

For these reasons the accused, each and all, are hereby discharged in accordance with the provisions of article 165 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. The accused, Miura Goro, Sugimura Fukashi, Okamoto Ryunosuke, Adachi Kenzo, Kunitomo Shigeakira, Terasaki Taikichi, Hirayama Iwabiko, Nakamura Takewo, Fuji Masahira, Iyuri Kakichi, Kiwaki Sukenori, and Sokoi Masutaru, are hereby released from confinement. The documents and other articles seized in connection with this case are restored to their respective owners.

Given at Hiroshima Local Court by Yoshida Yoshihide, Judge of Preliminary Enquiry; Tamura Yoshiharu, Clerk of the Court.

THE RESULT

Ko Teung Ciai's report - Narration of the events of October 8 - Embarrassment of two governments - The incident of November 28 - Baron Komura - Popular discontent - Escape of the King to the Russian Legation

The judgment of the Hiroshima court was published on January 20, 1896 and became known in Korea in early February. It is easy to imagine what a profound impression it produced. It should be noted that this judgment, after establishing that towards dawn the whole gang (i.e. Japanese soldiers, *soshi* – members of a kind of anarchist sect, now fortunately extinct, which appeared in Japan around 1888 and provided many of the first Japanese emigrants to Korea - and others) entered the palace through the Kang-wha gate and immediately proceeded to the inner buildings, brings its recital of the facts to an abrupt end, adding with cheerful nonchalance that *these facts do not provide clear enough evidence to conclude that any of the accused committed the crime they were meditating*. But what is omitted in the Court's judgment can be found in Ko Teung Chai's report referred to earlier.

The Royal Palace is set in very extensive grounds surrounded by high walls enclosing many separate buildings, some of which are themselves surrounded by lower walls, closed by solid doors. The pavilion occupied by their Majesties the King and Queen on the night before the 8th of October is surrounded by a small garden and is situated about a quarter of a mile away from the main (Kang-wha) gate. The Japanese soldiers entering through the main gate proceeded rapidly to this building, quickly killing the few Korean soldiers they met on their way. When they reached the pavilion housing the royal couple, some of them were ordered by their officers to take up positions all round the garden and keep a careful eye on all the doors, while others, together with the *soshi* and the Japanese citizens, went inside with the horrible intention of seeking out and killing the Queen.

These Japanese *soshi*, thirty and more in number, under the orders of one of their leaders, burst into the building with their swords drawn, invading the private apartments of the royals, grabbing all the palace women they could find, dragging them by their hair and beating them to say where the Queen was hiding. These facts were witnessed by many people, the most important of whom was Mr. S. Sabatin, His Majesty's Russian architect, who was in the garden at the beginning of the attack. He saw the Japanese officers who commanded the troops; he saw the outrages committed on the ladies of the Court and remembers that he himself was repeatedly asked where the Queen was and threatened with death because he refused to tell them. The evidence he gave to the Korean commission of inquiry showed beyond a shadow of doubt that the Japanese officers who were in the garden knew perfectly well what the Japanese *soshi* were about to do, and stationed their troops around the building for the sole purpose of protecting it while the crime was being committed.

After searching the different rooms, the *soshi* managed to find the Queen while she was trying to hide, and after grabbing her by the hair, they pierced her with their swords. It is not known whether she died instantly or was seriously injured; in any case she was placed on a table, covered with a silk cloth and carried out into the garden. A few moments later the *soshi* themselves carried the body to a pile of wood which had been prepared not far off in the so-called *Deer Park*, poured petrol over it and set it on fire.

Meanwhile, as soon as he realized that the palace was under attack, the King, who already suspected that the action would be mainly directed against the Queen, hoping to divert the attention of the Japanese and thus allow his august consort to hide or to escape, went to one of the rooms at the front of the building, where he could be seen perfectly clearly by the Japanese. Immediately many *soshi* did indeed burst into that room brandishing their swords, while others under the orders of officers guarded the doors of the adjoining rooms. A palace servant who was near His Majesty warned them that this person was the King himself; nevertheless His Majesty was subjected to many indignities and one Japanese even grabbed him by the shoulders and pushed him some distance away. In the King's presence, some of the palace ladies were mistreated and beaten, and Yi Kyun Cik, a man of noble lineage and minister of the Royal Household, was most barbarously murdered before his eyes. HRH the Crown Prince, who was in one of the inner rooms, was grabbed, dragged by the hair, and mistreated in a

thousand ways, while they threatened him with their swords to reveal the hiding place of his mother the Queen.

As already mentioned, the King had sent a message that morning to Viscount Miura asking him to explain an unusual movement of Japanese troops that had been reported to him, and his message found Miura and members of his staff fully dressed and ready to go out. The Japanese minister told the royal messenger that he had heard from a Japanese colonel that other troops were expected at the barracks, but that he knew nothing about it. While they were talking, the first shots were fired in the vicinity of the Royal Palace, whereupon Miura ordered the messenger to return immediately to the palace, saying that he would go there himself at once.

Viscount Miura, accompanied by the first secretary Sigimura and an interpreter, then went to the palace as he had said. When he arrived the Japanese were still inside the palace grounds. Immediately after his arrival, however, the violence stopped and the *soshi* were dispersed. He promptly asked for an audience with His Majesty, who granted it and received him in the great audience hall called *Ciang Han Tang*. He was accompanied at this audience by the first secretary, the interpreter and several Japanese who had come to the palace with the *soshi* and whom the King had seen with his own eyes taking an active part in the nefarious enterprise. The Tai Uen Kun, who had come to the palace with the Japanese, was also present. During the audience Miura submitted three decrees to His Majesty: the first stipulated that from then on affairs of state were to be dealt with exclusively by the Cabinet; the second appointed Prince Yi Ciai Myung, one of the members of the conspiracy, to the post of Minister of the Royal Household in place of Yi Kyun Cik, killed by the Japanese little more than an hour before; and the third concerned the appointment of a deputy minister of the Royal Household. The King had no choice but to sign the decrees. The Japanese troops were then withdrawn from the palace, remaining on hand however to guard the Korean troops, the so called *kunrentai*, commanded by Japanese officers.

Later on the same day, the minister of war and the minister of police were dismissed and both were replaced by Cio Hui Yien, appointed minister of war and acting minister of police pending the appointment of Kuang Yung Cin to the latter post soon afterwards. Both of these men were believed to be privy to the conspiracy and loyal to Japan. In this way the King found himself for all practical purposes a prisoner of the Japanese, and every branch of activity in the country was forcibly placed under the direct control of officials, all of whom had been more or less involved in the conspiracies of 8 October.

The next day, the Queen, whom people were being encouraged to believe had fled, was degraded. Here is a copy of the translation of the relevant proclamation included in a special supplement to n° 145 of the *Official Gazette* of Korea:

“It is now thirty-two years since We ascended the throne, but our sovereign influence has not been fully asserted. Queen Min introduced her relatives to the Court and placed them beside Our Person, which clouded our judgment; she exposed the people to extortion, and brought disorder to our government by selling offices and titles. As a result tyranny prevailed everywhere and predators sprang up on all sides. Under such circumstances the foundations of our dynasty were in imminent danger. We knew the extent of the Queen's wickedness, but we could not dismiss and punish her for lack of help and for fear of her allies.

We now wish to curtail and suppress her influence. On the twelfth moon of the past year We swore an oath at the Temple of our Ancestors that neither the Queen nor her relatives nor ours would ever again be allowed to interfere in state affairs. We hoped that this would lead the Min party to change course. But the Queen did not abandon her wicked ways; with the help of her party she succeeded in surrounding Us with a host of base individuals, thus effectively preventing the Ministers of State from consulting Us. In addition, they falsified a decree which unlawfully dissolved our loyal militias, an act which led to an uprising. This done, the Queen fled as in the year Im-O (alluding to her escape in 1882).

We have tried to discover her whereabouts, but she is nowhere to be found. We are convinced that she is not only unsuitable to be Queen and unworthy of the position, but that she is guilty of extremely serious misdeeds. Therefore, since we cannot emulate the glory of our Royal Ancestors with her, we have stripped her of her royal rank and degraded her to the level of the women of the lowest classes.”

Signed: Yi Ciai Myon, Minister of the Royal Household

Kim Ong Cip, Prime Minister
Kim Yun Sik, Minister of Foreign Affairs
Pak Ciong Yang, Minister of Home Affairs
Sim Sang Hun, Finance Minister
Cio Heui Yon, Minister of War
So Hwang Pom, Minister of Justice
id. Minister of Education
Ciong Pyong Ha, Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Trade

On the 11th the Cabinet sent a communication to all foreign representatives residing in Seoul, containing a copy of this edict transcribed in full, with the additional comment that *His Majesty had decided to take the measures provided for in the decree purely out of regard for the royal dynasty and the well-being of his people.*

The following day, in response to this circular, Viscount Miura sent a dispatch to the Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs in which, having taken note of the communication, he declared himself sure that the King's august determination had been suggested to His Majesty by a respect for his royal lineage and the well-being of his people.

Dr Allen, the representative of the United States, replied with this single sentence:

I cannot recognize this decree as the work of His Majesty.

All the other foreign representatives, with one exception, wrote to the minister in almost identical terms.

About ten days later, the Japanese government, worried about the turn of events, recalled its representatives – Viscount Miura, Mr. Sigimura, various officers and others – and had them arrested. However, the Cabinet formed by the Japanese continued to handle the affairs of the Nation, depriving the King of any control.

Many decrees were promulgated, many proposals were made, and many measures were taken that aroused general discontent. Although all classes of Koreans, and all foreign representatives demanded in explicit terms that the events of 8 October be clarified and the assassins of the Queen put on trial, none of this was done, and all the while it was still falsely claimed that she had fled and could not be found.

In the end, the situation became so tense that the Cabinet too realized that something had to be done. Consequently, on 26 November 1895, the entire diplomatic corps and many foreign residents were invited to the palace, where, in the presence of His Majesty, it was announced that Cio Hui Yen, minister of war, and Kwan, minister of police, had been dismissed, that the so-called edict degrading HM the Queen had been cancelled and was to be considered null and void, and that the facts relating to the attack on the palace were to be investigated by the Ministry of Justice and all the guilty persons arrested, tried and punished. At the same time the death of Her Majesty the Queen was announced.

It was hoped that this measure would calm popular discontent, but instead, at the break of day on 28 November a certain number of Koreans, disgusted that nothing more serious had been done, and embittered at the thought that the guilty ministers continued to remain in charge of affairs and absolute masters of the person of the King, made an attempt to enter the palace, claiming that they were faithful subjects of His Majesty and intended to restore his former power to the King. This attempt was badly organized, and therefore came to nothing. While many people had gathered in front of the palace gates and around the walls of the palace, making a great noise, nobody dared or managed to get inside; a few succeeded in entering the Quagga, but were easily dispersed. No one was injured and as far as we know no foreigner, either Japanese or western, was involved in this affair, which compared to the events of 8 October was nothing more than an insignificant and rather ordinary incident.

To replace Viscount Miura, meanwhile, Mr. Komura had been appointed as resident minister. He remained in Seoul from 19 October 1895 to 31 May of the following year. The King continued to be a prisoner in the palace, and the country continued to be ruled by the revolutionary Cabinet inspired by Japan. The excesses continued, and in the months of December and January and in the first days of February several innovations were decreed by the Japanese-inspired Cabinet, all of which were

extremely unpopular and contributed greatly to increasing the internal disorder. The remaining semblance of order collapsed with the publication on 30 December of the decree ordering all Koreans to cut their hair. The people, who until then had suffered more or less patiently, revolted at this new blow to their customs. The whole nation was in a state of violent agitation and rebellion broke out in many places. To better clarify the extraordinary effect produced by this decree, it is worth recalling that, as I already had occasion to mention elsewhere, Koreans are accustomed to wear their hair very long, gathered in a knot on top of the head; this knot has very great significance for them, which is not easily understood by anyone who is unfamiliar with the deep-rooted symbolism of these peoples of the Far East. For the Korean, the knot of hair on the head almost represents the symbol of his virility and his nationality. The day the young Korean stops wearing his hair down to his shoulders and ties it in a knot on his head, he ceases, as we have seen, to be a boy and becomes a man: his name is changed, he is inscribed in the roles of the population, in a word it is only then that he acquires what we would call civil rights. But, leaving aside the special significance that this custom has for Koreans, who could fail to understand quite clearly the absurdity of this decree, if he imagined for a moment the reaction that a similar law would produce in our own country – a law, for example, obliging our women to wear short hair, or ourselves to wear long hair?

Such was the ridiculousness of those decrees!

The King himself had to submit, together with the Crown Prince, to the regrettable operation. The population was informed of this and invited to follow the example of their sovereign. But the people did not want to know; the peasants in particular were bitterly opposed to the new decree.

In Seoul the order was carried out by force and police officers stationed at the gates of the city were instructed to do the same with all the peasants who came from the countryside bringing food for the daily market. Strict orders to this effect were sent to all provincial cities. Scuffles occurred at the gates of Seoul, until the peasants, knowing of the police order, refrained from coming to the city and Seoul found itself in danger of remaining without supplies.

At this juncture, the Hiroshima ruling was published. While acquitting the forty-eight Japanese of all charges, it revealed the true facts of the affair, and it became public knowledge that many of the Japanese who had been acquitted were on the point of returning to Korea to recover the same positions they had previously occupied in the Korean government.

It is easier to imagine than to repeat what happened in the provinces: the people rose up en masse, many officials loyal to the Cabinet were killed, and the rioters threatened to march on the capital.

The King began to fear for his personal safety, for the rumor had reached him of a new plot hatched against his person and that of the Crown Prince. He then resolved to make a decisive move, and on 11 February, eluding the watchfulness of the sentries at the gates of the palace, he fled with his son to the Russian Legation.

On the day of his escape, His Majesty published an edict by which all members of the Cabinet were dismissed, six of whom were denounced as traitors, and a new Cabinet was appointed, whose members were chosen from among people who had remained faithful to him.

With this escape, the King untied the knot preventing a solution of the problem, and calm returned to the country.

So Japan, after about two years of absolute dominance on the Korean peninsula, had achieved the remarkable feat of forcing the King of Korea into the arms of its feared rival, Russia. But, what was more important, its harmful influence went further than this, for together with the so-called reforms it had brought rebellion, disorder and the most barbaric murder to the Korean people.

TRADITIONAL ORDER AND MODERN DISORDER

The ancient Statutes – The official hierarchy - Badges of rank - Privileges of officials - Reforms on paper - Lady Om and her story - The sorcerers

The kings of Korea, like those of Ko-ryu and the Three Kingdoms, were always absolute kings in the most Asian sense of the term.

The word of the King was tantamount to an order, and the possessions, the very life of the people were entirely in the hands of the sovereign. Here as elsewhere, however, the external influences of the courtiers, of the favorites and of anyone who happened to have won the royal favor were profoundly felt, and the decisions of the head of state usually ended up being no more than the result of those same influences. The history of Korea is, indeed, a whole story of court intrigues, conspiracies and arrogance; even if, as we saw in the beginning, there were some kings who tried to have the well-being of the people as the only guide to their actions, the great majority of them, it should be said, were no more than puppets in the hands of their astute courtiers.

To complete this weak monarchical structure around the person of the King, there existed, before the reforms, a whole series of officials who were organized, from the earliest times of the current dynasty, on the lines of the model used in the Middle Empire under the domination of the Ming. These officials were divided into nine hierarchical grades, each divided into two classes, and the grade and class of each individual office was determined very precisely by ancient laws or customs established in the "Six Basic Statutes."

Using the notation introduced by Wilkinson, where a number indicates an official's grade and a letter (a or b depending on the case) the class to which he belongs, so that 3b would mean an official in the second class of the third grade, I shall now give a succinct outline of the traditional organization of Korea.

At the head of this privileged body of servants of the state, alongside the sovereign, there were first of all the "Three Dukes," *Sam Kong*, individually called the Prime Minister, the Right Hand Minister and the Left Hand Minister, all officials of the 1st degree, who alone constituted the Cabinet, *Eui-cyeng-pu*. They were not placed at the head of a special department, but essentially fulfilled the office of advisers to the King. The administrative work was instead entrusted to the care of six large departments, known by the name of Tribunals (*Ciò*): they were the *Tribunals of Civil Offices*, of *Taxes*, of *Ceremonies and Rites*, of *War*, of *Penalties* and of *Public Works*. After the opening of Korea to international trade with the signing of the first treaties, two other departments had to be created, those of the *Interior* and of *Foreign Affairs*. The heads of these ministries were all Grade 2a officials with the title of President, *Pan-sye*, and each had a Vice-President, *Ciam-pan*, of grade 2b under them.

To complete the enumeration of the high metropolitan dignitaries, we should mention the Governor of Seoul, *Pan-yun*, a grade 2a official, head of the Prefecture of Seoul, *Han-syeng-pu*, - who oversaw housing, traffic, markets and in general all the municipal services of the city and the surrounding four hills – and the President of the Correctional Court, *Ei-kem-pu*, an official of the first grade, 1b, who was responsible for judging the faults committed by the senior officials, and who was hierarchically inferior only to the three great Cabinet Ministers.

Turning to the provincial administration, it is useful to remember that before the reforms the peninsula was divided into 8 provinces, or *Do*, each of which was in turn divided into cities, departments, districts and villages, respectively known as *ciù*, *pu*, *kun* and *hyen*. At the head of each province was a Governor General, *Kam-sa*, a grade 2b official, assisted in his duties by a Secretary of Civil Affairs, *Te-sa*, and a Military Secretary, *Cyung-kun*. At the head of each city was a prefect or pastor, *Mok-sa*, 3a, with the exception of Pyen-yang, Ham-heung and Cien-down, whose respective prefects, with the title of *Pu-yun*, were the governors of the provinces of Pyeng-an Do, Ham-kyeng Do and Ciul-la Do.

The *pu*, *kun* and *hyen* were respectively governed by *Pu-sa*, 3b, "Departmental Magistrates with full powers," *Kun-syu*, 4b, "Custodians", and *Hyen-nyeg*, 5b, "District Magistrates."

Particular privileges were granted to the different grades and special rules governed the ceremonial to be observed for them, such as the styles of dress which distinguished one grade from the

other. These outward signs of rank consisted essentially in the use of special headdresses, buttons behind the ears on the frontal band, and finally of embroidery on the chest and on the back. The main difference, one of the few still remaining, was in the buttons: officials of the 1st grade, 1a and 1b, wore, as they still wear, *smooth jade* buttons; those in grade 2a wore *smooth gold* buttons; those in grade 2b, buttons of *worked gold*; those in grade 3a, buttons of *worked jade*; for the following grades there were no special buttons – the horn buttons which everyone could wear were used. The embroideries on the chest or on the back represented a *peacock* for the 1st grade, a *wild goose* for the 2nd and a *silver pheasant* for the 3rd; officials in the lower grades were not entitled to any such ornament. There was, moreover, a distinction in this regard between civil and military officials: the embroidered designs for military officials of the first and second grades represented a *tiger* and for those of the 3rd grade a *bear*. As for the headdresses, the difference consisted in this, that while only *yang-ban* (noblemen) could wear the tiara hat (*koan*), the butterfly hat (*mo*) and the Phrygian hat (*tang-ken*) being common to all classes of officials, the former for Court dress and the latter for use indoors, the beads of the ordinary hat (*kat*) could only be of pure amber when worn by officials of the first two grades and of the upper class of the third grade, 3a. These officials were collectively known as *tang-syang*.

Regarding Court dress, *tap-ho*, which I have briefly described elsewhere, I will limit myself here to saying that it was of violet silk for officials of the first grade, of dark green silk for those of the second and third grades, and of black cloth for all the others. In addition to this costume, there was what was called *tai-rye-pok*, the "grand gala uniform," used only for the most solemn ceremonies, such as attending the annual sacrifices of the sovereign at the Temple of Heaven and the Temple of the Spirit of the Earth. This uniform consisted of several silk robes of different colors that overlapped the ordinary dress, held tightly to the waist by a silk belt, from which hung a long rectangle of embroidered material, called *syu*, on the back. The embroidered design varied according to the official's grade, representing a *stork* for the first two grades, a *sea eagle* for the third, a *magpie* for the next three and a *mandarin duck* for the last three. On top of these clothes was the rigid belt already mentioned in the earlier chapter on the Imperial Court: the belt was worked in *rhinoceros horn* for the first grade, in *gold* for the second, in *silver* for the third and in *common horn* for all the others. With the grand ceremonial uniform, the most curious of all Korean headdresses was used, a kind of gilded cardboard crown, held down at the back by some wooden pins which were also gilded. The number of these pins indicated the official's grade: there were five of them for officials of the first grade, four for officials of the second grade, three for officials of the third grade, two for those of the fourth, fifth and sixth grades, and just one for the last three grades.

On certain special occasions involving royal processions, a curious headdress (*pit-kat*) was still worn by Korean officials: similar in form to the ordinary *kat*, it was red instead of black, and was decorated at the front and on both sides with three feathers of tiger moustache fixed to the head by a cord of pure amber, or amber mixed with coral, depending on the official's grade. A large blue silk overcoat with fluttering sleeves was worn with this hat, and the combination of the two was called *yung-pok*, or "martial dress".

On the subject of official privileges, it should be noted that all classes of officials considered it beneath their dignity to be seen walking on the streets. As a result they never appeared in public except in a sedan chair or on horseback. In the latter case, the horse was invariably kept at walking pace and two servants held the dignified rider by the legs, one on the right and the other on the left, so that he would not have to go to the trouble of thinking for himself how to keep his balance.

The sedans used were also of different kinds, depending on the official's rank. Thus the use of the *pyen-kye-cià*, a low covered sedan chair, generally more comfortable than the others, was reserved for officials of the first grade, or as a special favor for very old and infirm officials in other grades. The curious *cio-hen*, "mono-cycle sedan," raised about a meter and a half above the ground over which it rolled by means of a single large wheel, while a certain number of servants kept the whole machine in balance, was reserved for officials of the first two grades; use of the *sa-in-nam-ye*, a small, low chair covered with a tiger skin and carried by four porters, was the exclusive privilege of officials belonging to the first two grades. There were many more differences – certain officials could not have more than so many porters for their sedan, others were not allowed to use side windows, and so on.

If by chance it was necessary for an official to walk a few steps - this normally happened every time an official had to go to the palace, where only the Chinese Resident and the three great Ministers

of State were permitted to enter in a sedan chair -, then two servants supported him under the armpits and almost dragged him inside, so that he avoided the physical fatigue of walking, which would have been singularly degrading.

The great state exams, which I shall discuss in a special chapter, were held periodically and officially opened the way to all these privileges, since careers in the Korean civil service were reserved for the successful candidates. In practice the sale of offices was the system most generally followed, and the one that, from the Korean point of view, brought greater benefits to the public treasury. Offices were sold through the intervention of some official or influential person in the Department of the Royal Household, whose power was always immeasurable; but it would be more accurate to say that offices were rented out, as the newly appointed official was sure not to remain in his post more than two or three years, after which the desire for new income led them to appoint another person ready to pay in his turn.

It is superfluous to insist on the abuses that such a system generated, and it is painful to observe that it is still openly practiced and, I would say, to an even greater extent since the abolition of the State exams which, if nothing else, could bring some element of honesty to the administration.

Today there should be nothing left of the old state of affairs: although the Emperor has not yet granted a constitution to his subjects, he has nonetheless given a solemn oath before the whole nation to observe certain rules of government which should restrict his powers and lay down the broad outlines of a more civilian order.

Today Korea has a fine cabinet made up of nine Ministers/Secretaries of State, *Tai-sin*, headed by a Prime Minister, *Eui-giong*. Each minister has his own undersecretary and his own cabinet; each ministry is divided into multiple directorates-general, divisions and inspectorates, whose duties are well defined by specific laws and regulations published in the "Official Gazette of the Empire" and which were mostly the work of the famous Legislative Assembly. The meeting of all these ministers constitutes the so-called Council of State, *Ciong-pu*. The Prime Minister, President of the Council, has no portfolio, and the other Ministers, each of whom has a Deputy Minister under him, *Hyap-pa*, are respectively head of the following departments: Interior (*Nai-pu*), Foreign Affairs (*Oi-pu*), Finance (*Tak-ci-pu*), War (*Kun-pu*). Education (*Hak-pu*), Justice (*Pop-pu*), Agriculture and Commerce (*Nong-sang-kong-pu*), and the Imperial Household (*Kun-de-pu*).

The number of officials employed by each Ministry is generally very large.

They are divided into three broad categories or distinct ranks with the names of *Cik-im* (first rank), *Ciu-im* (second rank) and *Pan-im* (third rank), depending on whether they are appointed by imperial decree, by decision of the Council of Ministers or by simple ministerial decree. Each of these categories is then divided into various classes: there are four for the first rank, six for the second and eight for the third, making a total of eighteen grades in the Korean hierarchy.

In addition to the ministries proper, there are also various autonomous directorates headed by officials who have the same rank as ministers: thus there is the Director of the Police, *Kieng-mu-ciong*, the Director of the Communications Office (Post and Telegraphs), *Tong-pan*, the Director-General of the Railways, *Cial-to-uon*, the President of the Health Office, *Knan-ce-uon-cia*, etc. etc.

I note that there is even a General Commissioner for Emigration and a Central Office of Weights and Measures; this shows that no branch of the State service was overlooked by those busy legislators.

But what can we conclude from this magnificent organization on paper? The conclusion is that Korea believed it could throw overboard its ancient customs, its traditions, its age-old arrangements and its national spirit, on an order from the sovereign, and that following the same method it was possible from one day to the next to adopt new arrangements and new customs, completely unrelated to the nature of the people, to their way of thinking, to their psychology - arrangements and customs which had been developed among other peoples over a long period of time. It was not long before the country realized it had made a mistake. Before, there was a government, corrupt, blemished, barbarian, perhaps, but national, understood and endured by the people: today there is nothing, only complete anarchy.

The will of the sovereign is in the hands of concubines, eunuchs, courtiers and sorcerers. Ministers are the laughing stock of their parties and their clients. The parties, unconsciously, obey orders from abroad; and some believe perhaps that they are working for the good of their country, while in reality they are only hastening its ruin. And the people? The poor people sweat, work, pay taxes and starve.

The influence which the so-called Department of the Imperial Household has on affairs is truly enormous. In times gone by, the person who directed all this gang of courtesans was Queen Min: now, since the Japanese thought of sending her to a better world, her place has been taken by the famous Lady Om. I say famous, because, in one way or another, much has been said about her in the Western press.

There was a time when the sea snake was in fashion, and when a journalist in a good mood did not know how to whet his readers' appetite, he served them up a good column of sea snake, nice and warm. But, alas, fashions come and go, and when the sea snake was no longer fashionable, its place was taken by the favorite of the Emperor of Korea, Lady Om, an American, it was said, a certain Miss Brown, the daughter of a missionary, etc. etc. The first time this news appeared, it was in the columns of an obscure little North American newspaper; the "scissors" - the editorial telegraph - got hold of it, and in a flash the news spread across the globe. By now it has already travelled around the world three times. Of course, whenever it arrives in Korea it provokes general indignation, and the poor *Korea Review*, in my time the only representative of the fourth estate in the peninsula, busily denies this fairy tale and anathematizes anyone who repeats it. Be that as it may, the American wife of the Emperor of Korea is now in the public domain and who knows how long it will take for this fantasy to become just another old wives' tale, like the sea snake mentioned above, and for a new fantasy, perhaps even more outrageous, to take its place.

The whole misunderstanding arose from this most unfortunate title of Lady that the representatives of the powers in Seoul, and the western press in the Far East, got into the habit of attributing to the first concubine of the Emperor, the Korean Om. In a way they can be forgiven, for official Court etiquette in Korea does indeed attribute a special position to this lady, and the corresponding etiquette of the western Courts has no recognized title for people in the same position as Om. Since it would be disrespectful to refer to her simply as "the Om concubine," they were induced to give her the title of Lady, a title moreover in common use for the numerous concubines of the emperor of Japan. Hearing this European title it was only natural to imagine that whoever bore it must necessarily have been European, or at least American, and the legend spread throughout the world.

Let us now see who this lady Om really is. No different in this respect from their brothers in the West, the Koreans have their own legends concerning her. The dignified Mr. Yang, when he condescended to forget his literary reserve, used to tell me a few, and here, on the faith of that serious confidante of mine, is as much as I could learn about Ms. Om.

First of all, it is fitting to assume that she is old, having passed forty - a very advanced age for a Korean - and that she is proverbially ugly; accepting this assumption, it is deduced that the influence she exerts on her imperial consort must be entirely moral and that the passions of the senses have nothing to do with it. While still a young girl, when she was certainly not dreaming of climbing to such an exalted position, she entered the house of a Chinese merchant as a concubine, with whom she had a son. She then subsequently attracted the favours of various Korean gentlemen, until one of them, who was very influential at Court and with whom she had another son, managed to bring her in as a handmaid of the late Queen. Endowed with great intelligence and uncommon tenacity and moral strength, she was able, in this new environment, to attract not only the goodwill of the Queen but even the attention of the King himself. Now Queen Min was very jealous, and although Court protocol allowed for a significant number of royal concubines, she had no intention of letting her royal consort avail himself of the indulgent provisions of some long-dead legislator to grant his favours to other women than herself. So, as soon as she became aware of the relationship between the King and the damsel Om, a violent scene took place, and the poor girl had no choice but to escape. The King patiently endured the Queen's will and for some time no longer thought of Om. She for her part did the same, and after taking a new lover she had a third child, whom she would have liked to pass off as the son of the Emperor, but who soon died.

When the Queen died at the hands of the Japanese, the Om lady reappeared in the palace, in the humble position of a maid. But she watched and waited for the right moment to come forward. An opportunity was not slow to present itself. When the life of the sovereign himself was under threat from the Japanese, who kept the palace under guard, the King realized that the only way out open to him was to flee. The two ladies Om and Pak, assisted by Yi Yong Ik, prepared his escape to the Legation of Russia, and it is no wonder that the King, out of gratitude, immediately raised this intelligent instrument

of his salvation to the singular dignity of royal concubine. Now the royal concubines were divided into several classes in Korea, and the highest of these, according to the ancient statutes, was ranked immediately below the corresponding class of the Chinese Court. Ms. Om rose swiftly through the entire hierarchy of the royal harem, and from the lowest grade of *Suk-uen* "chaste beauty (!)" soon reached the positions of *So-yong* "resplendent conduct," of *So-eui* "exemplary splendour" and *Kui-in* "noble lady," until she was elevated to the very highest rank of *Pi* "lover." But this was not enough for her ambition, and a party arose at the Court that called for her to be raised to the throne: they wanted her to take the place of the late Queen and be officially recognized as the legitimate consort of the sovereign. Meanwhile, she had had a son by the Emperor; when the lady Om was officially recognized as imperial concubine, this son had received the rank of prince of the blood, *Oang-cia Kun*. If his mother had been raised to the throne, the boy's chances of being raised to the position of Crown Prince, *Oang-tai-cià Tien-ha*, would have been very great, particularly given the mental and physical weakness of the current heir. The Emperor, however, did not want to allow this situation to arise; not knowing how to refuse the lady Om's direct requests, or those which she had other people send him from all quarters, reminding him that there existed a higher rank at the Chinese Court than that of *Pi*, the Emperor has solved the problem by creating this new rank in Korea too, and promoting his favourite to the rank of *Oang Kui Pi* "private consort of the sovereign". And this is the position which the famous Lady Om currently occupies at the Korean Court.

This is the woman who keeps the unfortunate Korean monarch under her control. In the internal affairs of the palace she does and undoes everything as she pleases, but with her very lively intelligence she immediately understood that in that same palace she had to limit her sphere of action if she wanted to keep the position she had so laboriously conquered and perhaps - who knows? - rise to even greater heights. Consequently she has always taken care not to interfere in matters of foreign policy and questions concerning the relations of the Court with the representatives of the Powers. Even if she has exercised some influence in one way or another, it has never been apparent to the public.

Still, it would not be accurate to assert that Ms. Om's ascendancy over the Emperor's mind is unchallenged: besides the special position that Minister Yi Yong Ik, of whom I will say more shortly, was able to create for himself in imperial circles, she often has to deal with the enormous influence that sorcerers, soothsayers and necromancers of all kinds have on the imperial soul. When a soothsayer has expressed his opinion on any matter, there is nothing in the world that can persuade the Emperor to follow any other course than that. Upon the death of Queen Min, the Emperor gave her a great state funeral and her body was buried with solemn honours and huge expenditure (over half a million dollars) in a location not far from Seoul. It was enough that shortly afterwards a fortune teller led His Majesty to believe that the location might be harmful and the late Queen's spirit uncomfortable in it, for the Emperor to order the body to be exhumed and the royal remains to be transported elsewhere, at the same enormous expense.

This influence of fortune tellers at Court is something that should always be kept in mind in diplomatic relations with the Korean Court. How many procedural delays, how many troubles of all sorts can be spared and removed with a simple word uttered in time by one of these sorcerers!

KOREAN AFFAIRS

Korean independence - Political kaleidoscope - Beginning and end of a Korean minister - The archives of the Oi-pu - Collection of taxes in geometric progression - Gin-seng, the man-plant - Minister Yi Yong Ik and his financial policy - The value of paper - Story of a ship.

We come now to the ministers and their occupations.

Korea's independence was always a myth. With great pomp and vain display of words, it was duly proclaimed on 1 August 1894, while the sovereign publicly disowned the ties that bound him to China. A new era seemed to be dawning for the energies of the nation. A new era did indeed begin, but it was an era of double servitude, not of the independence for which young Koreans, still new to the hypocrisies of Western civilization, had dared to hope.

Japan, with the war of 1894-95, had been the direct cause of the declaration of Korean independence - an independence officially recognized in the Simonsseki treaty - and Japan was undoubtedly determined to have a free Korea; but the Japanese had their own interpretation of the adjective "free": Korea would be free from the influence of a third power.

The simplest logic dictated that the independence thus proclaimed could not be applied to Korea's relations with Japan. Why would Japan have embarked on a war with China in order to declare Korea independent, if Korea was then to deny Japan itself any major role in the affairs of its government? Moreover, did not the most elementary duty of gratitude oblige the Koreans, having obtained their freedom solely thanks to Japanese arms, to pursue the course which Japan preferred them to follow?

In failing to acknowledge this obligation, the Koreans committed the very serious error, in Japanese eyes, of forgetting that their independence was indeed a good and beautiful thing, but a thing to be exercised in respect of everyone except the Japanese.

Consequently, as soon as the Sino-Japanese war ended, the Japanese Minister in Seoul believed for some time that it was his absolute right to occupy the same position at the Korean Court as the Chinese Resident, who represented, at the time of China's dominance, the wishes of the Chinese empire.

Now, while China's interests were at odds with those of Japan, Japan's interests were at odds with those of Russia; as a result, immediately after the war of 1895, the struggles and intrigues between the Chinese and the Japanese ended, only to flare up again at once between the Japanese and the Russians. So Korea, while under the overt protection of neither Russia nor Japan, was in reality under the protection of one or the other of these States by turns, depending on which of their Ministers interfered the most, or from which of the two the Emperor thought he could gain the greater advantage, or rather suffer the least damage.

Thus, the people who have effectively run things in Korea until now have been the ministers of Russia and Japan, alternately representing government and opposition. In this state of affairs, Korean cabinet ministers naturally came and went in incredibly quick succession. In the year 1898 alone, for example, there were nine successive foreign ministers.

Now, in Korea as elsewhere, the first concern of a minister is undoubtedly to revoke all the measures, orders and regulations, good or bad, but especially good, put in train by his predecessors; and with nine ministers a year, I leave you to imagine the anarchy and economic disorder that inevitably ensue.

I note in passing that, as a general rule, the minister who ceases to hold office is certain to be exiled to a distant province or to one of the islands of the archipelago, perhaps in order to avoid the painful sight of his own work being undone by his successor. In some special cases, the dismissed minister may also be imprisoned and possibly even beheaded.

If the end of a minister's career seems strange enough, the beginning of a ministerial career is also somewhat unusual. Custom dictates that when the Emperor appoints someone to be the head of any department, that person must first immediately send his resignation to the throne, protesting that he is unworthy to occupy such a high office. The resignation is generally refused, but the new minister must insist and cannot take up his post until his resignation has been refused three times by the Emperor. If he behaved otherwise, he would certainly incur the imperial wrath, and if not his head, at least his

freedom, would be in serious danger. The reason for this strange custom is perhaps to be found in the fact that it offers the sovereign a legitimate opportunity to go back on a decision which he may have made too quickly, but given the unfortunate end which usually awaits these poor ministers, it is no wonder that they adhere so scrupulously to the observance of this ancient custom. Hope sustains them until the end that the Emperor will repent and their resignations will be accepted. As can be seen, being appointed a minister in Korea is tantamount most of the time to living under a sword of Damocles – a sword that may even fall and decapitate him!

While all this merry-go-round of appointments and resignations is going on, time passes, and with no minister in place - in Korea there is no deputy responsible for the discharge of on-going business – the ministries remain closed, the employees do no work and the administration falls apart.

When at last the minister takes office, he begins by spending a fortnight exchanging congratulatory visits (!) with all the authorities in the capital. After that, if yet another Cabinet reshuffle has not taken place in the meantime, he will finally take possession of his department, where you can be sure to find him every day, excluding holidays - and there are many of these in Korea -, from two to three in the afternoon.

If you are only making a courtesy visit for the pleasure of his company, you can certainly set out with an easy mind, for you will usually find a handsome old man, elegantly dressed in silk clothes, and armed with a powerful pair of round glasses, who will give you the warmest of welcomes. He might offer you some bad champagne and mouldy cigars; he will politely ask your age, and your father's age, and your mother's too, and extol their old age, intending by that to pay you a compliment; and you will leave the interview with the impression that you have spent a few moments with the nicest and most courteous person on this earth.

But if by chance you go to see a minister to discuss some business that is close to your heart, then you must arm yourself with all the courage and Christian resignation you can muster, and be prepared to repeat the visit five, ten or twenty times, and remember that the proverb *time is money* was not written for Koreans.

For months and months you have been begging for a solution to a question, you have written hundreds of letters on the subject, and of course you are convinced that everyone in the appropriate ministry is informed of your affair. In reality, nobody knows anything about it. You protest, recall the letters you have written, but these are not found; you are assured that they do not exist, that you might think you have written them, but that you will end up convincing yourself that things are exactly as you have been told - so write again and you will see that everything will be arranged.

And next time you are back to square one.

The Minister of France told me the following story and it gives a very vivid idea of the Korean bureaucracy. After a little scene of the kind just described at the Foreign Ministry, the Frenchman, who had a good knowledge of Chinese, insisted on seeing the archive, ensuring the Foreign Minister that a letter, which he had taken great care to have delivered, must be there, and that he could not fail to track it down. The Foreign Minister willingly agreed to this request, even though it was unusual, and turning to a servant told him to "go and fetch the French sack". The servant disappeared and returned shortly after with a big bulging sack. At a sign from the minister, he promptly turned it upside down and emptied its contents on the floor. There at his feet the representative of France saw in a great jumble all the letters, notes and dispatches which his Legation had sent to the Korean Government over the past few years: some had been opened, some were still sealed and therefore unread, and some were in half or torn or mixed up with pages of other letters. Patiently the two ministers began sorting them; the famous letter, needless to say, was found and, strangely, it was not even one of the unopened letters. After that the servant thrust all the papers back into the sack, loaded it on his shoulders and triumphantly carried it back "to the archives," while the minister, delighted with the lucky discovery, good-naturedly restarted discussion of the business in question.

Hundreds of similar anecdotes could be told, and they would all show, not only that the Korean administration is very disorganised, but also that the Koreans themselves find it organically impossible to understand and therefore to apply our systems of government.

What of the public finances? Korea is a very fertile country, rich in gold deposits, and its people, with their simple customs, are used to work, so everything should contribute to making it a financially strong state. Instead the coffers are always empty, debts are added to debts, officials are not

paid and the people are literally crushed under the weight of taxes, established and collected by the most inhuman system that can be imagined.

I have already said elsewhere that whoever wishes to obtain a position in government must begin by paying a large sum to the department of the Imperial Household, a sum that naturally varies according to the importance of the desired position, and this system has still not disappeared in Korea. Once he has been appointed, the official knows perfectly well that in less than two years his job will be taken by someone else, and so he must hurry while still in office to accumulate what he needs to compensate him for the sum already paid and still leave him with enough to spend the remainder of his days in *honest* comfort.

We also note that the governor of a province, the prefect of a district or the magistrate of a village is always held responsible by the central government for the amount of the taxes previously fixed for each territorial subdivision of the state. If when the time comes he is not in a position to send the full amount to Seoul, he runs the risk of being personally held liable for the remainder, and if he cannot pay it within a given period, he risks being dismissed, imprisoned, exiled and heavens knows what else.

So what does the provident official do? He decrees additional taxes for his own sake. Thus, for example, the governor who should annually deliver a sum of 100,000 dollars, based on the tax of one tenth of the income of each of the inhabitants of his province, will naturally fix the amount to be paid at, shall we say, two tenths instead of one, to offset possible non-payments and provide for his own compensation. The various district prefects, who in turn are answerable to the governor, will raise these two tenths to four. The magistrates of the individual villages will unfailingly increase them to eight, and finally there is the person who has to collect the taxes, usually an unpaid official, who will add another tenth for his trouble.

So the poor peasant who has sweated painfully all year is left with at least the satisfaction of enjoying a tenth of his harvest.

The rapacity of Korean officials is really astonishing, and quite often exasperated peasants end up killing one of them.

Still, the law and established custom do not allow the authorities to leave the farmer with less than he needs to live on. The farmers know this and they also know that anything they produce from their land over and above this strict minimum would not be for their own benefit, but for the benefit of the magistrates; so they arrange things in such a way as to produce only what is strictly necessary.

Moreover, apart from these illegal exactions, the Koreans pay more taxes than any other nation on earth, and God knows they pay taxes elsewhere too!

According to an accurate study published in the *Korea Review*, there are some twenty or so different taxes in force in the peninsula, the main ones being: land tax, house tax, salt tax, customs, *gin-seng* monopoly, mining tax, fishing tax, fur tax, tobacco tax, forest tax, trade corporation tax, tax on boats, tax on skins, tax on paper, pawn tax, etc. etc.

The land tax should be imposed at the rate of one tenth of the harvest on cultivated land only, and for this purpose a cadastral map, with precise indications of the different crops grown on each plot of land, should always be kept up to date in every magistrate's office. In practice, these maps are always in the utmost disorder and decisions based on them are as arbitrary as for other things. This tax yields about six million Korean dollars in nickel for the central government, an amount equal, depending on exchange rate fluctuations, to ten or twelve million Italian lire, which suggests that the people actually pay at least thirty million.

By virtue of an ancient privilege granted by King Tai-Giò himself, the inhabitants of Seoul and of the suburbs to the south and west of the capital up to the river are exempt from house tax. The owners of all the other houses on the peninsula, regardless of their position or size, have to pay a fixed sum of forty cents, or about sixty hundredths of a lira. This tax yields a total of half a million Korean dollars.

Gin-seng, the wonderful plant particularly associated with Korea, the only place where it is found in the wild, the universal panacea of Korean medicine, constitutes one of the imperial monopolies. When granting a private citizen a licence to grow the plant, the Government obliges him to hand over his whole harvest to its own agents, and then sends it to the markets of China, making a net profit of between twenty-five and fifty percent.

Since the opportunity has arisen, some remarks will not be out of place about this extraordinary plant, whose root has a human shape, hence the name *gin-seng*, man-plant. There are two species, the red, cultivated in various parts of Korea, but more especially in Song-do where there are vast plantations, and the white, which is very rare and grows wild in the northern forests of the peninsula. White *gin-seng* is of course the most valuable. The most extraordinary tales of miraculous cures obtained with this sovereign drug are on everyone's lips: an infusion of a few grams of the precious root is enough to restore all the vigour and vitality of his early youth to an octogenarian. The discovery of a white *gin-seng* root, which only happens once in many years, is immediately known throughout the peninsula and is spoken of as an exceptional event. As a rule, it is immediately brought to Seoul and offered to the Emperor, the legitimate owner of all the *gin-seng* that Korea produces. If then someone especially dear to him becomes ill, the Emperor will exceptionally have a special decree published in the Official Gazette, authorizing the gift of a few grams of the precious root; and if, nevertheless, the sick person dies, it can only be from the emotion caused by such a singular favour. Various European doctors also wanted to experiment with the therapeutic qualities of this drug, but, whether because of a difference in organic constitution, or atavistic habit, or simply an effect of auto-suggestion, the fact is that while on the Koreans and the Chinese it undoubtedly presents all the characteristics of an energetic stimulant, it produces disastrous effects on Western organisms.

A few years ago the *gin-seng* harvest was exceptionally good and the government was very afraid that, when the Chinese buyers got to know about it, prices would drop sharply. It then had an imperial decree published in the *Official Gazette*, by which the Emperor, recognizing that the quantity of *gin-seng* collected that year was much too high compared with the harvests of previous years, ordered that on a certain day at a certain time seventy crates were to be burnt on the highest point of the island of Roze! And on the appointed day and time, the inhabitants of Cemulpo could actually see 70 boxes burning on the island opposite their port.

Of course, none of them contained *gin-seng*!

One of the most important taxes is the tax on fishing boats, collected on the basis of the number of men on board and the size of the nets used. We note that many of these junks are part of the empire's "navy" and are leased by the State to fishermen for an appropriate fee, which in no way exempts them from paying the fishing tax itself.

It is impossible to discuss Korean finances without mentioning the famous Yi Yong Ik, who was the feared Finance Minister. This was far from being the only office he held, for in addition to being a *brilliant* colonel of cavalry, in whose uniform he is portrayed here, he was also Commander of the Imperial Guard, Director of the Mint and the Government Printing House, Keeper of the Imperial Treasury, Director of the *Gin-seng* Administration, First President of the High Court of Justice, and so on and so forth.

A son of the people, who had received a decidedly mediocre education, in a country where the nobility has, and always has had, the exclusive direction of affairs, Yi Yong Ik worked his way up from the modest profession of miner to the highest positions of the official hierarchy. In this prodigious career he was greatly aided by the Russians, who constantly favoured him, and he came to be regarded as the most influential leader of the party loyal to them; but he owed much to his own shrewdness and to his apparently sincere and continuous devotion to His Majesty the Emperor, who, as we have seen, owed his successful escape to the Russian Legation in February 1896 in great part to him and to Lady Om.

Blindly subservient to his master in the exercise of his most important office of finance minister, continually targetted by the snares of innumerable enemies at home and abroad (primarily Americans and Japanese, whose designs for economic and political hegemony he always hindered), Yi Yong Ik understood that the only way to preserve his position was to ensure that he was absolutely indispensable to the Emperor. Making himself the blind instrument of imperial authority and facilitating the unconscious oniomania of the Korean Court, he withdrew from the public coffers entrusted to him whatever sum the Emperor requested, however large the sum and however meagre the resources of the treasury.

It is to him that Korea owes its monetary reform, which gave rise to a complete mint, set up in Seoul with modern improved machinery, and to a new nickel currency that replaced the ancient *yup*, those small bronze coins with a square hole in the middle, which are still used in China. Today, due to

the continuous depreciation of nickel, to the excessive minting of broken pieces, to the truly extraordinary number of counterfeit coins reportedly introduced every day by bag from Japan, but above all to the wonderful ignorance of Yi Yong Ik in economic matters, it appears that the reform did more harm than good to Korea's finances. But he certainly promoted it in good faith, believing that by not adopting the Japanese currency, an alternative proposed by some, the empire would avoid becoming even more dependent on its powerful neighbour.

The following anecdote gives an idea of his highly personal approach to financial matters. On one occasion he found himself faced with the absolute necessity of making a certain payment of a few hundred thousand dollars; since, as usual, he did not have the necessary sum in cash, he thought of solving the problem by having the mint, of which he was director, print the necessary quantity of one-dollar stamps, which he immediately sent to his colleague the Director of Posts and Telegraphs, requesting him to send back the equivalent amount in cash "at his earliest convenience". The colleague naturally refused, and a highly irritated Yi Yong Ik very nearly had him dismissed. But there was no way he could ever be made to understand the absurdity of his project.

Recently he took it into his head to open a Korean national bank, and I was able to see the banknotes that were being printed for this purpose at the mint, which he himself wanted me to visit. Naturally, the capital for this bank was lacking, but that did not worry him in the slightest, as he thought all he had to do was print large-denomination notes: "and then" - he said - "as soon as we have some payments to make, we will do it with our own notes, and since we have plenty of paper, we will always be able to meet our commitments and soon Korea will become the richest country in the world". He was amazed that such a simple idea had never occurred to anyone else.

It was the Japanese themselves who set him a bad example in this banking business. The *Dai Ichi Ginko*, Japan's First National Bank, has a branch in Seoul that issues special banknotes which are only valid for Korea, and are not guaranteed by anyone. This same bank is authorized in Japan to issue notes, but there it is under the immediate supervision of the Government, whereas in Korea it is free from any control. Now it happened last winter that, as this bank had to make a payment to the Korean government, it thought it best to do so in paper money. The government refused to accept it, demanding payment in gold instead. Pandemonium broke out: the Japanese minister was on leave in Japan at the time and the young chargé d'affaires deputising for him covered himself in glory by sending an ultimatum to the Korean government, giving it twenty-four hours to accept the whole mountain of paper at its face value of over five hundred thousand dollars, and demanding that a notice be posted on all the city gates ordering everyone to accept this paper currency in their daily transactions, failing which the Japanese troops in Seoul would seize the Imperial Palace and the Tombs of the Emperor's ancestors. At the same time the telegraph announced the departure from Japan of a squadron of warships. What else could poor Korea do except submit and be content with lots of paper instead of lots of gold? Knowing this, one cannot reasonably blame Yi Yong Ik if from then on paper has assumed such great importance in his eyes.

Lately the Japanese had managed to convince the Korean government that it was absolutely necessary for Korea to start acquiring a large navy. The Korean ministers were immediately convinced of this; a country like theirs most definitely could not do without such an instrument of civilization, especially since, although they still had no ships, they had plenty of personnel - the staff of the General Directorate of the Navy already included a large number of officers, among them no less than twelve admirals. To save them any trouble, the Japanese themselves resolved to provide Korea with its first warship, and to this end, there arrived one day at Cemulpo a decrepit coaling-ship, painted white for the occasion, equipped with four 6-cm guns and baptized with the pompous name of cruiser. One may be Korean, but one cannot ignore certain things, and the Ministry vigorously refused to accept this instrument of war, provoking anger in Japan. Yi To Ciai, the Foreign Minister, no longer knew what to do: he was pressed on one side by a furious Minister of Japan threatening reprisals, and on the other by the Minister of War and acting Minister of the Navy, who did not want to yield - and as if that were not enough, Yi Yong Ik, claiming he had not been consulted, refused to recognise the contract as valid and declared that on no account would he pay. But there is no point going into the details of this affair any longer, as the conclusion is already predictable: poor Korea took the beautiful instrument of war and was obliged by Japan not only to pay the six hundred thousand and more dollars specified in the contract, but also a penalty of goodness knows how many hundreds of dollars a day for as long as the dispute

lasted.

And the payment was not made in paper money!

A CRISIS IN SEOUL

Hatred of Yi Yong Ik - Conspiracy of the ministers - Little man, not little subject! - Petitions to the Emperor - Imperial embarrassment - The escape of Yi Yong Ik - Resignations, demotions and confiscations - The final pardon.

I have talked about Lady Om and I have talked about Yi Yong Ik. I am now going to tell a little story of Court and government intrigues, which unfolded before my own eyes and which involved both of them. Poor Yi Yong Ik certainly never feared so much for his life as he did then.

He was detested by government officials of all parties, including his fellow Cabinet ministers, and their hatred reached a peak. The unbending approach he brought to his professional dealings with colleagues and subordinates, his harsh insistence that they pay the sums due to the treasury punctually and in full, and the truly exceptional honesty he displayed in the discharge of his many duties - an honesty clearly demonstrated by the fact that, although his multiple offices made him in practice the sole arbiter of all the empire's financial resources, he had not the smallest property of his own and his private residence was more than modest, it was frankly humble - were reasons enough to attract so much hatred. His appointment as President of the High Court of Justice was to bring about his downfall. The severity of his judgments exceeded all limits: a very great number of officials guilty of embezzlement had been tried, flogged and sentenced to various punishments quite regardless of their rank. It was also said that even several women had been subjected to torture, something unprecedented in Korean criminal procedure.

His Cabinet colleagues, interpreting the general indignation, held an emergency meeting one fine day in November and resolved to ruin him.

To achieve this aim, they first had to accuse him publicly of some serious crime, and demand that the Emperor sacrifice him. In another country, they would have started by going through his accounts, scrutinizing the legality of subsidies granted and sundry expenses incurred, and they would perhaps have found that he was helping himself to state *gin-seng* to fortify his health, or using palace sedan chairs for private purposes and that his own visiting cards had come from the Imperial Printing House. But all such accusations are useless in Korea, they are blunt weapons. Something more serious, more sensational, was needed. So, what exactly? A failure to observe the formalities, a breach of Court etiquette, was what was needed. Could there ever be a more serious crime for Koreans than the non-observance of those formalities that have come down to them over many centuries and which fathers pass on to their children as a treasure greater than any other? And this disregard, this infringement of the age-old rules, in whose presence would it have to have been committed for the plot to succeed and the blow fall with maximum effect? The person who came naturally to mind was Lady Om.

And so there they were, those serious men, gathered in secret council, drawing up a Petition to the throne in which they accused Yi Yong Ik of having dared to refer to himself, in conversation with Lady Om, as *so-sin* ("little subject"), an expression that must only be used when speaking with the sovereign, whereas the appropriate expression to be used in this case would have been *so-in* ("little man"). Nor was this all, because Yi Yong Ik, perhaps thinking in his profound ignorance that he was paying a compliment to the august concubine, had dared to compare Oang Kui Pi to Yang Kui Pi, the favourite concubine of a Chinese emperor of the Tang dynasty, who lived about 1150 years ago, and who was the primary cause of her lord's death.

It is best to reproduce, in its Italian translation, the exact text of that curious document, if only to give an example of the convoluted and grandiloquent style of official Korean correspondence:

We, unworthy subjects of Your Majesty, take the liberty of informing Your Majesty that we were told by Ciò Pyong Sik, Minister of Foreign Affairs, that Um Jun Ik, ex-Governor of Seoul, and Kim Yung Gin, Chief of the Executive Office of the Imperial Palace Police, went to see him and informed him that Yi Yong Ik, Head of the Imperial Administration, dared to express himself in words that should never even be murmured by a subject loyal to his Sovereign, words representing the greatest of insults to the most August of Persons.

Furthermore, he is said to have risked making so imprudent a comparison that his secret thoughts are shown to be as hateful as they are dangerous.

Finally Cìò Pyong Sik explained to us that this careless talk and the resulting crime hide the blackest betrayal and therefore deserve the severe punishment proper to such cases.

We all, on hearing this news, felt our legs tremble, and our spirits sink in horror.

We then gathered together all the senior government officials in the Council of State, and having brought in Um Jun Ik and Kim Yung Gin and examined and compared their statements, we found, alas, that what we had been told was absolutely true. Not a word had to be changed!

Alas! The treacherous thoughts and insulting talk of Yi Yong Ik represent the greatest rebellion since the creation of the world! Such a traitor cannot be left unpunished even for a single moment.

We therefore have the high honour of begging your Majesty to deprive him immediately of all his ranks and offices and at the same time to order the Minister of Justice to seize him and punish him according to the laws regarding such a crime, so that the your sovereign authority is preserved intact, and the national grief is relieved.

Yi Yong Ik's lucky star did not desert him, for when the Petition reached the Emperor he was in the Palace with him, and it did not take him long to convince the sovereign that this was neither more nor less than a plot to harm him, and that if he were abandoned and handed over to his enemies, great damage would be done not only to the State, but to the Emperor himself, whose purse strings he held. It was even whispered that over six million yen belonging to the Emperor were deposited in a Shang-hai bank in Yi Yong Ik's name. This last argument undoubtedly convinced the Emperor more than any other, and he replied verbally to the ministers that the matter did not seem so serious to him, and that in any case he would think about it and decide later.

But the conspirators were not satisfied with this evasive answer, and they hastened to send this second Petition to the throne:

We, unworthy subjects of Your Majesty, have the high honour of recalling that we have already submitted a collective petition concerning the wickedness and betrayal of Yi Yong Ik.

We now dare to say that there is no greater crime than that committed by an official who nurtures disrespectful feelings for his sovereign. Now, can there be more disrespectful feelings than those that dwell in Yi Yong Ik's heart?

Since Sun Pi (Lady Om) has been raised to the position of *Oang Kui Pi*, he has dared to compare Your Majesty and *Oang Kui Pi* to *Tang Myeng Oang* and *Yang Kui Pi*, without the slightest scruple or fear. In addition, he has dared to call himself *so-sin* when speaking with *Oang Kui Pi*; on several occasions she herself had to point out to him the mistake he was making, as the Illustrious Lady well understands that her current position does not entitle her to such a sign of respect, but he paid no attention.

So how can it be denied that his thoughts are dangerous and conceal betrayal? Alas! It is true that the rogue is nothing but a fool, but with the office he holds he has now reached the rank of Minister, and he must know what the rules of official etiquette are. He is well aware with whom officials must use the expression *so-sin* [little subject], but he dared to call himself *so-sin* when speaking to a person who is not entitled to such an honour. But is it ignorance that led him to do this? No, we well know that by acting in this way he aimed to lead her [Lady Om] into a trap.

Now, can a person who has any consideration for his sovereign do such a thing?

We all know that *Tang Myeng Oang* was a corrupt monarch and *Yang Kui Pi* a bad woman. And he dared to compare the present kingdom with theirs? What, then, does he think the present kingdom is? Oh, this is indeed the greatest rebellion that has ever taken place since the creation of the world and he himself is the greatest rebel ever born on earth.

But his rebellion is now clear for all to see and it is useless for us to insist further. We have vowed not to live under the same sky as him [Yi Yong Ik]. And moved by righteous anger we again submit a collective petition requesting Your Majesty to have the firmness and energy to issue an order to the Minister of Justice so that the provisions of the Criminal Code can be applied to him, for the greater dignity of the Court, and the relief of the Nation's sorrow.

The affair was becoming more and more serious. Yi Yang Ik was still in the Palace and energetically refused to leave it. All the ministers were waiting outside with their acolytes and if he had fallen into their hands he would certainly have been killed. Around the palace there was a continuous coming and going of soldiers who watched all the exits by specific order of the Minister of

War. The Emperor did not know which way to turn, but he understood that it was absolutely not in his interest to sacrifice Yi Yong Ik, and he sent the following reply to the ministers:

If what is written in the Petition is true, how could he be forgiven? But how can you be sure that the words he is accused of uttering only became offensive after passing from mouth to mouth?

So you must not believe it, but generously admit the other side of the question.

This response did not satisfy the ministers. And there they all were, gathered in front of the main door of the Palace, remaining there day and night in protest. A third petition was sent to the sovereign, which for the sake of brevity I will not reproduce, complaining that while they, ministers of state, were waiting outside, Yi Yong Ik, the rebel, was free to move undisturbed inside the Palace. They had to be given some satisfaction, and so an imperial decree was published in the Official Gazette dismissing Yi Yong Ik from all his posts, while at the same time His Majesty addressed this new response to the ministers:

Although it became clear after the confrontation held before the State Council [that Yi Yong Ik is guilty], are there not perhaps other reasons for these accusations?

He is still in the palace because he has to settle his official accounts. So do not raise this business with me any more.

But the ministers were determined to have the matter settled once and for all and they were not satisfied with these half measures. The crowd in front of the palace was increasing every day; the ministers stayed outside the entrance, each surrounded by his own clients, and there was fear of disorder in the city. Various notable personalities, such as Sim Sun Tak, former prime minister, and Ciò Pyung Se, chairman of the privy council, sent their own petitions to the throne, all begging the Emperor to hand Yi Yong Ik over to justice, but the Emperor thought of the millions in Shanghai and held firm. Several of these petitions were rejected and subsequently sent back several times, until the ministers, tired of waiting any longer, sent a fourth collective petition:

We, Your Majesty's subjects, have the honour to recall that, after having met, and having sent Your Majesty the information regarding the traitor Yi Yong Ik, we withdrew to our private residences and waited at home for seven days and seven nights for the imperial order to be issued [for his arrest].

And while we, state officials, complain of his betrayal, he [Yi Yong Ik] can move freely around the Palace instead. This situation has arisen precisely because he does not care about his sovereign. After this, who will still believe that there are laws in this country that have to be observed? Oh, this is truly the greatest rebellion that has ever occurred since the creation of the world!

Of course, Yi Yong Ik is nothing but a trivial being. But what a great responsibility he bears for bringing the nation's laws into such a ruinous state, those laws which were broken in defiance of all the generations that have ever existed! Such a rebellion is unprecedented.

All this appals us, pains us, and almost causes our death. This may have made us forget the established customs for a moment, as we hurried to submit our complaints.

We sat in front of the Palace and demanded that an appropriate imperial order be issued. Was this perhaps due to our ignorance of customs? We ourselves know very well that it was an exceptional move, but we found ourselves obliged to do so because it was urgent. We are taking the liberty of saying that Your Majesty has not yet clearly understood what it is about We are still eagerly awaiting this order [to arrest him]. We are still very anxious and very tired, but so far the order has not appeared.

Of course, it is very important that he settle the official accounts. But can we forget the things that have brought about this disorder in the nation's laws?

These things are of the greatest urgency, and so we again dare to risk incurring Your Majesty's wrath and submit this collective petition with which we have the high honour of asking for an order to be issued immediately to calm the righteous indignation of the nation.

It is not my intention to reproduce the other petitions sent to the throne on that occasion – eleven in all – to which the Emperor no longer knew what to answer.

He had never been so embarrassed. If it had not been for the millions in Shang-hai, he would willingly have abandoned Yi Yong Ik to his fate, ridding himself of the whole troublesome business

in the process. It was clear that as long as Yi Yong Ik remained in the Palace, the ministers would be outside waiting for him, and this state of siege could not continue. So it was decided that Yi Yong Ik would flee and the Emperor agreed to facilitate his escape.

The Russian chargé d'affaires agreed to offer him asylum in his Legation, and so it was that while the ministers were in uproar outside, the Emperor left the Palace by a secondary door to perform a sacrifice in the Temple of the Ancestors, not far from the Palace itself. In the closed road leading to the Temple, a side door - a wise precaution – gives access to the Russian Legation. When Yi Yong Ik, who was in the Emperor's retinue, reached it, the door was ajar and behind it a certain number of Cossacks were ready for any eventuality. He stepped resolutely inside, closed the door behind him, and was finally able to say that he was safe. I will never forget the expression on that man's face at the moment when, after so many days of anxiety, in constant fear of literally losing his head from one moment to the next, he knew that he was safe at last.

His escape remained a secret for a couple of days, during which the ministers continued to submit their protests. When the rumour finally spread in the city that Yi Yong Ik had found shelter in the protective shadow of the Russian gryphon-eagle, five of the ministers most fiercely committed to the struggle sent their resignations to the throne. That was the false move which brought down the whole carefully constructed conspiracy.

The Emperor hastened to take note of the resignations which they and other great dignitaries had submitted, and not only accepted them, but decided that all those who resigned would have their entire assets confiscated and would be degraded and sent into exile.

Now, trying to ruin Yi Yong Ik was one thing, but ruining oneself was quite another, and none of the conspirators was prepared to make so very great a sacrifice and resign himself to such a fate.

Meanwhile, Yi Yong Ik, with a good escort of Cossacks, was sent to Cempulpo under cover of night; when he arrived there, he boarded the *Karietz*, the Russian gunboat stationed in that port, which took him to Port Arthur, a much safer place for him.

The disgraced ministers immediately enlisted the support of all their partisans to obtain an imperial pardon. They did not have to wait long, but when it came the pardon was total, with no exceptions - the same decree reinstated both the ministers who accused Yi Yong Ik and the accused himself in all their former grades, offices and duties with their associated privileges; and with that the Yi Yong Ik affair was closed once and for all.

The ministries reopened, normal business resumed and Seoul recovered its usual tranquility. After a couple of months, Yi Yong Ik made his bold return to Seoul, calm and serene, as if nothing had happened, as influential as ever and, perhaps, more feared than before. I invited him to dinner around the same time; he sat next to his most ardent accuser, and the two of them smiled and chatted cheerfully, almost amicably, together, for all the world like close friends!

KOREAN JUSTICE

Eastern cruelty - Responsibilities of magistrates - Korean penalties - Usual reforms - Purchase of judges - Torture - Prisons - Executions – Martyrdom of Bishop Berneux - Drum of complaints

Particularly refined cruelty is a marked characteristic of all the peoples of the Far East. Chinese methods of torture are now famous all over the world, and the cruelties of the Japanese, although little talked of now, are much in evidence in the old histories of Japan; the monument of the hundred thousand noses cut off Korean prisoners during Hideyoshi's expedition, is a striking example, but by no means the only one. Inferior in many respects to their eastern and western neighbours, the Koreans were their equals when it came to cruelty, as the unfortunate victims of the first religious persecutions in the peninsula were well aware.

Given such special aptitudes, it was natural for the system of justice in Korea to rely heavily on torture in trial proceedings, and on corporal punishment as a penalty for breaking the law.

As a general rule, magistrates in the individual towns and villages administered the law in the provinces, deciding ordinary cases of theft, assault with bodily harm and complaints, while murder cases were reserved for the governor of the province. The governor would send a trusted official to the scene of the crime; after the necessary examination of the body, the official ascertained the guilt of the presumed murderer and, if there was no doubt that he was guilty, ordered his execution without more ado. In disputed cases, one or two other officials were despatched to the crime scene and a detailed report on the case was sent to the *Court of Penalties* in Seoul, which was responsible for making the final decision.

However, all offences committed by government officials, and all charges of treason brought against private citizens, were dealt with exclusively by the aforementioned court, *Sa-hyien Pa*. The governor of the province where the guilty official or the person accused of treason resided, began by sending a memorandum to the throne setting out the details of the case; the King then drew up the indictment, *ci-oi-ciang*, and sent it to the Court which, by means of one of its couriers, *na-ciang*, arranged for the arrest of the accused. The trial then took place, and the minutes of the proceedings were sent to the sovereign, who by another special act authorized the Court to pronounce the sentence, which had to be approved by the sovereign before it could be considered as final.

The main penalties decreed by the Court were dismissal, imprisonment, flogging, banishment, and execution.

Dismissal could also be decreed, without the need for a special procedure, by an *An-heung E-sa*, a Secret Royal Commissioner, a sort of high-ranking official who, by order of the sovereign, travelled incognito through the provinces and, wherever he observed disturbances, was empowered to dismiss the responsible officials, provided they were of a lower rank than that of governor. In order to be recognized when they needed to be, these *E-sa* were equipped with a special copper seal engraved with the figure of a horse, *ma o mal*, hence the name of *ma-pai*.

Imprisonment took place in Seoul's two main prisons, *Nam Kam* and *Puk Kam*, the first being used almost exclusively for prisoners awaiting trial, and the second as a place of punishment.

Flogging could be inflicted in different ways, with the *ci* (rod), or with the *kon-ciang* (a wide flat stick), and the number of lashes, variable according to the greater or lesser severity of the crime, could even be over one hundred. However, the remission of all or some of them was allowed, upon payment of 7 *yup* each, about two cents per beating! It cannot really be said that the taxman was demanding! Still, the vast majority of the condemned preferred to take their ration of lashes in peace rather than pay that small sum.

Banishment was divided into three categories, depending on the distance to which the condemned was to be deported, the greatest distance being 3000 *li*. Since Korea, according to Korean geographers, was 2373 *li* long and 1073 *li* wide, the peninsula itself was not long enough to apply the maximum penalty, so they resorted to the expedient of embarking the guilty person on a ship and after covering the necessary number of *li*, landing him on the first island they came to. Generally these exiles all ended up in Quelpart.

The death penalty was also divided into three categories: strangulation, beheading and quartering, each of which was then subject to many variants, intended to exacerbate the suffering of the condemned according to the gravity of the case or the whim of the magistrate presiding over the execution.

Now, after the reforms, some changes have been made to the organization of the judicial system as well as to the application of penalties. A whole system of Courts of First Instance, Courts of Appeal, and Special Courts, capped by a High Court of Justice, with related Judges, Prosecutors and Presidents, was devised, and the relevant decrees subsequently appeared in the *Official Gazette* of 1895-96; but as they appeared on paper, so they have remained on paper and they have not been applied in practice. Some slight changes can be observed, introduced perhaps in material terms, since in moral terms the system of buying judges is still the most popular.

If Korea, unfortunately, is not the only country in the world where justice, let us call it that, can be bought, it is nevertheless one of those where the practice is most blatant. In the past this was not the case, at least the Koreans claim it was not, maintaining that this deplorable custom only became widespread in very recent times. During the reign of Ciung-giong, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, an unfortunate official who was vice-president of the *Court of Penalties* was struggling to make ends meet and at a loss to know how he could feed himself and his numerous offspring. A devoted friend, wishing to help him in some way without offending his dignity, broke into his office one day and left a silver statuette, on which he had engraved his own name, in a corner of the room. As was to be expected, the gift was received with great jubilation, and the vice-president was thus able to put his affairs in order. Years passed, and one day the friend's father, involved in a terrible conspiracy, was arrested, and was about to find himself in mortal danger, when his son went to see our official and reminded him of the old favour his father had done him. When he remembered it, the old man was moved and promised that he would do everything he could to help. The friend's father was indeed acquitted, on one of those specious pretexts that the representatives of the law never fail to find to exempt themselves from observing it. But the affair ended up reaching the King's ears and provoked a serious scandal among the people. The vice-president in question was naturally dismissed, but by then the people had learned the surest way to get what they wanted, and from that day the use of *bakschish* became general.

Thus the good judge has his way ahead clearly marked out: favour those who pay him and condemn those who do not pay him – clearly not a difficult profession.

As for the penalties, the main changes made were, first of all, the abolition of the age-old custom of holding all the relatives, close and distant, of a guilty party jointly responsible for the offence committed, confiscating their assets and exiling them as well as the offender. Likewise, the distinction between the treatment of officials and the treatment of private citizens was abolished, proclaiming for Korea too what has been called the greatest lie of the whole legal system: *the law is the same for all*. Flogging with the stick was forbidden and the price for reducing the penalty was raised to one day's wage for every stroke remitted.

The different categories of banishment ceased to be fixed in terms of the distance to the place of exile, but reflected instead the length of the sentence to be served, from five to fifteen years, in addition to exile for life, still in use today.

Some changes were also made to the death penalty, which in future was to be carried out only by hanging for civilians and shooting for the military.

However, the worst of all these horrors remained: torture. It was too deeply rooted in the minds, not only of Koreans, but of all the peoples of the Far East, for its abolition to be expected. Even after several years of feverish Europeanisation, torture was still being used in Japan, and the meticulous and exact bureaucrats of that empire were still preparing everything necessary for the monthly publication of the statistics relating to it! And if it was finally abolished in 1876, this was largely due to the energetic work of Mr. Boissonade de Fontarabie, then Legal Advisor to the Mikado Government.

It should be noted that in Korea torture is used not only on the accused, to force them to confess their crime, but also, and in equal measure, on witnesses, to force them to reveal everything they know both for and against the accused.

This is perhaps due to the perennial habit of telling lies, a habit which is second nature among many peoples, and which has led to the belief that exceptional methods have to be used to discover the truth. There is no doubt that any Korean would laugh his head off at the idea of an interrogation that did not begin with a preventive session of torture, the only way, in his view, to achieve any worthwhile result.

In past times there existed a great variety of methods of torture - nothing could better illustrate the inventiveness that cruelty fosters among these people. Many of these methods were abolished at the beginning of the current dynasty, and still others, such as crushing of the knees, application of red-hot iron and dislocation of the bones, were proscribed at the end of the 13th century by King Yong Giong, as already mentioned.

The systems still in use are roughly the following:

1 ° *Flogging with rods*. The "patient", after being partially stripped, is stretched flat on a bench and tied to it by two ropes, one round his waist and the other round his feet. Then one of the guards of the *a-mun*, using a flexible rod about one metre long, inflicts the number of lashes prescribed by the magistrate. The number fixed for each interrogation, both of the accused and of the witnesses, is thirty; in the past, when the stick was still in use, and had to break with each blow for the stroke to be considered valid, there were always thirty new sticks ready for use next to each of the unfortunate people due to be interrogated.

2 ° *Bending the bones*. There are two methods in use: the first, *ka-sai-tsu-roi*, consists in tying the big toes and the knees of the accused tightly together, after which two solid sticks are planted in the ground between his legs and pulled by two guards in opposite directions, until the bones begin to bend; the guards then slowly return the sticks to their original position, and immediately repeat the manoeuvre. The other method, *tsul-tsu-roi*, is much the same except that only the feet are tied together, a large block of wood is placed between the legs, and two ropes, each tied round one knee, are pulled in opposite directions to try to bring the knees together.

The use of other and more terrible systems of torture, such as dislocation of the arms and suspension, is now only permitted for truly extraordinary crimes. Dislocation of the arms is performed by tying the patient's elbows behind his back and placing two sticks between them, which are then pulled by two executioners, using the shoulders for leverage, until the shoulder blades are forced out of position. The unfortunate man is then untied and laid on the ground where one of the executioners, placing a knee on his chest, grabs his arms and with skilful movements pushes them back into place. The whole operation is then repeated. Suspension is performed by tying the wretched man's hands behind his back and holding him up by the arms while four villains whip him until he bleeds. Care must be taken to lower him in time because in that uncomfortable position the patient may very well not survive the operation. A variant can be obtained by having the guilty person kneel on top of glass fragments and then pulled up and suspended by his hair, which is easy in Korea where everyone wears their hair long, while two wretches, armed with powerful clubs, beat him on the legs.

As can be seen, the paths of justice in this country are not strewn with roses, and the sessions of these courts can be very disturbing. The representatives of the Powers in Seoul periodically send the government their most formal protests at the continued use of such a barbaric system; they get promises of reforms, but that is all. At most, instead of being inflicted in public, torture is used for a time in secret, when it is very probably even more severe.

I shall not dwell on the state in which the prisons are kept, because just to see them is horrifying. It is hard to believe that those poor filthy creatures, covered with sores and mud, devoured by insects, some chained, others tortured by *canga*, emaciated, veritable living skeletons, are human beings and that other men keep them in such a state. On entering those places one cannot help but feel a very deep sense of pity for the unhappy inmates, and it requires an effort not to break down at the sight of them. But what is most surprising is not so much the indifference with which the Koreans consider these things, as the quiet calm with which the prisoners themselves endure what for others would be terrible sufferings. It is not uncommon to see them chatting amiably among themselves, laughing loudly and cracking jokes - yet another example of the continuous contradictions one comes across among these people.

And now, before leaving this unpleasant subject, a few words on the executions which, until very recently, plagued the Korean capital with great frequency.

Death by poisoning was reserved for nobles and senior officials, but for the others there were various kinds of torture, the most common of which was this one, described by Fr Dallet in his *Introduction to the History of the Church of Korea*. When the hour of execution arrived, a cart pulled by two oxen drew up in front of the prison, and the condemned man, carried on the shoulders of one of the executioners, was suspended by the arms and hair from a cross a little more than two metres high erected in the centre of the cart, with his feet resting on a stool so that his hair was not supporting his whole weight. The procession, which included a number of officials and many onlookers, then set off for the Little West Gate. After passing through the Gate, where the road descends very steeply, the driver of the cart whipped the oxen into a run, while one of the executioners, with a rapid movement, pulled the stool from under the feet of the crucified man, who thus remained suspended by his hair: it is easy to guess what agonies he must have suffered with the constant shaking of the cart on that uneven and rocky road. When they finally reached the place of execution, the unfortunate man was taken down, an executioner undressed him, tied his hands behind his back, made him kneel, placed a log of wood under his chin and then beheaded him. If the sabre was sharp and the executioner skilled, a single blow was enough.

Since these were great criminals, the head was then hung on a kind of tripod, to which a sign was sometimes attached bearing the criminal's name and the crime he had committed. The limbs were quartered and sent to the provinces, where some villains carried the shreds of human flesh around for several days, extorting money from those they met on the roads of the peninsula.

Finally, here is how the same author narrates the martyrdom of Bishop Berneux and his three companions, the first victims of the great persecution ordered by the Tai Uen Kun: On the 22nd day of the 1st moon, the four missionaries were taken from prison to be led to their death. Each of them was laid on a wooden litter carried on the shoulders of two men, their legs and arms were solidly tied and their head secured by their hair, which those fathers wore long, in the Korean fashion. Behind the head a placard bore the victim's name and the words "rebellious and insubordinate, condemned to die after various tortures." Four hundred soldiers accompanied the procession, which was made up of the worst scum of the capital, who rushed to see and insult those barbarian propagators of a new doctrine. Once they reached the place of execution, the soldiers arranged themselves in a semicircle in front of the tent specially erected for the magistrate who supervised the executions. The victims, stripped of almost all their clothes, were laid in the centre of the circle, at the foot of a large tree surmounted by a white flag. The bishop was called first, and while one of the executioners tied his hands behind his back, another folded back his earlaps and drove a long arrow into each ear. His face was smeared with quicklime, two sticks were passed under his armpits, and he was lifted up and carried round the semicircle eight times for the crowd to see. Finally he was made to kneel with his chin resting on a stump, while a soldier pulled his hair, and six executioners armed with long knives danced a macabre dance around him, blindly striking the wretched body. At the third blow, the head fell off. It was lifted up by means of the arrows stuck in the ears, shown to the magistrate, and then hung on the tripod to which the placard bearing the sentence had been attached. The same atrocious ritual followed for the other three unfortunate priests. The most terrible fate of all was reserved for Father Dorie who, as the last to fall, had to witness those bloody scenes three times - a terrible torment for someone forced to see his companions, who shared the same faith and the same ideal, put to death in this way, knowing that their suffering would be his too.

Enough of this catalogue of horrors; a cheerful note to finish. In observance of an ancient custom, established I believe by Tai Giò himself, a huge drum always stood at the main entrance to the Sovereign's Palace. It was called the "drum of complaint," *shin-mun ko*; any individual who had not had been given a fair hearing had the right to bang it, and his case, brought at once to the attention of the King, was promptly given due consideration. Similar drums were found in the provinces near the gates of each *a-mun*.

This use has not been abolished. The drums are still visible, both at the entrance to the Palace and at the gates of the *a-mun*. But anyone who tries to bang them will be arrested on the spot, tried and eventually thrown into prison. Given Korea's legal system, it is better to resign oneself to not wanting justice at all costs. Korea is one of those countries where the law is expensive, and it is not clear why it continues to be called justice.

NATIONAL DEFENCE?

Korean Cavalry - Changing of the Guard - Purpose of the Army - The Army of the past - The first firearms - Military monks - Traditional Korean telegraph - Changes in military instruction - Recruitment - The Military Academy - Splendour and decadence of the Korean Navy

First comedy, then tragedy, and now farce.

If you find yourself one morning at about nine or ten on Ministry Street, you will witness a military spectacle like no other: it is there that the Seoul garrison goes to drill. Small units of about a hundred men each march past and perform manoeuvres to the strident sound of a dozen trumpets (oh, the Korean trumpets!) and as many drums, followed by a long crowd of onlookers; the soldiers chat to one another, moving in their own way, in no readily discernible order. They wear a uniform very similar to that of the Japanese, and could easily be mistaken for Japanese soldiers if they displayed the same remarkable order and discipline for which the latter are so admired. Sometimes you can see a bunch or two of paper flowers pinned on the hats of soldiers and officers alike, but take no notice, it is only a token of imperial approval: on every national holiday, and in Korea there is at least one a week, the Emperor thoughtfully sends each soldier a paper flower; he sometimes sends two to the officers, and both are pinned on their hat. But we should look closely when the cavalry passes - it is a troop worth watching. There are about fifty men in all, dressed in red, each of whom has a horse on which he tries as hard as he can to stay upright. Sometimes, holding on tightly to the pommel of the saddle, or hugging the animal's neck, a rider manages to stay on his horse, but this does not always happen, and they do not all manage the feat. A charge of these valiant horsemen puts you in mind of a *paper chase* where men are scattered about instead of bits of paper. Once the rider has fallen, the horse runs off and then all along the street there is a general stampede of soldiers and onlookers, until the horse is recovered and calm returns. Here as elsewhere the cavalry officers are very proud of their position, and, to be honest, they are on average far superior to the men they command, especially the young officers who have recently graduated from the Seoul Military Academy, the institute to which General Yi Hak Hiun devotes so much care. Here is a photograph of one of these young officers who, having seen that I was carrying a camera, left his unit at once to run and pose complacently in front of the camera, a satisfied look on his face.

The incompetence of the Korean rider is natural when you remember that in Korea they are not used to riding horses. The little ponies, which I have mentioned elsewhere, are used exclusively as beasts of burden; those who travel, travel on foot or in a sedan chair, and we have seen that the few *yangban* who use a horse when it is not possible to do otherwise, leave the task of keeping them in the saddle to others. Nominally, by ancient tradition, there should be six hundred Korean cavalymen, but in reality there are no more than fifty at the present time. This number of six hundred was not decided at random. Legend has it that in the early days of the current dynasty Korea possessed a large force of mounted warriors, who used to gather every day for their exercises west of Seoul, in the Valley of the Lilies of the valley, the start of the Mandarin road to Beijing. So fierce were the fights and mock battles they indulged in, that very dense clouds of dust rose from the earth and almost darkened the sky. Now it happened that, about 350 years ago, the Son of Heaven, standing one fine morning at one of the windows of his palace in Beijing, saw on the horizon, towards the east, a huge yellowish cloud that had every appearance of a cloud of dust. Concerned, he called a messenger and told him: "Some terrible battle must be happening in Korea, leave now and come back to report what it is." The messenger departed like a bolt of lightning and his astonishment was great when, having arrived in Seoul and been led into the presence of the King, the innocent cause of those clouds was explained to him. As soon as the Son of Heaven heard the news he was troubled and said: "If a single mock battle of Korean horsemen is capable of raising such dense clouds in the sky, it is a sign that Korea is getting too strong, and this is not good for a vassal state. Go and tell the King of Korea that I order him to dismiss his horsemen and keep no more than six hundred in his service". So it is that since that day, the Korean cavalry is nominally six hundred strong.

In order to admire the Korean soldiers, there is no need to go and look for them, because if, like the majority of foreigners, you have the good fortune to live near the Imperial Palace of

Ciongdong, you can be sure that they will make enough noise for you to immediately notice their presence. From six in the morning until around nine a continuous parade of soldiers and, what is much worse, an interminable blowing of trumpets will leave you no rest. The whole performance is really nothing more than the changing of the guard at the Palace, and there will be no more than a hundred soldiers taking part in the exercise, but they have the ability to make it last for a couple of hours going back and forth, with a thousand turns and about-turns, like the extras in the operettas, so that it seems the whole Korean army is assembled there, raising all the trumpets of Jericho for the occasion.

A curious army, this Korean army! Read the orders of the Ministry of War, the military regulations, the imperial decrees, in short, everything that has been officially written about it and for it, and you will really believe that you are in the presence of a perfectly ordered force reflecting the latest dictates of the general staff. Then look at the reality on the ground and you will find, as in every other branch of the administration, a frightful confusion, and, above all, a general ignorance of what should be its real purpose. The idea of an army must in fact go hand in hand with the defence of the national territory, but on this point, as has been seen on many occasions, and even very recently, the Korean army does not seem of much more use than the Swiss guards in the Vatican or the forty guards of the Republic of San Marino. The Chinese and the Japanese have invaded the peninsula, and our good Korean soldiers have stayed put, enjoying the new spectacle, impassive, indifferent, without a burst of indignation, without a spark of generous patriotism. What then is the use of this army with its hundred generals, if the territory of the peninsula can be violated with impunity without even the most platonic of protests? To march back and forth around the Imperial Palace every morning from six to nine, to the accompaniment of trumpets and drums? That really does not amount to very much; and yet in practice it does no more. It costs the nation 4,675,251 Korean dollars, admittedly a small sum compared to what other countries spend on defence; but even so one cannot help but conclude that it is money wasted, the game is not worth the candle.

It is very difficult to say how many men make up this army. In addition to the lack of reliable statistics - you find a figure in one official document and a completely different one in another - its composition is continually shifting, as scarcely a month goes by without some battalion being dissolved or another established. At a rough estimate, it can be calculated that the army has a total of seven or eight thousand men, of which about half are in Seoul while the others are scattered around the peninsula, mainly in the provincial capitals, the open ports and the so-called five fortresses.

This Western-looking army is a very recent creation. In former times the Korean army was organised along the same lines as the Chinese army at the time of the Ming dynasty, a dynasty whose arrangements the Koreans always loved to copy.

Thus in this peninsula military service, as is the case in China, was always considered far inferior to the civil one; it was thought of as aiming to giving prominence to physical accomplishments and not the more highly appreciated intellectual graces.

In those days, it was more a question of armed bands, which could be called upon to offer their services as and when the need arose, rather than regularly enlisted troops. For this purpose, each Prefecture kept a register of all the men suitable for military service, and the forces needed in the event of war or internal rebellions were drawn from them. I have already spoken elsewhere of the exams that used to be held periodically for those hoping to obtain one or other military rank; with the exception of the study and explanation of the Seven Treatises of Military Art, these exams consisted essentially of physical exercises and shooting practice with the various weapons in use.

The forces of the peninsula were divided into two large groups: the army of the capital, which was directly dependent on the central government, and the army of the provinces, which were constituted and maintained by the respective provincial governors.

The army of the capital was in turn divided into five units: *regular forces*, *the King's guard*, *the King's brigade*, *the common brigade* and *the dragon and tiger brigade*. These units were then transformed into five regiments called respectively *right*, *left*, *vanguard*, *rearguard* and *river defence*. In normal times their duties consisted in guarding the gates of the city, policing the streets at night and garrisoning the famous fortress of Mount Puk-han, which was connected by a secret passage to the Royal Palace, and provided the kings of Ciu-sen with a safe refuge when the capital was threatened by the approach of an enemy host.

The localities of Song-do, Kang-wha, Koang-giù, Su-uen, and Ciun-cien, known as the "Five Fortresses," had special garrisons, each under the orders of two commanders, one of whom was by right the governor of the province where the fortress was located.

These forces were equipped with very primitive weapons, essentially different kinds of sabres, spears, javelins, clubs, arrows and bows. Only a very small part of the Korean army was equipped with firearms, which first appeared in the peninsula during the great Japanese invasion, in Hideyoshi's time. Here is a popular legend which refers to that event: "During the campaign of 1591, the bulk of the fighting took place near Pyeng-yang. The Japanese greatly outnumbered the Koreans and possessed far better weapons: while the latter possessed only bows and arrows, most of the Japanese had firearms as well, which Dutch navigators who frequented the port of Nagasaki had taught them how to use. The king of Ciu-sen had fled to Euì-giù to seek the protection of China, and the Korean soldiers, taking shelter behind the city walls, tried to defend it as best they could while awaiting Chinese reinforcements.

"One day, they had a flash of genius. They cut down hundreds of trees and fashioned wooden instruments shaped like the rifles used by the enemy. The Koreans, who had never seen such weapons before, did not have the slightest idea what they were, and simply assumed that the instrument used by the Japanese was nothing more than a kind of round stick which, for some mysterious reason, had the power to inflict death.

"The Koreans, each armed with this improvised weapon, advanced bravely towards the Japanese, taking care to keep the tips of their staffs pointed at the enemy. The Japanese did not move, and let them approach; when the Koreans were very close, they all fired at the same time, a mighty volley of rifle shots which killed a large number of Koreans before any escape was possible. The surviving Koreans fled, pursued closely by the Japanese, and so great was the massacre they committed that the God of War himself was moved. At a distance of some 30 *li* from Pyeng-yang, there was a temple in honour of this deity; when the Japanese, returning from their pursuit of the Koreans, passed in front of it, the God of War, armed with a miraculous axe, descended from his pedestal and went to meet them and exterminated them."

The main material for making the old weapons of the Korean army was bamboo, and to ensure that it was always in plentiful supply there were government reserves where it was forbidden for anyone to cut the bamboo. One of them, the reserve on the island of Quelpart, was especially famous, for there, it was said, whenever the envoys of the Government landed for the usual supply of bamboo canes, they found the necessary quantity beautifully arranged at the landing point, gathered spontaneously, according to the legend.

Three times a month the troops of the capital gathered for military training exercises, consisting of individual instruction in the traditional handling of different weapons - each move was governed by very specific rules expounded in minute detail in military treatises - , of mock duels with spears, sticks, sabres and double-edged sabres, and of practice in archery and wrestling. These training sessions generally ended with a mock battle, where the winner was the side that managed to remove the greatest number of hats from their opponents.

A very curious peculiarity of the provincial army was the inclusion in its personnel of all or almost all the Buddhist monks who lived in the monasteries located on the tops of hills or in strategic points of the peninsula. These bonzes were obliged to undergo training in the use of weapons, and they were all under the orders of the army commander of their respective province. Many monasteries consequently had a store of weapons and were even equipped, in recent times, with cannons, the last thing you would expect to find in a religious establishment. These Korean guns, all of Chinese construction, generally consisted of small iron pipes tied to large wooden trunks; they were breech-loaded, by first inserting a spherical ball and then the load of powder, of Korean manufacture, enclosed in an iron case. Several of these guns were taken from the forts of the island of Kang-wha by the French and American expeditions of '67 and '71.

In the past the system of beacons by which the capital communicated with all the peninsula's most important forts, especially those located near the coasts and frontiers, formed an integral part of the nation's defences. These fires were lit on the hilltops at a short distance from each other, and since the peninsula had very few good roads, they served to quickly transmit to the capital all news that could affect national land and sea defences. These fires were kept alight continuously,

and were visible by day thanks to the smoke they produced, which was intensified by throwing dry straw and rice husk on the pile. If all went well a single fire was lit; if there was a probability of imminent danger, two were lit; if there were reasons for serious alarm, three; if the enemy attacked the frontier, or approached the coast, four; and finally, if there was a battle, five. Two military officials and ten guards were assigned to each beacon, and it was their duty to immediately repeat any signal they saw on the surrounding hilltops. The most severe penalties were imposed on those who were guilty of neglecting this duty: anyone who forgot to signal a danger or transmitted a false signal, was immediately punished with death. The same fate befell any private citizens who lit other fires in the vicinity of a beacon. At Seoul, the beacons were located on the summits of the Nam-san and Puk-han mountains, and five officers perpetually on the lookout were responsible for immediately reporting any relevant news to the King.

Once Korea had begun to admit foreigners and the Koreans had seen the superiority of Western weapons and military systems, they began to feel the need to reform their army.

Thus it was that in 1882 the King, who for some time had employed Chinese instructors for his troops, turned to the Japanese government to reorganize his army. Japan sent him some instructors, led by Lieutenant Horimoto, and sold him twenty thousand Murata rifles. But it proved impossible to get along with the Japanese and, especially after the events of July '82 and December '84, another change was necessary. The United States government was then asked to send a military mission to Korea to instruct the troops, and in 1887 General Dye, Colonel Chambelle and Major Lee arrived in Seoul.

These three distinguished officers, who arrived in Korea with great zeal and enthusiasm, proposed to begin by training 200 non-commissioned officers, carefully chosen from the best of the existing Korean forces – who could in turn become instructors of individual units - and to found a school of sixty pupils of noble family, which would provide the officers of the future. But they had reckoned without Korean inertia and foreign interference. Their position, poorly defined from the start, became more and more difficult due to the sullen hostility and perennial opposition they encountered from all sides, so the results obtained were not great. It must however be acknowledged that among the current top brass of the Korean army, the only ones who are really worth their salt are precisely those who come from General Dye's school. One I particularly like to remember is General Yi Hak Hiun, the Emperor's cousin, the organizer of the current Military Academy of Seoul, and one of the most progressive minds in Korea. He is much appreciated by the capital's western society, being above all a perfect gentleman with distinctly European manners and none of the affectations that make most of the Europeanized Easterners so ridiculous.

When the independence of Korea was proclaimed, and Seoul found itself at the mercy of the Japanese, Japanese instructors were naturally called upon to replace the American officers. Practical people, the first reform they introduced was to abolish the old uniform and order a new one made of special cloth manufactured in Tokyo. Then they had all the military units in the provinces abolished, on the understanding that they would be staffed with the best of the troops already trained in Seoul. From these troops 2,500 men were selected to form six battalions of four companies each, two of which were sent to the provinces, one to Pyeng-yang and the other to Ciong-giù. It is not possible to keep track of all the changes which the staff of the Korean army subsequently endured, because almost every day new measures of different kinds were taken: the provincial army was reconstituted, the Royal Guard was alternately disbanded and reconstituted three or four times, special corps of engineers, artillery and cavalry were formed one after the other and then incorporated in the main body of the army - in short, real chaos, making it very difficult to follow what was happening.

But even the Japanese instructors did not last long. As soon as the King fled to the Russian Legation, they were dismissed and their place was taken by a mission of Russian officers led by Colonel Potiata, who arrived in Seoul in October of '96. Immediately the existing formations were disbanded and new battalions were formed on the Russian model. But these new instructors received no more help from the Koreans than their predecessors had had; on the contrary, they met with increased hostility among those who could not bear this Russian interference in Korean affairs, and they too had to leave soon.

Since the early months of 1898, the Korean army has been without foreign instructors, and things are now no worse or better than before. The most that can be said is that there is less chopping

and changing of arrangements, and especially of uniforms, which, after all, is beneficial for the state finances.

Recruitment of common soldiers is still officially by compulsory conscription, since all young men fit for military service can be called up unless they are the father of three duly registered children, the eldest of four registered brothers, the only son or nephew of a seventy-year-old father, or the any of the sons of a ninety-year-old father. In practice, however, the only ones who do their military service are those who do not have sufficient means or influence to be exempted; and there is no doubt that a good many soldiers are drawn from the worst scum of the capital.

Apart from the usual arbitrary and illegal appointments - you may find, as I did, that your palace interpreter has become an infantry captain from one day to the next - officers are recruited from among students in the last year of their course at the Military Academy. This school, founded a few years ago and run with loving care by General Yi Hak Hyun, is attended principally by the sons of the nobility; the results that could be obtained, if the Korean government acted, at least in this field, with a seriousness of purpose that would so greatly and immediately benefit the unfortunate nation, would be far from negligible. Instead, as soon as some individual demonstrates any one of the qualities which are so rarely found in the country - loyalty of character, honesty of intention and practical ability - the Korean government unfailingly and immediately removes him and relegates him to some position of secondary importance where he has absolutely no possibility of fulfilling his potential. This is how General Yi Hak Hyun finds himself filling the modest function of director of the Military Academy, and the good students he produces are not employed in any useful way.

So the national army is indeed in a sad state, but the state of the navy is sadder still: it does not exist. It is true that there is that old coaling ship which I mentioned earlier, which the Japanese decided to unload on Korea, and which costs the country 500,000 dollars to maintain - but that is all.

Gone are the days when the small kingdom of Ciu-sen could put to sea as many as 380 warships and defeat the mighty Japanese fleets with them. We have seen how during Hideyoshi's invasion the Korean ships destroyed the enemy fleets and, by becoming masters of the seas, effectively contributed to driving the invading armies out of the peninsula. But nothing remains of that brilliant past. The old ships, large junks armed with colossal catapults that shot long, iron-tipped arrows, their bulwarks protected by a dense array of shields, equipped with oarsmen in large numbers, and warriors who fired arrows and stones, and warlike crews ready to board the enemy's ships - those large ships with prows depicting enormous gaping throats of terrifying dragons ready to swallow the enemy, were hired out to the industrious inhabitants of the coasts, who used them for entirely peaceful fishing expeditions, and have now completely disappeared. It is true that there are still a few admirals on the staff of the Ministry of War, a dozen I believe, and alongside the governor of each province there is still a naval commander; but these admirals and commanders, in a country where family traditions are so religiously preserved, might perhaps be able to recount the nautical adventures of some ancestor of their great-grandparents, and the dangers he faced on the high seas, but they, poor things, have no contact with that treacherous element themselves.

TRADITIONAL EDUCATION

A Korean school of the old type - Chinese characters and the national alphabet - The origin of eur-mun - Korean and its relationship with other languages - The state exams

Strolling through the streets of Seoul, your attention may often be caught by the shrill sound of childish voices coming from some Korean house. If you have the traveller's instinct to observe everything and to want to make sense of everything, you immediately go to the door of the building and enter – and here you are right in the middle of a primary school. In the narrow room, about thirty boys dressed in pink, seated cross-legged on the ground, are rocking swiftly back and forth over a book covered with large Chinese signs, all confusedly shouting out what they are reading. In front of them is a handsome old man dressed in white with a very light three-pointed tiara of black horsehair on his head; he has the same book in front of him and is reading from it with the help of a pair of very large round glasses in tortoiseshell frames. He is the teacher: he is silently smoking a very long pipe and he keeps a fairly long cane at his side, which he uses from time to time to rap a pupil over the head or shoulders if he has remained silent and motionless for some time; as if propelled by a spring, the errant boy will immediately resume his rocking motion and deafening shouts. At other times someone who has incorrectly pronounced one of the signs is given a rap on the shoulders while the teacher clearly repeats the correct pronunciation. This is the Korean system for teaching pupils to read Chinese characters. The book which these boys are holding was written in China eight centuries ago by the sage Uang Ying Lin, and contains the fundamental precepts of Confucian morality as well as the first principles of Chinese metaphysics. It is in general use throughout China and is still very popular in Japan; in Korea, the government added a short chapter on Korean history where Korea is obligingly called “Little China”. The book consists of 1068 words comprising about 500 different characters arranged in 356 rhymed groups of three characters each – hence the Chinese name of *San Tzu Uan* or Classic of the Three Characters. When the boy has thoroughly mastered these 500 characters, he moves on to the *Tsien Tzu Uan* or Classic of the Thousand Characters. Generally speaking, in Korea, where a very simple national phonetic alphabet is used, the traditional teaching of Chinese stops there for middle class boys. Only the sons of the nobility and those who aspire to pursue a learned profession continue the inexhaustible study of Chinese characters, memorizing first the four classics, then the five canonical books, and, if they live long enough, as many other books as possible to increase the number of characters they know – but there are no less than forty-two thousand Chinese characters recorded in the great dictionary of Kang-hi!

As well as learning to read these characters, the boys must naturally learn to write them. For this purpose very large models printed in red on extremely light paper are used. The pupil must first practise covering the red characters of the model exactly with decisive touches of a brush dipped in black ink. When doing so he must remember that every single stroke making up a character – and sometimes there as many as eighteen – must always be started from the same point, as otherwise the character can acquire a different meaning or at least make no sense. The trained eye of a student of Chinese always distinguishes at first sight the precise point from which one of the brush strokes of the character began. When the student has acquired the required skill in this exercise, he can then reproduce the character on another sheet, and ninety-nine times out of a hundred the copy will be absolutely identical to the model. Knowing this, it is easy to understand why the study of Chinese characters takes such a long time, but what is not easy to understand is why the Koreans insist on imposing the straitjacket of Chinese hieroglyphics on their own language, when the language they speak is so different from Chinese, and when they are lucky enough to possess, as already mentioned, their own alphabet, which is undoubtedly one of the most perfect in Asia.

Korean is an agglutinative language and cannot of course benefit from a means of expression created for the needs of a monosyllabic language, that is, one in which there are no grammatical variations at all. In Chinese each character represents an idea and not a sound, as happens in other languages: when, for example, the sign representing a house is coupled with a sign that suggests the idea of height, the idea of a tall house comes to mind, but only the context can make it clear whether the meaning really is a tall house and not, for instance, the height of a house. In the Korean language, where there are numerous grammatical variations and the grammar is complex as in all languages that use prefixes and suffixes, Chinese characters could only be used if supplemented by some signs derived from them but which have acquired a special meaning to meet the particular needs of Korean. This whole system of signs, arbitrarily chosen to express some of the most important inflections and affixes of the Korean language, is known as *Ni-tu* and was invented at the end of the seventh century by a Buddhist monk called Syel Ciong. Its use is based on the same principle which underlies Japanese, that of mixing the signs of *kana* with Chinese writing.

Now, as every single Chinese sign has a special pronunciation in Korean, different from Mandarin as well as from the many other kinds of pronunciation in China, Japan, Annam and so on, and since this sound does not always correspond to that of the Korean word which expresses its meaning, we observe in Korea the very curious fact that most educated Koreans, while they have no difficulty reading or writing any document in this special Sino-Korean language, would understand absolutely nothing if any passage was read to them by a third person who was not smart enough to add all the missing parts of speech on his initiative. This is very easily understood if we remember that Chinese signs do not represent sounds, but ideas.

The honour of inventing the indigenous alphabet, says Scott, is ascribed by national tradition to the fourth king of the current dynasty, and it is held to have been officially promulgated in the year 1447.

Its origin can be traced to the fact that the Government and the people of the peninsula always harboured the ambition to appear to be an independent nation with its own identity, which is strange for a people who for many centuries had always been the vassal or tributary of one or other neighbour. The Korean envoys to the Court of the very powerful Ming emperors had observed that the neighbouring states which maintained relations with China all had their own literature and writing; and the King of Korea, not wanting his nation to appear inferior to the others, and wishing to make use of the knowledge which his envoys had acquired of Mongolian, Burmese, Tibetan and Sanskrit in Nanking, where there was a flourishing government school for interpreters, ordered the composition of the current alphabet, called *eur-mun* - originally composed of twenty-eight signs, now reduced to twenty-five -, and had its adoption proclaimed throughout the realm.

However, the good King had reckoned without the conservative spirit of his people, and while it is undeniable that the indigenous alphabet has rendered great services to the cause of education in the peninsula, it has never succeeded in replacing the Chinese ideograms which the educated classes still use today as their normal script.

There again, the use of *eur-mun*, which until a few years ago was held in very low esteem by the upper classes and educated Koreans, and was confined to women and people of the lowest class, is often a source of ambiguities and misunderstandings. This is due to the existence in Korean of a great many words which sound the same but mean different things, and which are never the same as the Chinese ideograms.

A more rational system would be one which uses a mixed script, as is already the case in Japan, where all words expressing a concrete idea, such as nouns, adjectives, pronouns and roots of verbs, would be represented by Chinese ideograms, while *eur-mun* would be used to express particles

and morphological and lexical variations. Such a system, which would be nothing more than an extension of the one already in use with *Ni-tu*, was introduced in Korea very recently; it is beginning to take hold and has already been adopted by the two daily newspapers that are printed in the capital (*Ce-guk Sin-mun* and *Han-sung Sin-mun*).

The only written language used until now in official reports is Sino-Korean, but very occasionally you come across passages in the *Official Gazette* written in the national alphabet. This fact, which even a few years ago would have caused a huge scandal, is principally due to the Independence Party's propaganda in favour of everything essentially national, and indeed *eur-mun* was officially used for the first time when the sovereign edict proclaiming the independence of the nation was published.

On the question of whether *eur-mun* is derived from this or that existing alphabet, that is, from Tibetan, or Sanskrit, or Manchu or perhaps even from Chinese itself, opinions are very divided among Orientalists. I am not going to risk entering the debate by expressing a personal opinion, although derivation from Sanskrit, which is perhaps the theory that enjoys the greatest support today, seems to me the most probable, or at least very likely, as can be seen from the table I have taken from Scott's *Corean Manual*. For my part, I shall do no more than recount the legend that Koreans like to tell about the origin of their alphabet.

This legend has it that when the King issued the order to draw up a national alphabet, one of his courtiers, a very learned gentleman and a reputed man of letters, ran home and locked himself in his room where he spent most of the night in deep meditation on this arduous task. And there, while he was cogitating how best to proceed, his eyes fell on the lattice-work of a window, and the idea flashed through his mind: "Suppose I were to take that as a model?". No sooner said than done: he seized his paintbrush and an hour later he had composed the alphabet. If we remember that the little circles we see now were so many triangles in the past, each of its signs can easily be detected in the traditional lattice-work of Korean windows and doors.

Just as the origin of this alphabet is still debated, even though it is of relatively recent date, so too the origin of the language itself is much discussed, and the question whether it belongs to this or that linguistic family is far from settled.

Even if I had not already mentioned that Korean is an agglutinative language, it would be pointless, in the current state of the public's general knowledge, to insist on the fact that in its structure it has no affinity with Chinese, an error that was very common until a few years ago and which stemmed from the use of Chinese ideograms in the written language. On the other hand, it is undeniable that Korean grammar and Japanese grammar are closely related, although the vocabularies of the two languages are not related at all. The discovery of this fact has given rise to the theory of a common continental origin for the two peoples who currently inhabit the Korean peninsula and the Japanese archipelago. The Japanese, passing from the mainland to their islands, are thought to have adopted the vocabulary of the natives, adapting it to the lexical forms they were familiar with. The same affinity can be observed between Korean, Mongolian and Manchurian, and it seems very likely that the Korean language is of Altaic origin. The subject is hotly debated among Orientalists, especially in the Far East, and scientific journals continually publish the attempts of this or that glottologist to find similarities between Korean and the most disparate Asian languages. However, the method employed to prove these hypotheses, consisting most of the time in comparing words, is often illogical, and can lead to completely false deductions. Anyone who uses such comparisons as his only scientific method to prove the relationship between two languages could end up placing Turkish, Arabic and perhaps even Persian in the same linguistic group, while placing Japanese and Korean in different groups, when in fact the first three, despite having many words in common, belong to three quite distinct linguistic families, and the last two, as we have seen, in all probability share a common

origin. Dr. Edkins, who for several years has supported the theory of common origins for both Asian and European languages, relying heavily on the laws which, he believes, govern the phonetic modification of words in their successive migrations, has published many such comparisons, finding similarities, often quite remote, between the vocabularies of most Far Eastern languages; and Professor Hulbert in his turn highlighted a series of comparisons between Korean and some Dravidian and Polynesian dialects. But, I repeat, the conclusions drawn from such comparisons are so illusory that a joker of goodwill was able to find a series of Korean words which were phonetically very similar to the corresponding English words, and then wonder amusingly whether it could now be taken as proven that Korean belonged to the Anglo-Saxon group.

However that may be, unlike the situation in China, where the study of the national language can be said to absorb so much of the energy of the educated classes that literate is synonymous with learned, and foreigners tire themselves out investigating its inmost essence, in the peninsula the Korean language, if not exactly held in contempt, is at least considered of very secondary importance, and Korean literature is of no help in this branch of study. Rather like the situation in Europe during the Middle Ages, when education was purely scholastic and Latin was judged to be the only language worthy of imparting knowledge, Korean culture is still essentially Chinese. Korean is not taught in schools, where instead long years are spent studying Chinese ideograms and literature. The literature of the peninsula consists largely of works written in Chinese, some of which were acclaimed in the Middle Empire itself. The only books written in the vernacular are popular works: short stories, novels and songs intended for the general public. Sometimes books are written with the Korean text opposite the Chinese, usually ritual works or compendiums of moral texts intended for general distribution.

Before the reforms, attendance at school generally lasted from six to twenty years. Young people aiming at a career in the civil service or in one of the learned professions had to attend two schools. In the most elementary of these, the primary school, which I have already shown you, teaching was limited to a certain number of Chinese characters; the number of characters taught depended on the career which the pupils hoped to pursue. Boys from the common social classes limited themselves to learning the number of ideograms in current use in the profession or trade for which they were destined, while those from the upper classes stayed on until they had memorized all the thousand characters of the *Tsien Tsu Uan*. They then entered a high school, where by studying the classics they enriched their knowledge of ideograms and acquired those notions of Chinese metaphysics, ethics and poetry which would enable them to sit and pass the great state exams held annually in Seoul.

These exams, very similar in essence to those that are still held in China, differed from them in that there was a distinction between the examination entitling successful candidates to a *Mun* or *Mu koa*, a certificate qualifying them for civilian or military employment, and the examination leading to the title of *Gin-sa* or *Seng-uen*.

The first of these exams, known by the name of *cyel-il-koa*, took place five times a year, on the seventh day of the first moon, on the third day of the third moon, on the seventh day of the seventh moon, on the ninth day of the ninth moon and on the day of the eleventh moon when the annual tribute of oranges from the island of Quelpart arrived in the capital, to commemorate the excitement produced in Seoul when the fruit first arrived, several centuries ago. The exam generally consisted of a Chinese poetic essay on a subject determined by the King; of the successful candidates, the one who came top was sure to obtain a post of official in grade six, the next two were provisionally appointed Reporters at the Court of Transmissions, and the others obtained a certificate which, depending on what influence and connections they had among members of the party in power, would enable them sooner or later to obtain any post in public administration.

The other examinations, those for the conferment of academic degrees, took place more rarely and therefore assumed even greater importance. In the autumn of the last year of each cycle (the Chinese sixty-year cycle by which dates are distinguished) and then every three years, four senior officials, known as *Kieng-si-koan*, Metropolitan Examiners, were sent from Seoul to each of the provinces of Ciung-cieng Do, Ciul-la Do, Kyeng-sang Do and Pyeng-an Do, where, in agreement with the governors, they chose candidates for the *sik-nyen-koa*, an exam that was held in Seoul the following spring. In the other provinces the governors alone selected the candidates, and in Seoul the candidates were determined by a competition which was held in the Examination Hall.

These preliminary exams took place over two days, with a day off in between. On the first day candidates competed for the degree of *Cin-sa*, the subject of the exam being the Chinese classics – the four *Sye* and the five *Kyeng*. On the second day they competed for the title of *Seng-uen* with a poetic essay. In the whole peninsula only 700 candidates sitting the preliminary exams could be accepted for each of the two degrees, and after the final exam, which took place in Seoul in the following spring, no more than 100 in each of the two categories received the coveted title.

The exams for ranking posts in the armed forces were similar to the civil exams, except that the subjects were essentially military: archery, on foot and on horseback, handling of the spear, javelin throwing, fencing with sabres and explanation of the seven military treatises.

All these national examinations took place in the Quagga, behind the Royal Palace, and constituted an extraordinary event for which the capital took on a festive and lively air. Thousands of candidates of every class and condition flocked to Seoul from the provinces: young people timidly preparing for the difficult test for the first time, grey-haired old men resigned to try it again for the hundredth time; many came with their family, or with a crowd of friends, or a revered teacher, while others came on their own, after sweating for years, not to draw ideograms and meditate on the classics, but simply to save up enough money to pay for the journey from their dark provincial village to the luminous capital.

No periodic event in the national life of our peoples has ever had the importance that those solemn examinations had for the Koreans. The popular literature of the peninsula contains a wealth of legends, stories and anecdotes which revolve around the exams, relating Kim's schemes to pass the test, or Pak's cunning in overcoming an unexpected difficulty, or the events that prevented Yi from obtaining the degree he was entitled to.

It was customary for successful candidates to undergo a burlesque initiation ceremony which kept friends happy and which they paid for. A kind of tribunal was set up, and the new doctor had to present himself to its members and bow to them; while he was making his bows very contritely, the president of the assembly no less solemnly dissolved a stick of China ink in a stone basin of water. When he judged that he had dissolved enough ink, he dipped a broad brush in it, approached the victim and blackened his whole face; then, jokingly proposing to turn it white again at once, he dusted it with flour while it was still damp, amid general laughter. The game continued until all the friends had done the same thing to the poor doctor, or sometimes played another and worse joke on him. But the new doctor was overjoyed at the honour he had earned and calmly endured these ferocious jokes, which always ended, *more solito*, in a sumptuous feast.

Meanwhile the unlucky student, who had come from afar and failed the test, started for home with a heavy heart, thinking of the new pilgrimage he would have to make in three years time.

MODERN EDUCATION

Abolition of exams - Elementary schools - The High School - Schools of foreign languages – Mission schools

These examinations, deemed unworthy of a nation that was to set out on the rosy path of civilization, were abolished after the reforms of 1895, before they could rationally be replaced by any others, as the nation was neither intellectually nor morally ready to adopt a new culture.

A knowledge of Chinese letters, although it implied a knowledge of the whole of Chinese history and philosophy, from which all the nation's institutions are derived, was not much, but it was still a qualification for advancement in a ranking system based on merit. Even taking into account the abuses generated by the old system, it was still better than the void which exists today.

The abolition of the annual exams was a terrible setback for the study of Chinese letters in the peninsula. The members of the College of Confucius, the last bastion of the old culture, struggle in vain to defend it, sending petitions to the throne imploring the sovereign to restore the former curriculum. The old classics lie abandoned, while the energies of the young are dispersed in a vain effort to master Western science.

The current education system, designed along the lines decreed by the famous Legislative Assembly, comprises Elementary Schools, a High School in Seoul, and various so-called Foreign Language schools, also in Seoul.

At present there are only a few government *elementary schools* in the capital, while in the provinces the old system of private elementary schools still exists. In the private schools, where the small monthly fee charged for each pupil constitutes the teacher's sole income, only basic arithmetic is taught in addition to the usual Chinese characters. In the government schools, at least the Korean language and some notions of history and geography are taught as well as arithmetic.

The *High School*, formerly called the Teacher Training School, is the highest educational institution in the peninsula. It was established in 1897 to train future teachers for the various state schools, and Professor Hulbert, an American who arrived in Korea in 1886 to teach in the existing English language school, was appointed to run it and draft the necessary textbooks. In the spring of 1901 it was renamed and reorganized: a Korean official was appointed to manage the institute, leaving Prof. Hulbert at the head of the teaching staff. As it is organized now, the school has nine teachers: Professor Hulbert himself, a Japanese graduate from the University of Tokyo, and seven Koreans, several of whom, I was assured, are fairly competent in their respective subjects. The courses taught in the school include Arithmetic, Algebra, World History, Geography, Physics, Chemistry, Physiology, Political Economics, Botany, Chinese Classics, Japanese Language and English Language; all subjects are taught in Korean.

Accompanied by Prof. Hulbert, who was my courteous and intelligent guide, I embarked on a series of detailed visits to all the schools in the capital, starting with the High School.

This school, the only one, with the Military Academy, which boasts a so-called European style of architecture, stands on a small hill in the northern part of the city; getting to it, through the usual labyrinth of ruined and muddy alleys, is not really an easy business. We were then towards the middle of March and as the long Chinese New Year holidays had ended only a month before, and Korean students, unlike our own perhaps, are in no great hurry to get back to their books, only about thirty of the fifty or so students regularly enrolled were present. My arrival, equipped as I was with a complete battery of photographic equipment, caused some excitement among all those boys, anxious not to miss the surprise of a photographic session; I think many of them were also grateful to me because they had very little studying to do that day.

After a short stay in the teachers' room, where I had time to admire a modest but adequate set of altogether up-to-date teaching aids, I photographed the director surrounded by all the teachers who were present, before starting a tour of the classrooms to attend the lessons.

In the first classroom I visited Professor Sidehara was teaching his own physics course. He had only recently arrived in Korea, and was giving his lesson - that day it was the pendulum - in Japanese, speaking slowly, while next to him an interpreter gradually translated what he was saying in Korean. This necessarily bilingual method of teaching is naturally not very fast, but the professor did not seem to mind; on the contrary he seemed quite satisfied with the results he obtained.

In another class a Korean teacher explained the Chinese classics and in a third a geography lesson was given using a text in *eur-mun* and modern maps published by the Ministry of Education with the names in Chinese characters and their pronunciation explained in Korean.

Finally, in Prof. Hulbert's class, I attended an algebra lesson; knowing the native language well, he gave the lesson directly in Korean, using European notation for demonstrations on the blackboard. Concerning the

aptitudes of his pupils, Prof. Hulbert declared himself completely satisfied, especially with regard to mathematics. "In my opinion - he once wrote to me - the students are as apt to learn as the students in any country, and in mathematics I find them fully equal to American boys of the same age."

The average age of the students is around eighteen. What immediately amazes the foreigner is that the great majority of them are married, as the hat they wear indicates. In the whole school there are perhaps less than ten bachelors. Even though we know that in Korea marriages are made early, when couples are still almost children, we are so little used to associating the idea of a wife and family responsibilities with attendance at school that our amazement is at least understandable.

The so-called *Schools of Foreign Languages* are quite different in character. There are six of them, and each one is headed by a foreign teacher imposed on the Korean Government by the Legation of the country concerned. The way in which they came into being is typical of the foreign interference to be observed in the internal affairs of that dissolving organism which is the Korean state. It is common knowledge that in the Far East the best known language, the one that is needed for all transactions, both diplomatic and commercial, between Europeans of different nationalities and between them and the native population, in short, the *lingua franca* of those countries, is English. It is therefore understandable that both in China and in Japan there are government English language schools, and the Korean government was wisely advised to set up similar schools in Seoul to train interpreters and officials who could deal directly with foreigners. Thus three government schools were subsequently built in Seoul, headed by British subjects or American citizens. In the eyes of the foreign ministers this measure appeared little less than a violation of the treaties: the French minister wanted a French language school to be opened, the Russian minister a Russian school, and so on. In short, in addition to the three English schools, there are today in Seoul a French, a Russian, a German, a Chinese and a Japanese government school, all of them needless to say staffed with foreign teachers decently paid by Korea, costing the country many thousands of dollars. There is reason enough to have a French school, and a Russian and a Japanese school too: there may be some use for the Korean government itself in having officials who speak these languages. But a German school? Unless you know the local languages, you cannot go to any German colony and be understood by the natives if you do not have a smattering of English: this is true for East Africa, for the Bismarck Archipelago, and for Kiaochow. In Korea itself, if the 42 Germans who are scattered around the peninsula only spoke their own language they would be in real difficulty! Yet who knows what would have happened to poor Korea if it had not immediately complied with this strange request? At the very least, a full-blown naval demonstration! I must point out that in saying this I do not in the least want to discredit the teachers in charge of those schools, least of all the director of the German school, the excellent Prof. Bollhjan, who has made his school a true model of its kind. Indeed it is only right to acknowledge all the efforts these foreigners are making, amidst obstacles of all kinds, and with truly apostolic fervour and generosity of spirit, for the good of education in Korea. But the fact remains that most of these schools were founded for purely political reasons and not from a genuinely disinterested desire to further the cause of education in the peninsula.

The oldest of these schools is the English Language school. It was established in 1883 under the direction of Mr. Halifax, who is today, with the captain of the port of Cemulpo, our compatriot Borioni, one of the peninsula's oldest European residents. The school lasted for a couple of years, but the only fruitful work was done in the eight months leading up to the riots of 1884. Most of the few really good interpreters currently in government service come from that school. In 1886 it was suppressed and a new school was opened under the joint direction of three American subjects, of whom only one remained in Korea, Professor Hulbert, already mentioned. This school was subjected to fierce opposition from various quarters and its results did not meet expectations. In 1894 it too was abolished, and a new one was established in November of the same year under the direction first of Mr. Hutchison, and now of my good friend Professor G. R. Frampton.

Of all the foreign language schools in Seoul, the English school is undoubtedly the most important, being the most useful, having the most pupils, and possessing the best equipment. Much of the credit for this must go to the English community of Seoul, which was willing to provide the necessary school materials, and spares no sacrifice to ensure that the school remains up to its task despite the distressing neglect of the Korean government. In addition to the English language, which is the core subject, pupils are taught the rudiments of mathematics, history, geography and the natural sciences; most of them belong to the middle class and they generally follow the courses attentively enough to profit from them. Five Korean teachers assist Professor Frampton in his work which, with over one hundred and twenty pupils, is no sinecure.

The *French School*, directed by Mr. Martel, was established in 1896, at the request of the French chargé d'affaires. It is certainly one of the best organized and the results obtained are excellent. When it opened there were only 14 pupils; today it has about a hundred pupils, divided into six classes, and a staff of six teachers, the director himself and five Koreans chosen by him. The main purpose of the school is to form a nucleus of good French interpreters and future Korean officials who will foster pro-French feeling in government circles. During my stay in Seoul I asked Mr. Clémencet, inspector of the Korean Post Office, who managed the school for a time in the absence of Mr. Martel, if he could give me some information on the organization of the school itself, and

he was kind enough to send me a succinct but comprehensive monograph. Given that, *mutatis mutandis*, the way the French school is organized and the difficulties complained of are nearly the same as in the other foreign language schools, I am content to reproduce almost word for word the information I was given, which gives a clear idea of the state of one of the few vibrant branches of education in Korea.

The general curriculum of the French School comprises:

1. - Study of the French language, written and oral (reading, writing, dictation, grammatical analysis, composition, French, syntax, conversation, and translation of French texts into Korean and of Sino-Korean texts into French).

2. - Arithmetic (four basic operations, rule of three, and, for level VI only, the metric system, plane and solid geometry, and bookkeeping).

3. - Geography (in level VI).

These courses, taught in French, take place every morning, from 10 to 12.30.

The afternoon is given over to study of the Chinese language, under the guidance of a Korean teacher expressly appointed by the Ministry of Education (2 hours a day) and to gymnastic exercises directed by an officer of the Seoul garrison, also appointed by the Ministry of Education (one hour per day).

The average time needed to train a good pupil varies according to his intelligence and aptitude for study. A pupil of average intelligence can easily go from Grade I to Grade IV in his first school year; one year is necessary to follow the courses in the fourth and fifth Grades, and it is only in the third year that he will be capable of following the lessons given in the sixth. There have been exceptional cases of students who completed the entire course in two years, but in principle you have to count on three or four years.

After completing all six Grades, the students generally find a place in some branch of the civil service, and Mr. Clémencet pointed out to me with some pride that already over forty former pupils were occupying important government posts. In the list he sent me I have found two interpreters with the Imperial Household, one interpreter in the Foreign Ministry, various employees at the Direction of Mines and Railways, and even three Legation secretaries, currently in Petersburg, Paris and Berlin - which shows that Korea does not demand particularly advanced academic qualifications for admission to the diplomatic corps.

A certain number of students in Grade VI have to follow special courses at the *School of Law* annexed to the Ministry of Justice and at the Postal School in the Directorate General of Communications, with a view to training future officials for both the judiciary and the administration of the Postal Service.

The teaching system is essentially practical, but is complicated by the Ministry of Education's failure to supply books for the students. The teachers are obliged to provide the teaching materials they need at their own expense, and Mr. Martel supplies the books the students most need from his own pocket. There is scarcely one French/Sino-Korean dictionary for each class, and no wall maps or atlases at all. In short, the Ministry does no more than supply the school with ink, paper, pens, brushes and pencils; it has also recently abolished the modest allowance of five cents initially allocated to each pupil for his daily lunch.

Two exams are held annually to rank the students in order of merit, one before the big Chinese New Year holidays, around February, and the second in June just before the end of the school year. The school closes in July and reopens in September.

The sum entered in the budget for the maintenance of the French School is about 11,000 Korean dollars, equal to some 18,000 lire, but a part of this sum, needless to say, is lost on the way, forgotten in the pockets of some official.

The French community in Seoul is very proud of this school, and Mr. Clémencet concluded the report he sent me with these words: "It is not without legitimate pride that we may note that Korea is one of the few countries in this part of the world where the French language, and *consequently something of the Latin mentality too*, have succeeded in gaining a footing."

Almost on the same level as the schools described above are the Japanese School, founded in 1891, the Russian School, founded in 1896, the Chinese School, founded in 1897, and the German School, founded in 1898.

The directors of all these schools, aided and encouraged in every way by their compatriots, do everything possible, as I have already said, to ensure that their schools do not become simply an additional burden on the finances of the State, but they often encounter an almost insuperable obstacle in the inertia, bad faith and corruption which prevail in the Korean administration. Faced with such an obstacle every initiative necessarily comes to nothing, all enthusiasm inevitably dies out. Admission to all government schools should be by competition; instead intrigue is the only basis that determines admissions. Assignment to this or that class should be decided in the light of each individual pupil's ability and knowledge; instead it is the Minister of Education who, *motu proprio*, promotes the pupils he favours most, sometimes forcing a school to upgrade students it had already found inadequate at a lower level. While the regulations prescribe five years of attendance at each of these schools in order to obtain the relative diploma, in practice no one stays for more than four years; as soon as a favourable opportunity arises to obtain a position of any kind, students leave school promptly.

The few schools in the capital run by Europeans, which have no connection with the government, would

naturally provide better qualifications; unfortunately, as they are all run by missionaries of the various confessions, they lack that calm environment without which a school cannot fulfil its true purpose. In all of them the main goal which their respective and in many ways excellent teachers strive to achieve is to form good believers, and they are not worried if their charges do not later turn out to be good citizens. Prominent among the religious schools are those run by the French Catholic mission belonging to the *Société des Missions Etrangères de Paris*. They offer an adequate elementary education to over three hundred children in two orphanages and a seminary located at Ryong-san. Except in the seminary, where teaching is in Latin, all lessons are given exclusively in *eur-mun* and Sino-Korean.

The *American Methodist Mission* also maintains a very flourishing college, founded in 1886, which the Emperor honoured by personally bestowing upon it the name of *Pai Cé*, or "Court for the Breeding of Useful Men." Under an agreement with the Korean government the school can take in pupils for a monthly fee of one dollar per pupil, and has to pay one Korean teacher for every fifty pupils. The curriculum, broadly similar to those of the schools already mentioned, is entirely in the hands of the Methodist Mission, as is discipline, and all pupils are obliged to attend religious services. The school has its own printing shop, undoubtedly the best of the two in Seoul, which prints Korean, Chinese and English texts, and a bookbinding workshop, which is also very good.

At this point, the astute reader will certainly have observed that up to now I have only discussed educational institutions for boys and have made no mention of schools for girls: the fact is that there are none. Women in Korea, as I have said before, do not count. Their function in Korean society is purely physiological and no special teaching is needed to regulate it. At least this is what the Korean government, which takes no interest at all at in women's education, seems to think.

For some years now the religious missions have been trying to do something for the female part of the population, but so far, with the exception of the orphanage run by French nuns, where a hundred girls, in addition to learning to read and write *eur-mun*, are trained in women's work, there are very few results to show for their efforts. Many years will have to pass before there is any improvement - not imposed and therefore ephemeral, but real and spontaneous, stemming from a change in general attitudes - in the present distressing state of moral and intellectual prostration afflicting the most unfortunate part of a population which itself enjoys so little good fortune.

THE KOREAN YEAR AND ITS HOLIDAYS

The Korean cycle - The hourly signs and the celestial signs - The Korean calendar - Useful information – Principal festivals of the Korean year - The legend of the Bird Bridge

In Korea years are counted by the Chinese cycle of sixty solar years, each of which has a special name consisting of two characters, the first being one of the ten celestial characters and the second one of the twelve characters which represent the hours. These hourly characters are twelve signs which are of great importance in the whole Chinese and Korean metaphysical system; each one of them is associated with the name of an animal, one of the twelve moons of the year, and one of the hours of the day (the Chinese and the Korean hour is equal to two of ours); there is also an occult relationship between these signs and the elements which make up the universe, and the four cardinal points. The celestial signs, on the other hand, are only associated with the elements, certain colours and the points of the compass. Here, out of curiosity, is the list of these signs and their equivalents:

HOURLY SIGNS

SIGNS	ANIMALS	ELEMENTS	MOONS	HOURS	CARDINAL POINTS
<i>già</i>	rat	water	11 th	23h=1h	North
<i>ciù</i>	ox	earth	12 th	1h=3h	“
<i>in</i>	tiger	wood	1 st	3h=5h	“
<i>myo</i>	hare	wood	2 nd	5h=7h	East
<i>gin</i>	dragon	earth	3 rd	7h=9h	“
<i>sa</i>	snake	fire	4 th	9h=11h	“
<i>o</i>	horse	fire	5 th	11h=13h	South
<i>mi</i>	ram	earth	6 th	13h=15h	“
<i>sin</i>	monkey	metal	7 th	15h=17h	“
<i>yu</i>	cock	metal	8 th	17h=19h	West
<i>syul</i>	dog	earth	9 th	19h=21h	“
<i>hai</i>	pig	water	10 th	21h=23h	“

CELESTIAL SIGNS

SIGNS	ELEMENTS	COLOURS	CARDINAL POINTS
<i>kap</i>	wood	blue	East
<i>cul</i>	wood	“	“
<i>pyeng</i>	fire	red	South
<i>lyeng</i>	fire	“	“
<i>mu</i>	earth	yellow	Centre
<i>keui</i>	earth	“	“
<i>kyeng</i>	metal	white	West
<i>sin</i>	metal	“	“
<i>im</i>	water	black	North
<i>kyu</i>	water	“	“

This method of numbering the years is said to have originated two thousand years and more before Christ. Sixty different calendars were compiled several thousand years ago and they are still in regular use each time the same year of the cycle comes round.

The Chinese year is made up of twelve lunar months, but it is governed by the sun, and a thirteenth month is inserted where appropriate every three years or twice in five years, so that there is never a great difference between the duration of a certain number of Chinese years and the same number of Gregorian years: sixty Chinese years - one complete cycle - are exactly the same as sixty of our years.

The Chinese year, and therefore the Korean year, always begins with the first new moon after the sun has entered the constellation of Aquarius, so it can never start before January 21st or after February 19th. The

extra month is not always inserted in the same position, but is placed, as the imperial astronomers decide, after one or other of the regular months.

All these things are made known to the public through the official calendar, which is printed in Beijing and sent to all the provinces about two months before the beginning of the new year. At one time, Korea also used this calendar, but now it has its own, although it is exactly the same.

This Korean calendar is printed by the Imperial Observatory of Seoul, during the winter solstice, and contains the name of the year of the cycle, the months and days, the seasons of the year and the natural phenomena specific to each. The seasons are 24 in number and denote the periods during which rain, good weather, frost, hurricanes, snow, etc. are to be expected, when insects begin to move, when the corn ripens, and other similar useful information. The hours of sunrise and sunset are also specified, and the period when it is most appropriate to start a particular work. There are favourable days to begin a building, or to repair a house or to redo the roof, while other days are considered especially suitable for celebrating a wedding, or holding a funeral. The same calendar will show you the precise day when it is appropriate for a boy to start his studies, the most suitable days for travelling, and the day when someone will enter your home and bring you good luck. It also includes the dates of birth and death of the members of the imperial family, the date of all the many national holidays and the corresponding days of the European calendar, so you can see that the Korean Official Calendar is a veritable little encyclopaedia which is absolutely essential for anyone who wishes to spend his time on earth in the least bad way possible. It is easy to understand how important it is for everyone and why, in former times, when only the Emperor of China had the right to publish the calendar, the Koreans considered that the annual tribute their envoys took to Beijing was very modest in comparison with the great benefit they received in exchange in the form of a copy of the famous calendar, which was immediately brought to Seoul and circulated in thousands of copies.

The interpretation of the calendar itself should not be thought of as something of little importance either, since it constitutes a true science, which provides a living for a special class of diviners who are thoroughly versed in the art of determining the auspicious and inauspicious days for each of life's activities.

It is a fact that the indications contained in the calendar are not always very clear and a great deal of skill is required to decipher them. Here are a few examples of the predictions for some of the months of 1895-96, as found in the Korean calendar of the year Eul-mi, in the translation reproduced in the *Korean Repository* of February 1895:

First Moon: During this moon the virtue of the sky will be concentrated towards the south, which will thus become an excellent direction in which to conduct one's business. The east wind will cause the thaw, insects will come to life again and the fish of the rivers will leap for joy because they can rub their backs against the floating ice. The bustard will offer the customary sacrifice of a fish to superhuman power. Ducks will appear flying from the north and the grasses and trees will turn green again.

Sixth Moon: Warm winds. The cricket enters the walls. The hawk begins his hunt. Last year's rotten grasses turn into fireflies. The earth is damp and the rain begins.

Tenth Moon: Water freezes, and so does the earth. Pheasants fly across the ocean to become large oysters. Sensible frogs hide. The celestial essence rises and the terrestrial essence descends. All things stop. Winter is upon us.

These are but a few examples of the general predictions made for each month; the most obscure and extraordinary are those the calendar offers you for each day of the year. But the most important information it contains is the exact position of *Ciuk-il in-sin*, the guardian spirit of your body, every day of the month. It is common knowledge that every person is guarded by one of these spirits, who loves to change position every day; however, despite appearing to be a wandering spirit, deep down *Ciuk-il* is a methodical being of regular habits, who always finds himself at the same point on the same day of each month. It is therefore absolutely necessary, especially for doctors and sick people, to know where he is every day, so as not to risk disturbing him, because, if you were to disturb him in the vain hope of healing your ailment, you would only make it worse. The almanac's usefulness is shown to the full in its detailed description of the spirit's movements throughout the month.

We come now to the holidays indicated in the Korean calendar. I will not list them all, because the Koreans, as I have already said, have so many that a complete list would be impossible, or at least very boring. Suffice it to say that, since the publication of the European calendar in conjunction with the Chinese one for official use, they have added fifty-two to all those they already had by introducing Sundays, which did not exist before. Thus, between Chinese holidays and European holidays, Korea would be a true paradise for schoolchildren, if not quite the land of the week of three Thursdays and four Sundays, at least something very like it. For business people it is a different story - these continual and compulsory interruptions of their work certainly cannot be welcome. However, they are welcome to the Koreans, who have a typical innate penchant for doing nothing.

There are special ceremonies and customs, strictly observed by the majority of the population, which correspond to each of the special holidays of the Korean calendar. Here is the list of the main ones:

New Year: Solemn day in which the entire population of the peninsula appears in new, or at least, white clothes. Everyone washes. Even the smallest children are washed for the occasion. Exchange of visits and gifts

between friends and acquaintances. Visit to the tombs of the ancestors and sacrifices before the ancestral tablets. The year must be started with no outstanding accounts, and every Korean, in accordance with the rule, will make every possible effort to settle all his debts by the eve of the new year.

Day of the Hare of the First Moon: On this day women must refrain from doing anything before men and they attach a silk thread to the purse of their husbands and children as a wish for longevity.

Fourteenth day of the First Moon: On this day small straw puppets are made, a coin is tied to them, and they are thrown into the street. This is a good practice to ward off ailments: the spirits who carry them, satisfied with the payment of the coin, are content to attach the ailments to the puppets instead of to people. Farmers place stones around trees to be sure of a good harvest.

Fifteenth day of the First Moon: Great folk festival called *Taiporam nal*. In the evening the crowd waits for the moon to rise, the first full moon of the year, amid great demonstrations of joy. The customary sacrifices are performed on the tombs and in front of the tablets. During the night all the men go for a walk on the main bridges of the city, and in Seoul in particular on the bridge located near Ciong-no at the end of Great South Gate Street: this will protect them from rheumatism throughout the year. Women observe the same rule the next day.

Eighth day of the Fourth Moon: The birth of Buddha. In front of the houses as many little lanterns are lit as there are children in the house. Decorations using houseleeks are concocted in the streets and large paper fish are hung on the roofs with the aid of long poles. The *mutang* have a great deal to do chasing evil spirits out of all the houses.

Fifth day of the Fifth Moon: The swing festival: on this day everyone swings. This is to commemorate the legend of a young Chinese princess, who lived thousands and thousands of years ago, and who fell in love with a young man who lived outside the palace and whom she could not see from within the precincts of the Forbidden City; but he solved the problem by placing a swing near the boundary wall and swinging on it so that he had a chance of seeing the object of his dreams beyond the wall. Papyrus leaves are hung outside the doors of the houses: they keep evil spirits away.

Fifteenth day of the Sixth Moon: Eve of the midpoint of the year. Offerings of melons are sent to the Emperor. Everyone anoints their head with oil.

Seventh day of the Seventh Moon: On this day all the magpies fly up into the sky and form the famous *Bird Bridge*, which lovers of long ago, dwelling in two different stars, one in the west and one in the east of the sky, will use to cross the Silver River (the Milky Way), and be reunited for a moment.

So the legend runs or, at least, one of the legends, because there are many versions of this sorrowful story in Korea as in China. In ancient times there lived in different parts of the sky two beautiful stars, the Weaver (*Vega*) and the Shepherd (*Aquila*). The first of these was the daughter of the Sun, the King of Heaven, and she was a good daughter, very shy and hardworking, who spent the whole day in silence at her spinning wheel, never leaving it for any reason. She never joined the other stars of her age for some happy and carefree excursion through the beautiful blue fields of the empyrean, or for a poetic walk on the beautiful Silver River, where so many lovesick stars went to sigh away the beautiful nights of summertime. Even the games of old Saturn who spent his time jumping through a ring left her indifferent, although they made all the little imps in the sky, who never tired of making fun of him, double up with laughter. Her friends would come in vain to announce the arrival of some funny planet with four or five satellites which had been trained to dance to the sound of an old bagpipe, or the extraordinary passage of a comet, an event that usually attracted the cream of celestial society; nothing distracted her. The beautiful Weaver, her eyes fixed on her work, slowly followed the comings and goings of her shuttle and paid no attention to anything else.

The old Sun, who was sensible and good-natured, and loved to be surrounded at all times by cheerful people with merry faces, did not like his daughter's attitude. After pondering all possible ways of getting his little star to smile, he thought that the only thing left for him to do was to give her a husband. In fact, a few days before he had noticed on the banks of the Silver River a young shepherd who looked like a good son. The young man happened to be the son of an old friend of his with whom in former times he had done all sorts of madcap things - the old constellations had witnessed everything they had got up to as young planets and knew all about them - and so, in no time, the marriage was arranged. And that was when the miracle happened. No sooner had her husband taken the little star home than she underwent a radical change which no one expected. The former hard worker became the laziest of the lazy, the good little star who never said a word suddenly turned out to be a chatterbox who could have out-gossiped a hundred gossipy wives from the lunar and the sub-lunar worlds put together. Those innocent amusements which at one time she would willingly do without were now no longer enough for her: there was no eclipse she did not want to watch, no northern or southern lights she did not want to be a part of, followed everywhere by a long crowd of admiring asteroids. In short, for the whole sky her behaviour was a real scandal and in all the orbits there was talk of nothing else. The Sun, who had been worried before, now had reason to be doubly worried; like the good father-in-law he was, he could not help but hold his son-in-law responsible for all these goings-on, as in-laws usually do. So he decided that the only way to get his daughter back

on the right track was to separate the young couple. The spouses protested in vain that they loved each other dearly, that they would never be able to live without one another, that they would immediately die of heartbreak, and other similar silly things that are usually said in such circumstances. The old man was adamant and since, besides being a father-in-law he was also king and therefore had unlimited powers over everything, he sent one to the west and the other to the east of the Silver River, strictly forbidding them to move. The poor Weaver returned to her work, but she wept so much and yearned so often that the old man truly feared that she would die at any moment. Such a thought moved him, but not wanting to go back on the decision he had taken, he agreed to let the two unhappy lovers meet once a year, on the seventh day of the seventh moon. This concession raised the couple's spirits somewhat and from that moment they lived only for the promised day.

When at last the day came, they set out to meet each other but had to stop when they reached the banks of the Silver River, for there was no bridge to cross it. Then the two lovers wept, they wept for a long time at their misfortune and so abundant was their weeping that the whole earth was flooded.

This sudden cataclysm caused a great sensation in the kingdoms of the earth and the sea. Immediately all living creatures gathered together in an imposing assembly and at once appointed a committee to make a detailed inquiry into the causes of the whole upheaval and propose the measures to be adopted for the future. Now, the work of the committee, in which all classes of animals were represented, would have been very difficult, since the event was completely beyond their sphere of action, if a drunken meteor, trying to cling to a ray of the moon to keep himself upright in the terrifying deluge that had caught him unawares, had not tumbled to earth and with his sensational revelations explained everything that had happened recently in the kingdom of heaven. The committee was urgently convened, and a young snail's proposal for an energetic measure to be taken immediately met with general approval. Disagreements arose when it came to deciding what sort of measure was needed and how to put it into effect. After many interminable talks and discussions, it was decided that the best way forward was to make sure that the two lovers could meet, and thus avoid a new flood caused by new tears. But how? New proposals, new speeches and new discussions followed, which might not have come to an end, if the magpies, those good and kind-hearted creatures, had not offered to solve the problem in a very ingenious way.

So it was that, when the seventh day of the seventh moon came round again, all the magpies of the earth soared up into the sky and on reaching the banks of the Silver River, they clung tightly to each other and formed a bridge over which the two lovers could pass and meet in the middle, where they fell into each other's arms. That day the lightest of rains, light as dew, fell on the earth: they were the tears of joy shed by the two newlyweds reunited once more.

And now every year on the seventh day of the seventh moon all the magpies fly up to the heavens to fulfil the merciful mission that has made them so dear to lovers all over the eastern world. If any magpie does not do so, it is a bad magpie, and children throw stones at it.

According to the Koreans, it should never rain on this day, although it falls in the rainy season. But if it does rain, they have their explanation ready: in the morning, they are the tears of joy that the two lovers shed at the thought of being able to hug each other again soon; in the evening, they are the tears caused by the pain of separation. There can be no doubt about this.

Sixteenth day of the Seventh Moon: The founding of the present dynasty is celebrated. It is the feast of the educated classes *par excellence*; poems of praise are composed in honour of the emperor and his august ancestors. In the evening, the streets are illuminated by countless lanterns.

Fifteenth day of the Eighth Moon: Visit to the graves, customary sacrifices.

Ninth day of the Ninth Moon: Feast of Chrysanthemums. A special wine distilled from the flowers of this plant is usually drunk. Swallows leave to migrate to the south and travellers who are far from their loved ones go up to the surrounding hills in the hope of seeing their own home.

Seventeenth day of the Ninth Moon: Coronation of the Emperor. Official party.

Thirteenth day of the Twelfth Moon: Celebration of Korean Independence (one party that is winding down!).

In addition to all these festivals there are special ceremonies dedicated to the worship of ancestors and those proper to the Buddhist faith, the winter solstice, the autumn equinox, the birth of the Crown Prince, and still others, not forgetting the fifty-two Sundays, which, of all the reforms attempted in recent times, immediately became the most readily accepted.

GAMES AND PASTIMES

Stone-throwing contests during the First Moon – Tug-of-war - The kite season - The legend of the kite - The nyut - Card games - Dominoes - Chess - uì-ki.

At certain times of the year special entertainments are customary. During the first fifteen days of the First Moon, a period which is generally one continuous holiday when all the offices and schools are closed, stone-throwing contests are all the rage in the capital.

These shows, which attract thousands and thousands of spectators, usually take place in a vast open space near the Great East Gate or on another site outside the West Gate near the Yong-whan-cin road. Two teams of young men armed with wooden sticks, each led by a chief half disguised as an ancient warrior, face each other and challenge the other to a battle. The fight always begins with each team hurling stones at the other. As soon as one of the teams shows signs of giving ground, the other rushes forward with sticks for the final victory, but most of the time the retreat is just a feint: no sooner have they advanced than their opponents start pelting them with stones again, forcing them to retreat in their turn. The show often lasts several hours and of course not infrequently a number of combatants end up badly hurt; there are even some fatalities. The spectators themselves are not always safe, as it happens quite often that a stone wildly thrown by an inexperienced combatant falls in the crowd and injures someone. In this respect, I remember an incident that occurred at one of these stone-throwing shows while I was in Seoul. An American who had come from the mines at Un-san to spend a few days in the capital, was watching one of them – they always attract Europeans, given the lack of distractions on offer in Seoul - when some stones fell near him. Whether he was afraid that he himself was the target of the combatants' hostility, or it was just bravado, or he acted for some other reason, I could not say, but the fact is that that gentleman drew a revolver and began firing shots at the crowd - and one poor wretch was killed. The Koreans numbered several thousand, and no more than half a dozen Europeans were present. The first thought that occurred to everyone was that the angry mob would fall on them and slaughter them. And in truth, if ever such a thing can be justified, it was then. Fortunately, the Koreans showed the common sense which the American had lacked: there were shouts, protests, threats, but nothing more. The American was doubtless locked up in the United States Legation and, after due trial and conviction, sent back to America.

At one time stone-throwing contests used to take place regardless in any or all of the streets of the capital, but the government has now prudently restricted them to the two locations mentioned above.

The origin of this barbaric spectacle goes back to a kind of mock combat which, at the time of the Ko-ryu dynasty, used to be held in the King's Palace for his personal entertainment; however, these fights aroused so much interest that they began to be imitated outside the palace grounds, and soon they were staged throughout the peninsula.

Now they are no longer in vogue except in Seoul. In the provinces their place has been taken by the game the English call tug-of-war and which is very popular with the crews of our warships – the sailors call it the "line game". An equal number of contestants hold on to the two ends of a rope, and each side tries to pull the other towards it. The winner is the side that manages to drag the rope over a certain pre-established mark (the line).

In the big provincial towns the contestants more often than not are people who have been specially chosen to represent the various districts of the town, but in the countryside what usually happens is that one village will challenge another to a tug-of-war. Before the agreed date, great

celebrations take place in both villages, with banquets and speeches, while the champions of each village are chosen. When it is time for the contest to begin, a thick grass rope, about twenty centimetres in diameter, spliced at both ends with thinner strands for the contestants to hold on to, is brought to the pre-arranged site. People of all ages and conditions take part in the contest: you find a wretched coolie in rags next to a dapper *yang-ban* in immaculate silk garments, educated old men next to little urchins, and even women – most unusually for Korea - who rush to lend a hand to uphold the honour of their village. When one of the elders gives the signal, a great shout rises from the crowd, muscles tense and everyone pulls. Sometimes the struggle goes on for over an hour, with no discernible movement of the rope for a long time, so evenly matched are the two sides. When one of the two teams has managed to pull their opponents over the agreed point, the latter admit defeat and are obliged to offer food and drink to the winners in their village, receiving in return a steady stream of wisecracks and sarcastic remarks.

The first and second Moons are the kite season. Hundreds of them can be seen bobbing over the city, so high that they are almost out of sight. The Koreans' kite-flying skills are truly remarkable, surpassed only perhaps by those of the Chinese, who are masters of the art. Everyone takes part in the fun, young and old, and anyone who is flying a kite is always surrounded by a crowd of onlookers who follow every move with great interest. The origin of the kite is also the subject of a legend, or rather legends, in Korea. According to one of these, at the time of the Ko-ryu dynasty, when the island of Quelpart was still a separate kingdom called *Tam-na*, and frightening stories were told about it and the Amazons who ruled it, the king of Ko-ryu decided to wage war on the island kingdom. However, he could find no ship that dared to brave the thousand dangers involved in landing on the rocky coast of that terrible island and bring the declaration of war to it. Faced with this difficulty, someone thought of building a kite, an object hitherto unknown, tying the declaration of war to it, and launching it from the Korean coast to fly over the island of Quelpart. The kite was to render equally valuable services during the war of conquest which was started in this way. The Amazons who governed the island had built a palisade of sharp stakes all around it as a defence against external attacks. The general who had been ordered by the king of Ko-ryu to direct operations was very nearly impaled on one of these stakes. After suffering one setback after another, it eventually occurred to him that a kite might afford the only means of penetrating the island's defences. Choosing a point on the coast where the branches of a tree behind the palisade could be seen overhanging the fence, he launched his kite and manoeuvred it so that its line caught fast in the branches of the tree. Then, very slowly, using his hands and feet, he climbed along the wire until he reached the top of the tree, whence he fell unexpectedly upon a group of enemies, slaughtered them, and conquered the island.

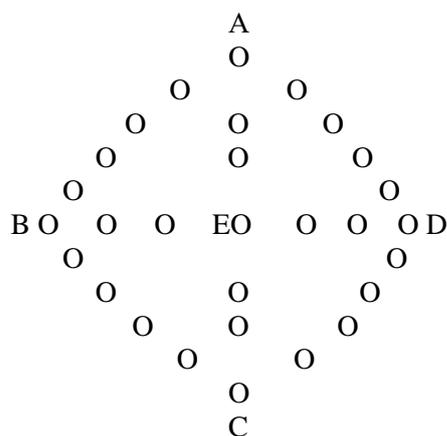
For a long time now, the kite has ceased to render the Koreans such remarkable services, but for all that it is as popular as ever throughout the peninsula. Kite fights, where everyone tries to sever the opponent's kite line with his own, are especially interesting. For this purpose, the lines are sprinkled with glass powder to make them sharp, and the contestants, who may be in opposite parts of the city, run towards each other until the lines of their kites meet, which itself is not a very easy thing to achieve. When the lines meet, the contestants, with sudden jerks, or skilful back and forth moves to evade the blows of their opponent, whom they cannot see and perhaps do not even know, fight a curious duel watched with ever-increasing interest by large crowds who gather in the streets, climb up on the roofs to get a better view and, *nil sub sole novi* – there is nothing new under the sun – place their bets on one or the other contestant to win.

Everyone should be aware that the Korean is a born gambler. A passion for gambling is perhaps the only one no Korean can restrain; it is indulged to such an extent that even the necessities of life are more often played for than bought. The desperately poor coolie who has earned the ten or fifteen cents that would allow him to buy just enough to satisfy his hunger, prefers to go to someone who sells food and drink and gamble all he has with him. Having chosen, for example, a portion of dried fish, or a cup of rice, or a carafe of wine, for a price of, let us say, five cents, he will agree with the vendor the terms of the bet: if he wins, he will only pay one cent, if he loses he will pay ten cents. Among the lower classes this is the most commonly used system of buying and selling. There are

many different ways of playing, but the most usual consists of drawing from a bamboo cylinder one or two bamboo sticks, which have certain special Chinese characters printed on the bottom: the combination of the characters serves to decide who wins.

The game called *nyut*, cards, dominoes, chess and *ui-ki* are also very popular with all classes of society.

The game known as *nyut*, which is so to speak Korea's national game, is very often played throughout the peninsula between the fifteenth day of the last moon and the fifteenth day of the first



moon. Broadly speaking it bears some resemblance to our "goose game". On a sheet of paper twenty small circles are arranged in the shape of a ring, and another nine in two straight lines, one perpendicular, the other horizontal, inside the ring. The four points where these lines meet the circumference of the ring (we will call them A,B,C and D) are of particular importance in the game. Two, three or four players sit around the sheet of paper (our board); they each have from one to four pawns, *mal*, the number being agreed beforehand. The players first place their pawns near the little circle A, then one at a time they throw four small semi-cylindrical wooden sticks (*nyut*) in the air. Depending on how these pieces land, flat side

or semi-cylindrical side uppermost (the flat side is generally white and the rounded side black), the throw is worth a different number of points: one white and three black scores 1, two white and two black scores 2, three white and one black scores 3, four whites scores 4 and four blacks scores 5. These different combinations are called respectively *lo*, *kai*, *kel*, *nyut* and *mo*. After each throw of the *nyut* the player moves one of his pawns forward one small circle if he has scored 1, two circles if he has scored 2, and so on. A player who scores a *nyut* or a *mo* (four whites or four blacks) gets another throw. The aim of the game is to move all one's pawns round the whole circle; the first to do so wins. If a player's pawn lands on a small circle occupied by one of an opponent's pawns, that pawn is taken prisoner and sent back to the start; if however it lands on a little circle occupied by one of his own pawns, both pawns can be moved forward together from then on. A pawn that lands on B has to go back to A via the centre of the ring (E) and start again; likewise a pawn landing on C has to go back to A via E, but if a pawn lands on D it can continue round the ring to A.

A variant of *nyut* is the so-called "game of officials," *cióng-kyeng-to*, which is also widespread in China. One hundred and eight squares are drawn on a piece of paper, each of which bears the title of a Korean official. There are usually two players, who throw a small wooden prism, engraved on each of its sides with a number from one to five, to determine where they must place their pawn. Each square contains a written instruction which, depending on the number obtained from the subsequent throw of the prism, indicates in which square the pawn must be placed next. The winner, of course, is the player who reaches the topmost level of the hierarchy first.

Instead of the titles of officials, the names of the most celebrated localities of the peninsula can be written in the squares. The game is then called *nam-seung-to*, and the board has one hundred and forty four squares.

Korean cards, *tui-ciang*, are small strips of thick oiled paper about twenty centimetres long and one centimetre wide. Forty cards are used for the commonest games, comprising four equal series of ten cards, but sometimes there can be as many as eight series. The cards of each series, numbered from one to ten, are called *il* (1), *i* (2), *san* (3), *ssè* (4), *o* (5), *yuk* (6), *cil* (7), *pal* (8), *ku* (9), and *ciang* "general" (10). This last card is the only one that takes different forms in the various series.

The most common, and also the least interesting, game is the one called *yot-pang-mei*, which can be played by from three to nine players (*hè-ki-pè*). The game is played as follows: the players sit on the ground in a circle, and whoever proposed the game starts by dealing one card to each player. Everyone makes his own bet on this card, which the dealer immediately covers by placing an equivalent sum next to it. He then passes the cards to the nearest player, who shuffles them and hands them back to him, asking him to take two. The dealer looks at them, and if they suit him he keeps them, otherwise he can still take a third. He then takes back all the cards and, starting with any player, deals him a second card; if that player wants one, he too can have a third card. The dealer does the same with all the players. In the end, whoever has less points in his hand than the dealer has to pay, and whoever has more wins money. In this game 10 counts as zero and ten is subtracted from numbers higher than 10. If whoever deals (*mal-ciù*) has the combination *kué-mi* (two identical cards and an ace) he wins all, while if a player has the combination *sun* (three identical cards) he wins the bank even if these three cards are not three aces or three twos, etc.

A more interesting game is *ci-kú teng-i*. A cup is placed in the middle of the players, and whoever is dealer places a bet in it, followed by all the other players who place an equal bet. The dealer then deals five cards to each player. Only those who can discard three of their cards (*ci-kú*), whose value is exactly ten or a multiple of ten (10, 20 or 30), may continue playing. Whoever has the most points with his two remaining cards wins the pool, unless someone has a pair of identical cards (*teng-i*), in which case he is the winner. If two players are tied, neither of them takes the pool, but the next hand is dealt, with all the players except the two just mentioned placing the same bets as before in the cup.

The rules for playing dominoes are the same as those for the *yot-pang-mei* card game, already mentioned. The value of each tile is shown by the number of red or black pips on its face. A variant of the game is *cyo-teng-i*, which is played by four people. Twelve tiles are removed from the stock. Each player is dealt five tiles face down, one of which he then turns up. If this tile is a 4 or an 8, he passes all his tiles to the player on his right, who passes *his* pile to the player on his right, and so on; if it is a 2 or a 10, he does the same, but to the player on his left; if it is a 1 or a 7, the piles are exchanged crosswise; and if it is a 5 or a 9, everyone keeps their own pile. The game then continues more or less as for the *ci-kú teng-i* card game.

The variety of chess, *ciang-ki*, played in Korea is regarded as a nobler game than the others and is especially popular with young middle-class Koreans; it is a variant of Chinese chess. The question of the relationship between Chinese and Western chess is much disputed. Although there are undoubtedly some similarities, there are many pronounced differences - but rather than dwell on a point which it is more prudent to leave aside, I shall restrict myself to a few words on the general set-up of the game. The Korean chessboard, like the Chinese one, has sixty-four squares of the same colour separated by parallel transverse and longitudinal lines, thirty-two at one end of the board and thirty-two at the other, separated by a row of eight squares forming what is known as the "river". The pieces used are the following: *Ciang* (General), corresponding to our King; *Cia* (chariot), corresponding to the castle or rook; *Po* (cannon), which has no equivalent in our chess; *Pyeng* (soldier), corresponding to the pawn; *Sa* (counsellor), corresponding to the Queen; *Sant* (elephant), corresponding to the bishop, and *Ma* (horse - our knight). The initial position of the pieces in each field is as follows: Chariot (a1 and a9), Elephant (a2 and a8), Horse (a3 and a7), Counsellor (a4 and a6), Soldier (d1, d3, d5, d7 and d9), Cannon (c2 and c5), General (b5). They are placed, not as in Western chess in the middle of the squares, but, as can be seen from the illustration, on the intersections of the longitudinal and transverse lines. The pieces are not carved; they are small octagonal wooden discs, the names of which are engraved on their sides in red and green Chinese characters of different shapes.

The aim of the game is the same as in European chess and consists in checkmating (*cent-so*) the General, but the means of achieving this are very different. A player cannot, for example, check from one side of the chessboard to the other, but must cross the river with his own forces and check in

the opponent's field. An exception is made when a player checkmates the opponent's General with his own, which is possible if there is no other piece between the two Generals; but a player taking advantage of this situation is recognizing his own inferiority by doing so.

The *General* and his two *Counsellors* cannot move outside their Headquarters, which are established in the four central squares of each field. However, they can move along the diagonal lines that are drawn inside their Headquarters; as a result, there are only nine positions altogether that they can occupy, and they can only move one step at a time.

The *Chariots* have the same properties as our castles, but they can also move along the diagonal lines in the Headquarters of both fields.

The *Horses* also move in more or less the same way as our knights, but they must always start by moving one step forward or one step sideways before moving diagonally. They cannot jump over a piece which is in their path. Consequently it is very much easier to defend one's General from being checkmated by the horse.

The *Elephants* move first one step forward, or one step sideways, and then two diagonally. At the beginning of the game the player who wishes can castle the horse with the elephant, either from one or both sides, and in this case it is advisable for the opponent to do the same (see the horse in a8 and the elephant in a7 in the illustration).

Soldiers may move forward as well as sideways one step at a time, but can never move backwards or follow a diagonal line other than one of those marked in the Headquarters.

Cannons are the most unfortunate pieces: they can move like our castles both sideways and straight ahead, but only when there is a third piece which is not itself a cannon acting as a shield between them and the piece they want to take.

Having briefly explained the moves of the various pieces, I must now draw attention to the two fundamental rules of Korean chess, namely that each piece can only move to take another piece and that within the limits of its powers, each piece can move along any of the lines drawn on the chessboard. Thus a *chariot* in a4 can be moved both to the centre of the Headquarters and to the opposite corner c6, as these points are connected by a line drawn on the board; likewise a *cannon* in the same point a4 can, if the centre b5 is occupied, go to c6 and take the piece positioned there. (Anyone looking for more information on the game of chess in Korea can turn to W.H. Wilkinson's article on Korean Chess in the *Korean Repository* of March 1895, which is the source of my brief summary and which also contains an annotated example of a Korean game).

Although superior to the Chinese game, Korean chess clearly does not present the same difficulties as ours, nor the same scope for developing one's own skills. Nonetheless, on the whole it must be said that it does have a certain interest, and it is not as easy to play tactically as it might seem at first. However, unlike what happens in China, in Korea it is rare to see serious, well educated people, with their large spectacles blackened with smoke, or proud *yang-bans* in silk robes, gathered around a chessboard. They consider this game too frivolous; the only one they take seriously, and regard as altogether worthy of being played by their peers, is the noble *ui-ki* or *pa-duk*: the most boring and interminable game I have ever come across.

Ui-ki is played on a chequerboard containing 324 squares, drawn on a kind of sound-box. Inside the box a loose spring produces a faint sound like a distant bell every time a piece is placed on the board. The game is played with about 300 white and black discs made of bone, which are placed one by one on the intersections of the lines on the board, giving a total of 361 possible positions. The two players take turns to place one of the discs on the board, and the game consists in trying to surround as many of the opponent's discs as possible with one's own. Once surrounded, discs are removed and the spaces thus freed become the property of whichever player manages to surround them with his own discs. Once there are no more discs left, the player with the most free spaces to his credit is the winner. Explained like this the game seems very simple, or at least it does not seem to call for a great deal of skill. However, this cannot be the case, since in China, where the game originated, as well as in Japan and Korea, there are *ui-ki* teachers who are held in high regard – lovers

of the game go to them to pass exams and obtain a diploma in one of the nine levels of skill which *ui-ki* enthusiasts can attain. According to Professor Chamberlain, one of the leading authorities on all matters pertaining to the Far East in general and Japan in particular, only one European, to his knowledge, has ever managed to obtain a diploma as an *ui-ki* player. For my part, while I admire that gentleman, I can understand perfectly well why the study of such a superlatively tedious game has failed to tempt anyone else.

Mr. Yang, among other accomplishments, was also an *ui-ki* teacher, or at least he possessed a very high-level diploma, and I will always remember the smile of compassion he spontaneously, unwittingly, bestowed on me, when I innocently asked him to teach me the game. Poor Mr. Yang! He was sure that I was not up to it, but he agreed with good grace. However, we soon had to give up. He was right: *ui-ki* was not my cup of tea.

ARTS, CRAFTS AND TRADES

Korean origin of Japanese art - Causes of artistic decline in Korea - Last remnants of art - Mats, hardware and chests - Korean theory of value - Trade guilds and their privileges - The pu-sang

If you leaf through any book dealing with Japanese art, you will see that every single one of the fine arts for which Japanese artists are so admired today was introduced to those islands and taught by Korean masters. The oldest artistic monuments that you can admire in the Empire of the Rising Sun are of Korean manufacture. In the temple of Horyugi, near Nara, you can see a mural painting which is believed to date back to 607 AD, the oldest painting anywhere in Japan: it is the work of a Korean priest. In Nara itself, the beautiful series of tutelary gods carved in wood that can be admired in the temple of Ni-o is ascribed to a Korean sculptor who flourished in the seventh century of the present era. The most highly prized examples of Japanese porcelain, which is so greatly appreciated, are undoubtedly of Korean origin. Satsuma porcelain is believed to originate from a colony of Korean potters brought to Japan by General Nabeshima in 1498, when the Japanese evacuated the peninsula after Hideyoshi's death. Dr. Allen, it is true, believes that the potters who emigrated with Nabeshima settled in the province of Higen and that the Korean colony of Satsuma, a province where even today there are villages of undoubted Korean origin, was founded there by that Daimyo on another occasion. However that may be, it is beyond dispute that the Japanese were taught this art, like the others, by the Koreans.

All this would suggest that it is still possible to find something in Korea which would at least remind us of the wonders of that glorious past. Instead, unfortunately, there is nothing left any more, or at least very little. The decline of art in Korea is not a recent phenomenon; it goes back to the advent of the current dynasty over five centuries ago.

There were two main causes: first the removal of the capital from Song-do to Seoul, and then the ban on the Buddhist faith.

The most celebrated artists of the peninsula were based in Song-do, the wealthy capital of the kings of Ko-ryu. The renowned porcelain wares of Korea - if you want to admire some fine examples today, you have to visit the *British Museum*, or the *Louvre* or, better still, the *Ueno Hakubutsu Kuan* (Imperial Museum) in Tokyo - were manufactured exclusively in Song-do. When General Yi left that city to settle in Seoul, the citizens of Song-do viewed this very damaging change with disfavour and sided with the partisans of the old regime. Many of them were fiercely persecuted by the new rulers, others sought escape by emigrating to Japan, and none of the established artists followed the new court to Seoul. As a result the production of artistic porcelain, after enjoying periods of great splendour, suddenly ceased. The few examples of these porcelain wares in existence today come for the most part from the families of former Song-do courtiers who brought them with them when they moved to Seoul in the wake of the new king. Others were found in old tombs that Koreans and Japanese hastened to plunder as soon as they saw how much Europeans prized those old broken vases. The pieces in the *Louvre* come for the most part from excavations carried out for the construction of the current French Legation in Seoul, where the palace of one of King Tai-giò's chief ministers once stood.

If the removal of the capital from Song-do to Seoul was a very heavy blow for Korean art, it was the ostracising of the Buddhist cult decreed by the kings of Ciu-sen that dealt the fatal blow.

Buddhist worship, with its ceremonial and decorative sides and its taste for the theatrical, captivating the senses but imprisoning the mind, constituted the most powerful and perhaps the only *raison d'être* of Korean art. While enriching its temples and heightening the splendour of its ceremonies, the Buddhist faith gradually widened its field of action, and art found therein reasons for ever-increasing production, emulation and progress. The achievements of one were the progress of the other. Nor was there anything abnormal in this, since at bottom we see in the history of every people that it is the religious idea which first gives rise to art, and then art takes root, flourishes, evolves, regresses and becomes debased, just as the religious sentiment which gave birth to it progressed, changed, weakened and faded away.

Only after reaching a very advanced state of development was it possible for art to escape the influence of the religion to which it was enslaved, and progress in safety, free from any pre-established bond. And there again this emancipation of art from the religious idea is basically only an indication of an ethical change in the consciousness of the people.

The Buddhist religion was banned, and suddenly there was no longer any demand for those vases, bronzes, paintings and sculptures which represented the entire production of Korean art, and which were produced solely to embellish the temples, shrines and domestic altars dedicated to the worship of the Buddha. Since this phenomenon coincided with the exodus of artists from Korea, no one could find any valid reason to fill the void they left, and the arts quickly declined.

The last remnants of the golden age of Korean art disappeared with the destructive Japanese expedition led by Hideyoshi, and the last remaining families of Korean artists were taken to Japan by the same expedition.

While in Japan the rapid spread of the Buddhist religion and the pomp surrounding the shogunate and the feudal courts of the Daimyo provided a favourable environment for the arts which the Korean masters had introduced and which soon rose to that peak of perfection observed at the beginning of the Meiji era, in Korea the continual internal struggles, the incessant depredations of neighbours and the ostentatious display of an exaggerated poverty designed to dispel its reputation for wealth and so discourage any new enemy conquests, necessarily prevented, not only a revival of those arts that have now disappeared, but even the simple spontaneous manifestation of any attempt at artistic creation.

This lack of artistic production is what first strikes the visitor to Korea, especially if he has come from Japan and is still dazzled by the splendours of Nikko and Kyoto and the delightful lines of the thousand *kakimono*, *inro*, *netsuké*, embroidered fabrics, vases, screens and armour, which day after day he found impossible to resist in that blessed land - his first impression of Korea can only be disastrous. In the whole of Seoul you will not find a single shop where some object attracts your attention by its original shape or graceful lines, and if you are a tourist pressed for time you will leave the Korean capital without finding anything even slightly rare to take back with you.

However, if you stay for a long time, and are very patient and very persevering, little by little, by dint of walking around and asking, you will end up making the odd little find and acquiring some good examples of those few works of art which, in spite of everything I have said, are still made.

The best of these are without a doubt the rice straw mats from the islands of Kang-wha and Kyo-dong. It is difficult to find anywhere else finer, lighter mats with such harmonious designs than the ones made in the Korean islands. The most beautiful specimens can be admired in the imperial palaces; some of them are very large, over forty or fifty square meters, all of one piece. However, it is difficult to obtain similar mats, because they are made in Kang-wha expressly for the Palace or to be sent as tribute to the Emperor. The ones made in Kyo-dong, on the other hand, are of more modest size and can be found with relative ease.

Regarding these mats, I am reminded of a little story a German merchant told me one day which illustrates the Korean conception of the laws governing the value of things very neatly. This gentleman, admiring the beauty of the mats, thought that they would easily lend themselves to a lucrative export trade since they could usually be bought very cheaply in Korea, but would fetch much higher prices if they were shipped to Europe and sold there. He went to see one of the Kang-wha artisans who he had been told was among the most talented, and after much discussion and the usual endless string of useless words, they agreed on a unit price of, let us say, 3 dollars. When the price had been settled, the German said:

“That’s fine, but if I order a thousand, you won’t want me to pay \$ 3,000, will you?”

“Oh, no, no, that's understandable” replied the other.

“So how much do we agree on for a thousand mats?”

The old Korean thought about it, made all his calculations, and then said:

“Well now, for a thousand mats you must give me 4,000 dollars.”

“What! But we said 3 dollars for one ... and now for a thousand you want 4,000?”

“Oh, yes, but I didn't know that you needed it so much!”

And there was no way he would budge: "I can let you have one," he said, "for three dollars, but if you want a thousand that shows you need it badly, and the deal we struck is too favourable for you, and therefore you must give me more." You can see from this how difficult it must be to do business with the Koreans.

After the mats, wrought iron objects with silver niello-work come next. These objects are only produced in the province of Hoang-hai Do, and even then they are only made to order for the Court or some *yang-ban*. The most usual objects are tea chests with a movable lid, and very large boxes for tobacco, with a puller and secret closure. They are invariably decorated, often very skilfully, with Chinese motifs: the familiar characters meaning *happiness, wealth and offspring* are the most commonly used. Other objects, such as trays, braziers, candlesticks, bits, bolts and padlocks, were once made along the same lines, but now it is very difficult to find any good examples. I had the good fortune, on one of the very first days of my stay in Seoul, to lay my hands on a magnificent candlestick, of exquisite workmanship; later I wanted to get a second one, but I was never able to find one, not even by offering ten times what I paid for the first one.

When the small chests that are sold in Seoul in Cabinet Street, which took its name from them, are added to these objects, the list of current Korean artistic products is complete. There are three main kinds of chests, those made in Seoul, those made in Ciul-la Do, and those that are made in Pyeng-an Do. Generally speaking, Seoul chests are the least beautiful: they are either large and massive in natural wood with brass ornaments, or smaller, very roughly lacquered in red and similarly decorated with brass fittings. The chests made in Ciul-la Do are of better quality, with very ordinary black lacquer and mother-of-pearl incrustations; but the most highly prized of all, the only ones that have

some genuine artistic merit, are the ones made in Pyeng-an Do. Very simple in shape, made of natural dark-coloured wood, decorated only with numerous wrought iron studs, of very detailed and careful design, they recall in some way our old Florentine and Sienese chests of the fourteenth century, and they have the same elegant severity of line. They are relatively inexpensive, and of all the objects mentioned they are the only ones which are manufactured for general use by ordinary people, and can therefore be found without difficulty in the shops.

To find the mats, the iron and silver boxes and those very rare screens and paintings that turn up from time to time in the capital, you have to look in some of the narrow second-hand shops in the northern districts of the city, where they end up, after passing through one of the hundred and more pawnshops in Seoul, the last remnants of the former wealth of some unfortunate impoverished family. But if you really want to find something good you have to make very frequent visits to those filthy *bric-a-brac* shops, where you find a worn shoe, left by some hungry peasant for a few *cents*, next to a tea box with very fine niello work, old bottomless hats next to the remains of a tea pot with no handle or lid, spectacles with no lenses, old buttons, jade ornaments, silk robes and cotton rags, used pipe stoves and antiquated magistrate's belts, books with torn pages and brushes with no hairs, tattered mats, old coins, chipped porcelain, broken glass and bronze chandeliers, everything in short that human art can produce, in all genres, of all periods, for all classes, in all states of preservation, all mixed up in the most horrible and dusty confusion. You have to visit these shops often, because their wares are constantly renewed; as soon as you have been sold some object a buyer materializes at once, and the object you saw today will very probably no longer be there tomorrow.

There exists a category of second-hand dealers who only sell to the Europeans living in Seoul. They personally go in search of what they believe would be of most interest to Western amateurs and then come to your house to proffer their wares. They usually turn up around lunchtime – which is also one way of spending that midday hour in less depressing and solitary fashion. They very solemnly unwrap their bundles, take out the few things they have managed to find, and carefully study your face to see what impression they have made, because your expression is the only guide they have to decide how much to charge – apart, that is, from one other: with the same impression the price will be higher or lower depending on the position you occupy. This is another rule of Korean trade: the higher your social position, the more you must pay. A friend of mine who had been living in Seoul as Consul General for several years, one fine day, due to the departure of his minister, found himself occupying the position of Chargé d'affaires: his standard of living did not change in the slightest, he did not increase the purchases he habitually made by one iota, yet automatically, at the end of the

month, and for all the months that he continued to hold that office, his expenses came to exactly twice as much as he was previously accustomed to. When the minister returned, his expenses automatically decreased and returned to the normal figure.

The five or six individuals who buy up these artefacts in Seoul – items which are often of curiosity, rather than artistic, value and which in fact go by the collective name of curios in the Far East – are, like all the other merchants in the capital, members of a special corporation that has its recognized head, its rights and its privileges.

These craft guilds are one of the most prominent features of Korean life. There exists a guild for every major item which is bought and sold locally, and no one has the right to sell that particular item if he is not a member of the corporation itself. Thus in Seoul there are the guilds of silk, cotton and rice merchants, of sellers of hats, hardware, brassware, mats, furniture and so on, each of which has its own elected leader, *yong-ni*, who settles the rules of the trade and arbitrates disputes between members of the guild. Those who wish to set up in business as sellers of a certain article must begin by contacting the appropriate corporation, paying the agreed entry fee and obtaining a written licence issued by the head of the guild. If he does not do this, he runs the risk of seeing his shop immediately invaded by members of the corporation and all his goods seized. An exception is made for shops selling "miscellaneous goods" where the most common and best-selling items for daily use are found, such as tobacco, matches, bags, hat ornaments, some items of food and drink, etc.; anyone can open such a shop without a licence of any kind. Another exception is provided by the very ancient custom according to which from the 25th day of the last moon to the 5th day of the first, anyone has the right to sell any item, and in this period hundreds of small improvised shops are seen in Ciong-no, where it is often possible to do some good shopping.

The licence fees due to the Government are not paid individually by the various shopkeepers, but by the guilds which always pay the fees for them from the central fund. This fund, to which all members contribute monthly, also helps members in cases of illness, death, funerals, etc.

Among the various guilds of the capital, the guild of itinerant merchants, *pu-sang-hoi*, which covers the whole peninsula, is of special importance because of the influence it has often had on political events in Korea. These *pu-sang* make up for the lack of shops that can be observed in all Korean villages; they follow pre-established itineraries, visiting all the villages on specific days, carrying on their shoulders their entire stock of goods, which include the most disparate items: hats, shoes, vases, brushes, inks, pins, clothes, and so on. But what makes this corporation special is its dependence on the government. In fact, not only this or that particular ministry, but any governmental office, has the right to request the co-operation of the *pu-sang* in case of need. Thus, if any disorder occurs in a distant village, the magistrate will send the *pu-sang* to arrest the guilty; if some person in authority has to leave for somewhere unsafe, the magistrate responsible for public safety will designate the *pu-sang* to escort him, and so on. Right up to the most important events, when the Emperor feels unsafe on his throne, it is always the *pu-sang* who are called in first. The last time this corporation was in the news was in 1897, when it was assembled in Seoul on the occasion of the decree dissolving the *Independence Circle*. Real battles were fought between the members of this political circle and the *pu-sang* on the streets of the capital, until the government, for fear of greater troubles, hastened to send the latter back to the province.

Among themselves, the *pu-sang* are very close-knit and help each other very loyally. So, for example, if one of them has some grudge against a stranger, or has to collect money owed to him, or wants the settlement of a debt postponed, he has only to mention it to one of his fellow members and the matter is settled in no time at all.

When the opposing party sees some twenty sinewy, muscular, taciturn *pu-sang* coming towards him, in the evening, in some isolated spot, making as if to roll up their sleeves as soon as they see him from afar, you can be sure that it will not take a lot of talk to get him to do what they want!

MODERN KOREA

Open ports - Post offices - Telegraphs - Railways, tramways and electric light - Maritime communications - Mines - Imports - Exports - Customs

OPEN PORTS - The first Korean ports to be opened to foreign trade by the treaties were Cemulpo, the capital's natural outlet at the mouth of the Han River on the west coast of the peninsula, Fusan on the south coast and Uonsan (Ghensan) on the east coast.

Two more were added in 1895: Cinnampò, at the mouth of the Ta-tong river, and Mokpò in the province of Ciul-la Do; in 1899 a further three were opened - Kunsan, Song-cin and Massampò - and very recently Yongampo and Vigü.

Of all these ports, only the first three are of relative commercial importance at the present time. However, a brilliant future seems assured for Massampò, for Mokpò, the outlet of the most fertile province of the peninsula, Ciul-la Do, called the garden of Korea, and for Cinnampò, the closest port to the important mining centres of Pyen-an Do.

I have taken the following data from the annual statistics published by the Directorate General of Korean Maritime Customs, as they give a clear idea of the relative importance and development of the various Korean ports open to foreign trade:

Traffico dei porti coreani ⁽¹⁾: Importazione ed esportazione per gli anni 1896-1901-1902.

		1896		1901		1902	
		yen	yen	yen	yen	yen	yen
Cemulpo	Importazione dall'estero	3,517,974		8,063,338		7,020,399	
	Importazione domestica	316,583		1,991,757		2,426,376	
	Esportazione	1,844,173	5,678,730	2,905,956	12,961,051	2,796,598	12,243,373
Cinnampò	Importazione dall'estero	—		1,037,522		1,278,460	
	Importazione domestica	—		34,662		83,805	
	Esportazione	—	—	1,248,925	2,321,109	1,731,171	3,093,436
Kunsan	Importazione dall'estero	—		486,540		382,946	
	Importazione domestica	—		57,122		73,691	
	Esportazione	—	—	731,591	1,275,253	838,253	1,294,890
Mokpò	Importazione dall'estero	—		596,514		418,056	
	Importazione domestica	—		104,926		105,577	
	Esportazione	—	—	1,188,613	1,800,053	1,547,936	2,071,569
Fusan	Importazione dall'estero	1,937,040		2,259,584		2,210,463	
	Importazione domestica	198,673		455,256		443,235	
	Esportazione	3,004,798	5,140,511	3,551,926	6,266,766	3,195,389	5,849,087
Massampò	Importazione dall'estero	—		192,717		211,024	
	Importazione domestica	—		15,173		10,896	
	Esportazione	—	—	130,699	338,589	263,442	485,362
Uonsan	Importazione dall'estero	1,084,616		2,108,163		1,933,987	
	Importazione domestica	289,999		306,909		514,936	
	Esportazione	648,653	2,023,268	1,571,632	3,986,706	1,574,229	4,023,152
Song-cin	Importazione dall'estero	—		148,198		101,450	
	Importazione domestica	—		78,439		94,997	
	Esportazione	—	—	127,469	354,106	109,586	306,033
Totale	Importazione dall'estero	6,539,630		14,802,578		13,556,785	
	Importazione domestica	805,255		3,044,244		3,753,513	
	Esportazione	5,497,624	12,842,509	11,456,811	29,303,633	12,056,604	29,366,902

(1) Il computo così in questa come nelle tavole seguenti è fatto in yen (1 yen = L. ital. 2.56).

Although the white population is mainly concentrated in the two cities of Seoul and Pyeng-yang and not in the open ports, the latter are the only centres of commercial activity and it is there that the headquarters of all the Western commercial houses, which control Korea's foreign trade, are to be found.

The Europeans who are resident in these ports - and allow me for the sake of brevity to include under "Europeans" the numerous American citizens living in Korea - have their own special neighbourhoods free from any interference by local authorities, governed and administered by their own Municipal Councils elected by the residents and subject to consular jurisdiction. In the most important ports, there are often more than one of these special districts: in Cemulpo, the European concession is next to the Chinese one and beyond that is the vast Japanese concession; each of them is perfectly independent of the others and, what is more important, of the Korean authorities. The oldest of the European concessions is the one in Cemulpo, located on the site chosen in 1882 by the American admiral Shufeldt, who signed the first Korean trade treaty. The Japanese concessions of

Uonsan and Fusan are, however, very much older; the Fusan concession, as we saw earlier, has actually been in existence for several centuries.

In Admiral Shufeldt's time, Cemulpo was only a poor fishing village, and it owes its great development exclusively to the Treaties.

Its harbour is very safe, even for big ships, and it can always offer shelter to a numerous fleet, even though a truly extraordinary tide which can be over eight metres high makes much of the port, especially the part closest to the city, unsuitable for large ships.

The number of inhabitants is believed to be around 20,000, in addition to 6,000 Japanese, 600 Chinese and about 30 Europeans.

The most important companies are naturally established in the European concession. Foremost among them are the three houses of *Towsend & Co.* (American), *E. Meyer & Co.* (German) and *Holme Ringer & Co.* (English). The latter also represents the *Hong-Kong & Shanghai Banking Corporation*, one of the soundest credit institutions in the Far East, while *E. Meyer & Co.* represents the *Disconto Gesellschaft of Berlin*, concessionaire of the Korean mines of Tang-ko-kai. The importation of European or American products has hitherto been almost exclusively in the hands of these three companies. Very recently a French company, *Rondon, Plaisant & Cie.*, after initially representing the Shanghai firm *Gaillard Jeune*, began to work on its own account and has also joined the ranks of the import companies.

The main offices of the two companies *The Oriental Consolidated Gold Mine Co. of Corea* and *The Eastern Pioneer Company*, respectively concessionaires of the American and British mines in the province of Pyeng-an, are also in Cemulpo.

Japanese interests in this port are even greater. In addition to an extraordinary number of small traders, artisans, hoteliers and professionals, the Japanese have installed the headquarters of various commercial institutes or concessionaires of first-rate public services in Cemulpo. The leading Japanese company is *Keigio Tetsudo Goshi Kaisha* (Seoul Cemulpo Commandite Railways Cy.), which holds the concession to operate the railway that connects Cemulpo to the capital. *Nippon Dai Ichi Ginko* (Japan's First National Bank), the most important Japanese issuing institution, which issues a special paper currency for Korea, has one of its branches here.

The two most important Japanese shipping companies, *Nippon Yusen Kaisha* and *Osaka Shosen Kaisha*, whose steamships account for almost all of Korea's coastal traffic, also have offices in Cemulpo.

The Chinese colony is made up especially of Shantung farmers who come here for the season and then return to China when the harvest is finished, and of horticulturalists who supply the market with the only vegetables grown there. However, there is no shortage of commercial houses of a certain size, generally branches of companies in Cefu and Shanghai.

POSTAL SERVICES - The organisation of postal services in Korea along modern lines is very recent. In former times there was a courier service and posthorses that travelled throughout the peninsula, but only the Government could use them. Private citizens who had correspondence to be sent within the country had no other means at their disposal than to entrust it to some traveller or peddler who was going to the desired location.

When Japan joined the Universal Postal Union in 1877, it immediately thought of providing a postal service for the correspondence of its numerous subjects who were already established in the neighbouring peninsula, and so Japanese post offices were built in that same year in Cemulpo, Fusan and Ghensan; the one in Seoul was added more recently. These Japanese post offices, like the telegraph offices, are completely independent of the Korean administration, and still exist today.

Later, in 1882, the recently established Korean Maritime Customs Directorate, like what was being done in China at the same time, organized a limited postal service between the open ports of Korea and those in China.

The first attempt to organize a postal service for the provinces as well was not made until 1884. But, as we have seen, it had to be abandoned, following the December revolution which destroyed everything on the very day the new service was due to be inaugurated.

There was no real postal organization until 1895, immediately after the Sino-Japanese war. However, in those early years the Korean postal service only operated within the country's frontiers, since this department of the government had no official relations with other countries. As a result, letters coming from within Korea and addressed to other countries, had to be delivered both to the Japanese post office and to the customs office, which involved the payment of a new postage tax, and equally letters coming from abroad, when they arrived in the peninsula, had to be delivered to the Korean Post Office and the appropriate tax paid before they could be forwarded internally.

Finally in 1897 the Korean government sent two representatives to the Postal Congress in Washington, joined the Universal Postal Union and, to prepare for the advent of this new state of affairs, obtained from France the services of a distinguished official of the French Postal Administration, Mr. Clémencet. He deserves to take all the credit for the current organization which, especially taking into account all the difficulties he had to contend

with and the lack of rapid communications, really is in all respects very commendable. Korea became a full member of the Postal Union on 1 January 1900.

At present, the Korean Post only handles ordinary and registered mail, for both delivery within the country and abroad. However, when I left Seoul, negotiations were well advanced to start other branches of the postal service as soon as possible, such as parcels, money orders, valuables, etc. A serious obstacle to the expansion of the service is the limited revenues of the Postal Administration, which are still far from covering the expenses of what is a very costly operation. However, over a period of just a few years there has been a very significant increase in both the quantity of mail handled by Korea's post offices and the related receipts, as is clear from the following figures:

Anno	Corrispondenze	Incasso doll. cor. (1)	Anno	Corrispondenze	Incasso doll. cor.
1895	192.000	2.200	1899	970.000	12.700
1896	415.000	6.300	1900	1.300.000	20.600
1897	636.000	8.400	1901	1.703.000	27.130
1898	763.000	9.900			

(1) Il dollaro coreano in nickel vale circa L. ital. 1.50.

There are currently 37 main post offices and 320 subsidiary offices throughout the peninsula, as well as 747 letterboxes placed at a convenient distance from each other along the postal routes travelled by the couriers. Only the main offices are run by officials of the Postal Administration, the subsidiary ones being entrusted to the district magistrates or to officials employed by them. The service which these sub-offices can provide is consequently very limited.

There are seven main postal routes serviced by postal couriers, namely:

Seoul-Vigiù-Kang-hai, passing through Songdo, Hai-ciù, Pyeng-yang, Cinnampò and Cien-giù. Total length 1500 *li*, about 750 kilometres. Duration of the journey from Seoul to Vigiù: 12 days; Seoul to Kang-hai: 20 days.

Seoul-Kieng-heung, passing through Uonsan, Ham-heung and Song-cin. Total length: 2000 *li*, about 1000 kilometres. Journey time from Seoul to Kieng-heung: 25 days.

Seoul-Cemulpo: railway line. Length 80 *li*, about 40 kilometres. Journey time: 1 h 45 minutes.

Seoul-Mokpò, passing through Su-uen, Kong-giù, Kun-san, Cion-giù, Nam-yeng and Hoang-giù. Total length: 1300 *li*, about 650 kilometres. Duration of the trip from Seoul to Mokpò: 11 days.

Seoul-Fusan-Massampò, passing through Ciun-giù, San-giù, In-dong and Tai-gu. Total length: 1400 *li*, about 700 kilometres. Journey time from Seoul to Fusan: 11 days.

Seoul-Cieng-giù, passing through An-sieng. Length 290 *li*, about 150 kilometres. Duration of the journey: 2 days.

Seoul-Kang-neung, passing through Ciun-cien. Length 670 *li*, about 335 kilometres. Duration of the journey: 8 days.

All the main post offices are located along these main routes, and a certain number of secondary roads branch off from them, connecting the subsidiary offices with the main ones.

There are about 480 couriers who travel these different routes in the peninsula every day, each carrying a maximum load of 20 kilograms. The postal journey of each courier comprises the round trip from one main post office to another main office, covering an average of 80 *li* per day. A complete postal journey takes about 5 days in almost all the provinces of the peninsula, with the exception of the northern provinces, where it generally takes 8 days.

In addition to these overland routes, the Korean Postal Administration uses, by contractual agreement, some sea lines, namely the two Japanese lines *Nippon Yusen Kaisha* and *Osaka Soshen Kaisha*, and the *Russian Steam Navigation Co.* line (mentioned under *Maritime communications*), as well as some Korean and Japanese coastal shipping lines.

Mr. Clémencet, whose official title is Advisory Inspector of the Imperial Post Office, and who, through constant hard work, has managed to create one of the trickiest services in the space of a few years, is at the head of a large staff numbering no less than 756 people, including 114 postal directors and secretaries, whom he has selected, trained and appointed and who, it must be acknowledged, carry out their duties with great zeal.

When you think what it means, when you are so far from your own country, to have a safe and regular postal service, you can readily understand the popularity and goodwill that Mr. Clémencet enjoys among the European community of Seoul.

Some of the credit must also go to General Min San Ho, Director General of Communications, who is responsible for both the Postal and Telegraph Administrations. An active and intelligent official, he always managed to stay clear of the intrigues of Korean politics, working seriously to equip his country with these two very important instruments of civilization.

TELEGRAPHS - Korea's internal telegraph communications currently include two networks, one owned by the Korean government and one owned by the Japanese government. The Korean network has a total length of 3492 kilometres, and extends across the entire peninsula, connecting the most important centres with Seoul. The Japanese network follows the Seoul-Fusan line and is now the most important, as it is the one which, through the submarine cable that connects Fusan to Japan, ensures that the Korean empire is in telegraphic communication with the rest of the world.

Before the Boxer uprising in northern China, the Korean network terminating at Vigiù was connected with the Chinese telegraph network, and thus there were two ways in which Korea could communicate with the rest of the world. However, this connection, established in 1885 by Uen Ci Kai, the current viceroy of Cili, when he was Imperial Commissioner in Korea, constituted a violation of the Japanese-Korean convention relating to the Fusan submarine cable, and now that the lines in Manchuria have been destroyed by Boxers, Japan categorically refuses to agree to the connection in question being restored.

The aforementioned convention, signed in Seoul in 1883, provides that, for a period of 25 years, the Korean government undertake not to build on its own initiative any submarine or overland telegraph line that could compete with the Japanese line. Therefore, according to the provisions of the convention, Japan's opposition is legitimate, and it should not come as a surprise that that State, which today is very much stronger and more to be feared than it was in 1885, no longer wants to allow today what it was too weak to refuse twenty years earlier. It is therefore most unlikely that Korea will be able to connect its telegraph network with the Manchurian network before 1908 when the convention expires, and even less likely that it will connect it with the Eastern Siberian network, as the Russians repeatedly asked. In the first months of 1902 the Russians, tired of the constant refusals to meet their wishes - they wanted to protect their communications with the Seoul Legation from Japanese interference - believed they could overcome all opposition by force; despite the protests of the local authorities, they proceeded to build a small military telegraph line connecting the Russian station of Novgorodskaya with the Korean town of Kieng-heung, a few kilometres away. The Korean government, however, encouraged by Japan, protested vigorously and, according to reports in the Korean newspapers in Seoul, the line has been destroyed by the local authorities on the orders of the central government.

Meanwhile, Korea's internal lines are being constantly extended, and in 1901 alone over 700 kilometres of line were added by the Korean government. A total of 152,485 telegrams were sent that year, an increase over the previous year of 27,075, while revenues, which totalled 72,443.26 Korean dollars in 1900, rose to 86,830.86 Korean dollars in 1901.

Telegrams can be written both in *eur-mun* and in Chinese characters - for the latter the code of conventional signs already in use by Chinese government departments was adopted - and, of course, in each of the European languages accepted by international telegraph agreements.

The direction of the telegraph service was entrusted to a Danish subject, Mr. Mülhensteth, a former member of the Chinese Telegraph Administration who was seconded to Korea in 1885 at the time of the construction of the Seoul-Vigiù line. This gentleman, who holds the office of Advisory Inspector of the Imperial Telegraphs, has under him 113 Korean officials (directors, engineers, secretaries) and 303 subordinate agents (messengers, linemen, workers and attendants).

A telephone service has very recently been added to the telegraph service. A special telephone line already connects Seoul with Cemulpo, Song-do and Pyeng-yang, and another line connects Pyengyang with Cinnampò.

All government offices located in these cities are now equipped with telephone sets, and some can also be found in private households. However, when I left Seoul, there were no more than ten of these; the photograph of the central switchboard, reproduced here, shows that there are still not many telephones in Korea.

RAILWAYS - The only Korean railways currently open to the public are the *Seoul-Cemulpo* line and the two sections *Fusan - Tai-gu* and *Seoul - Su-uen* of the Seoul-Fusan line, all in the hands of the Japanese.

The concession to build the Seoul-Cemulpo line was requested and obtained in March 1896 by the *American Trading Co.*, a commercial institution with vast interests throughout the Far East. This company started work immediately and carried it on for a couple of months. Then, in January 1899, it ceded its rights to a Japanese syndicate which completed the work and which operates the line today.

In reality, therefore, it can be considered as a Japanese government line, since the amount of 1,702,752 yen paid to the American company was in fact disbursed by the Mikado government, which made an interest-free loan to the Japanese syndicate of 1,800,000 yen which it secured by taking out a mortgage on the railway. The Japanese state guarantees payment of 5% interest to the shareholders, whose total capital would appear, from official figures of dubious reliability, to be 750,000 yen. The proceeds from the operation of the line, after deducting the interest to be paid to the shareholders, should be used for the gradual repayment of the loan.

The following results for the year 1901 are taken from the report published in 1902, the most recent

one I have seen:

INTROITI		SPESE	
Passeggeri (354,623)	Yen 107,579.67	Traffico	Yen 24,212.66
Bagagli	7,942.85	Mantenimento	26,650.87
Merci (tonn. 28,975)	80,452.96	Macchine	37,137.66
Varii (compreso guadagno sul cambio) >	9,418.05	Varie	23,013.32
TOTALE	Yen 205,393.53	TOTALE	Yen 110,014.21

BILANCIO	
Introiti	Yen 205,393.53
Spese	110,014.21
ATTIVITÀ	Yen 95,373.32 pari a circa L. it. oro 238,187.30

It is generally accepted in Korea that the above figures in the revenue section are somewhat exaggerated; however, even assuming they are accurate, after deducting 37,500 yen (representing the 5% interest on 756,000 yen of shares) from the total surplus, an amount of 59,779 yen would remain available to pay back the government loan. If this figure is accepted as an annual average, it would mean that the Japanese government will continue to control the Seoul-Cemulpo railway for about another thirty years.

The construction of the Seoul-Fusan line is also in the hands of the Japanese. Two sections of this line are now open to traffic, and the whole line is expected to be operational by the end of 1905.

The concession to build this line was granted by the Korean government in September 1898 to a Japanese syndicate which took the name of *Keigio Tetsudo Kubashiki Kaisha* (Seoul-Fusan Joint-stock Railways Co.). By 1903 the company had only raised a capital of 50,000 yen representing 5 yen for each of the 100,000 shares of 50 yen issued, while the total cost of the line was estimated at 25 million yen (approximately 63 million Italian gold lire). But here too the necessary funds were provided by the Japanese government, which from the beginning of the company guaranteed 6% interest to the shareholders. Under the terms of the concession agreement, these can only be Japanese or Korean subjects.

The strategic and commercial importance of this line is far greater than that of the Seoul-Cemulpo railway. Whatever the final outcome of the current conflict between Russia and Japan, it already looks destined to be the final section of the great trans-Asian line that will include the Trans-Siberian Railway to Harbin, the Manchurian railway from Harbin to Liao-yang, the line currently under construction between Seoul and Vigiù with its natural extension to Liao-yang, and lastly the Seoul-Fusan line - a stupendous undertaking which will make it possible to travel from Europe to Japan in just over two weeks.

The construction of the Seoul-Vigiù section was granted by the Korean government to a French syndicate in 1897, but as it did not manage to raise the necessary capital and the works had not started within the three-year period provided for in the contract, the concession expired. However, the relevant plans had already been completed by French engineers, and the minister of France in Seoul, Mr Colin de Plancy, managed to persuade the Korean government not to abandon the construction of the line and undertake instead to find the necessary capital and engineers in France. Work on a first section from Seoul to Song-do, a distance of approximately 70 km, was solemnly inaugurated towards the middle of 1902, but was soon interrupted because funds had run out. When I left Korea work had restarted but was proceeding with infinite slowness.

There is no doubt that this line, once completed, will also be richly rewarding, especially on account of its connection with the Fusan line. In the meantime, however, funds are lacking, and these can only be found by borrowing abroad. Obtaining a foreign loan is not very easy for Korea, not because there are no willing lenders, but for the opposite reason - there are too many and they are in competition with each other: England and Japan on the one hand, Russia and France on the other. Neither group wants to allow Korea to borrow elsewhere than from its own financiers. As a result Korea, fearing greater trouble, is content to do without railways. By now this question has also been resolved: the line's French engineers have been fired and Japan has taken over everything.

Moreover, there was much prejudice in the peninsula against this new product of civilization. Two years ago, the entire population had to endure the harmful effects of an exceptionally severe and prolonged drought. People attributed this calamity to various causes, two of which were that the smoke from the locomotives had dried up the sky, and that the cuttings through the mountains had annoyed the spirits who lived there, provoking them to a whole series of reprisals culminating in the famine. In spite of all this, however, the convenience of such a fast means of communication has outweighed the superstitions of the sorcerers, and there is no lack of passengers on the lines currently open to traffic.

The contracts for the Cemulpo and Fusan concessions envisage a possible redemption by the Korean government within 15 years of the lines becoming operational, and stipulate that, if by that time the Korean government has not be able to redeem the loans, which is out of the question, it will only be able to do so after

another ten years, and so on.

In addition to the railways already built and those currently under construction, the Korean network should be completed by a line connecting Mokpò to the Seoul-Fusan railway, another from Seoul to Uonsan and Kiang-heung, and lines connecting Cinnampò and Uonsan with Pyeng-yang on the northern extension of the Seoul-Fusan line.

TRAMWAYS AND ELECTRIC LIGHT – As I have already said, there are many surprises in store for the traveller upon his arrival in Seoul. One of the biggest must be finding an extremely well organized system of electric tramways running through the city's main thoroughfares, and even extending beyond the walls into the suburbs.

If Seoul can boast of being the first city in the Far East to possess such a modern system of transport, it is thanks to the initiative of some American financiers, headed by the house of *Collbran & Bostwick*, well known in that part of the world for other major undertakings of the same kind. After a standard contract was drawn up between these gentlemen and the Korean government, which had undertaken to foster the creation of a Korean company to take over the network once it was up and running, the American financiers behind the *Seoul Electric Company* immediately put in hand the construction of an initial line from the Mulberry Palace to the East Gate, where the central power station is located, and from there to the Queen's Tomb, a total distance of about 5 miles. This section was completed on 30 September 1896. Once this line was completed, it was extended to the Seoul-Cemulpo railway station via the West Gate, but although this new section was also ready by December 1898, the whole line was only inaugurated and started operating on 16 May 1899 because of delays with the machinery that was to arrive from America. By chance this date coincided with a period of great drought and that was all that was needed to immediately convince the inhabitants of the capital that these infernal new machines which travelled on their own through the streets of the city, only obeying the signals of the barbarians who drove them, were the one and only cause of their misfortune. Disturbances ensued, the infuriated population attacked the tramcars and the new service very soon had to be suspended.

Then the rains came, bringing an end to the cause of Korean irritability, and the service was resumed on 10 August; it has not been interrupted since. In December of the same year a new line from Ciong-no to Ryongsan was brought into service.

Meanwhile, the *Seoul Electric Company* itself provided the means to instal an electric lighting system for both public and private purposes, and on 17 October 1901 this new service was inaugurated. For now, public lighting consists of a few arc lamps installed around the imperial palace and at great intervals along the main streets of the capital, but even in this limited form it already represents an enormous improvement on the traditional flickering lantern which, in the streets that do not yet enjoy the privilege of electric lighting, the no less traditional *kishù* swings in front of you, almost blinding you and thereby achieving the opposite of what he is there to do.

The *Seoul Electric Company* then prepared a splendid road from Seoul to Tok-so, about 14 miles in length, along which it was proposed to extend the line which currently stops at the Queen's Tomb; but when I left Seoul no-one had any idea when the necessary works would start.

This company, as I said, had taken on the task of building the tramlines, advancing the necessary capital, and the Korean government should therefore have reimbursed everything at a predetermined time. But, alas, words are one thing and deeds another, especially in Korea, and when the day came to make the repayment, the Korean government ... forgot about it. The company protested, diplomacy intervened, but to no avail. It was therefore decided to auction everything, but it was then the turn of the Korean government to protest: it claimed that, since the whole project had been carried out on its behalf, the *Seoul Electric Company* could not dispose of it without the government's consent, and that if the contractual sum had not yet been paid, it was only because the funds were lacking, but that did not alter the fact that one fine day the funds would be found and then everything would be settled to everyone's satisfaction. But these arguments cut no ice with the company, and the negotiations for the sale of its assets were well advanced in the early months of 1903. Then other events occurred, and when I left Korea public attention was focussed on more important matters, and no-one cared about the trams any more. Besides, the trams continued to run every day and that was all the public wanted.

MARITIME COMMUNICATIONS - Three regular shipping lines connect various ports in Korea with each other and with Chinese and Japanese ports: the *Russian Steam Navigation Company*, *Nippon Yusen Kaisha* and *Osaka Shosen Kaisha*. The first of these runs a monthly service from Shanghai to Vladivostok, via Korean ports, calling at Cemulpo, Fusan and Uonsan. The second operates a fortnightly service from Kobe to alternately Newchwang or Port Arthur, calling at Mogi, Nagasaki, Fusan, Cemulpo and Cefoo; and another service, also fortnightly, from Kobe to Vladivostok, via Bakan, Idzuhara, Fusan and Uonsan. The *Osaka Shosen Kaisha* also runs two fortnightly services, one between Kobe and Cemulpo via Bakan, Idzuhara, Fusan and Mokpò, and another between Kobe and Cinnampò via Bakan, Idzuhara, Fusan and Mokpò.

In addition to these main shipping lines, various other much smaller ones ply the coasts of the peninsula or the navigable sections of the rivers, while small steamers run daily between Fusan and Simonoseki on the Japanese coast opposite.

The following table shows the total tonnage of the vessels which entered the various ports of the peninsula in the three years 1896, 1901 and 1902:

Numero e tonnellaggio delle navi entrate nei porti coreani negli anni 1896-1901-1902.

	1896				1901				1902			
	N.	Tonn.	Totale		N.	Tonn.	Totale		N.	Tonn.	Totale	
			N.	Tonn.			N.	Tonn.			N.	Tonn.
Cemulpo	Piroscafi	213	135,993		465	220,053		533	287,851			
	Vellieri tipo europeo	140	5,870		327	13,739		292	13,410			
	Giunche indigene	336	8,695	689	150,558	244	5,100	1036	236,892	189	4,134	984
Cinnampò	Piroscafi				293	35,826			283	58,626		
	Vellieri tipo europeo				432	11,771			497	11,455		
	Giunche indigene				438	6,653	1073	54,250	358	5,312	1138	75,393
Kunsan	Piroscafi				141	36,163			167	35,775		
	Vellieri tipo europeo				65	1,963			41	1,982		
	Giunche indigene				43	768	252	38,894	28	410	236	37,267
Mokpò	Piroscafi				320	133,494			373	165,116		
	Vellieri tipo europeo				62	4,333			53	3,600		
	Giunche indigene				13	239	395	138,066	19	230	445	168,946
Fusan	Piroscafi	331	237,293		686	312,929			786	379,662		
	Vellieri tipo europeo	19	1,424		347	24,114			343	21,880		
	Giunche indigene	527	16,111	877	254,828	418	6,033	1451	342,176	613	8,619	1742
Massampò	Piroscafi				169	20,223			207	29,749		
	Vellieri tipo europeo				8	287			4	201		
	Giunche indigene				64	646	241	21,256	88	627	269	30,576
Uonsan	Piroscafi	105	89,975		239	112,583			325	151,589		
	Vellieri tipo europeo	45	3,669		59	6,093			79	8,491		
	Giunche indigene	4	130	154	93,774	6	240	334	118,916	7	231	411
Song-cin	Piroscafi				196	32,565			228	52,527		
	Vellieri tipo europeo				2	226			9	858		
	Giunche indigene				2	68	201	32,859			237	53,385
Totale	Piroscafi	649	463,261		2439	902,936			2992	1,160,895		
	Vellieri tipo europeo	294	10,963		1303	62,626			1288	50,976		
	Giunche indigene	867	24,936	1720	499,160	1228	19,747	4972	985,309	1272	19,563	5462

Numero e tonnellaggio delle navi entrate nei porti coreani negli anni 1896-1901-1902 in rapporto alla bandiera

BANDIERA		1896				1901				1902			
		N.		Tonn.		N.		Tonn.		N.		Tonn.	
		N.	Tonn.	N.	Tonn.	N.	Tonn.	N.	Tonn.	N.	Tonn.	N.	Tonn.
Americana	Piroscafi	—	—	—	—	38	7.230	—	—	32	480	—	—
	Velieri tipo europeo	2	158	2	158	42	1.052	80	8.282	59	1.570	91	2.050
Inglese	Piroscafi	13	14.651	—	—	4	3.598	—	—	4	11.998	—	—
	Velieri tipo europeo	—	—	13	14.651	1	1.526	5	5.034	—	—	4	11.998
Cinese	Giunche	56	557	56	557	345	3.330	345	3.330	330	3.531	339	3.531
Francese	Piroscafi	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	Velieri tipo europeo	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1.744	1	1.744
Germanica	Piroscafi	10	9.152	10	9.152	3	2.619	3	2.619	1	1.379	1	1.379
Italiana	Piroscafi	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	2.791	1	2.791
Giapponese	Piroscafi	504	394.444	—	—	1796	746.174	—	—	1904	877.193	—	—
	Velieri tipo europeo	76	6.181	—	—	569	44.932	—	—	590	45.314	—	—
	Giunche	809	24.359	1389	424.984	873	16.084	3238	807.190	926	15.809	3420	938.316
Coreana	Piroscafi	95	21.115	—	—	529	107.733	—	—	845	165.782	—	—
	Velieri tipo europeo	126	4.624	—	—	683	14.102	—	—	634	12.054	—	—
	Giunche	2	20	223	25.759	10	333	—	—	7	223	1486	178.059
Norvegiana	Piroscafi	2	1.082	2	1.082	1	710	1	710	2	50	2	50
Russa	Velieri tipo europeo	25	22.817	—	—	68	34.962	—	—	113	101.222	—	—
	Giunche	—	—	25	22.817	10	954	78	35.916	4	294	117	101.516
Totale	Piroscafi	649	463.261	—	—	2439	902.036	—	—	2902	1.160.895	—	—
	Velieri tipo europeo	294	10.963	—	—	1303	62.626	—	—	1288	60.976	—	—
	Giunche	867	24.936	1720	499.160	1228	19.747	4972	985.309	1272	19.563	5462	1.241.434

When examining the above table, it should be noted that the steamers shown as flying the Korean flag are in reality foreign vessels generally belonging to Japanese shipowners and sailing on their behalf under the Korean flag in order to be able to do business in the Korean ports which are not yet open to foreign trade. Similarly, it should be noted that almost all of the American tonnage is due to a 15-ton boat that sails under special license between Cinnampò and the Cing-cien River on behalf of the American Mining Company.

In 1902, for the first time, a steamship flying the Italian flag, the *Cerea*, owned by Cappucci & Co, cap. Revello, arrived in Fusan in February with a cargo of oil, coming from Philadelphia, where it had been chartered by an American house.

MINES - The mineral wealth of the Korean peninsula, although not yet known exactly, is undoubtedly very considerable, and so far it has been only very partially exploited. In addition to gold, which is the main product of the Korean mines and is already exported in moderate quantities, iron, silver, copper, tin, lead, coal and jade are found in abundance in many places.

Gold mines are generally considered to be the property of the Emperor, and in the past, mining techniques were very primitive, never progressing beyond washing the sands deposited on river beds. From time to time people find the remains of old shafts dug to extract the ore; these shafts were dug by excavating a hole in the rock, and then lighting a fire inside it; as soon as the sides of the hole began to heat up, the fire was removed and water was poured into the hole. In this way the rock disintegrated, deepening the shaft by a few centimetres, after which the operation was repeated again and again. The shaft had to be vertical for this system to work, as otherwise the smoke would have completely asphyxiated the miners. It was therefore impossible to follow the seams along their whole length, and only a very small part of the ore could be extracted.

For several years now the Government has been bringing in European machinery to work some of the imperial mines, but the results are invariably disappointing. This is essentially due to a lack of good, effective management.

The first foreigners to request a gold mining concession were the Russians, early in 1896, but as they did not start work within the agreed time, the concession has now expired.

In May of the same year, an American subject obtained another concession, which he transferred in September 1896 to the *Korean Mining & Development Company* of New Jersey. This company started work at

once in the district of Uonsan, in the province of Pyeng-an Do. In May 1998 the ownership of the mines was again transferred, this time to the *Oriental Consolidated Mining Company* of West Virginia, which currently operates them.

In April 1897, a German financial consortium, headed by the *Disconto Gesellschaft* of Berlin, obtained a new concession. The place chosen was Tang-ko-kai in the Kim-song district of Kang-uen Do province. Work began immediately, and the mine has already had the honour of a visit, in June 1899, by His Imperial Highness Prince Henry.

The British, in their turn, had to overcome enormous difficulties - the Korean government had issued a decree on January 20, 1898, prohibiting the grant of any new mining concessions to foreigners - before they managed to obtain a fourth concession, the following September, for the *Eastern Pioneer Company*. Work was soon started at Eun-sun, in the province of Pyeng-an Do. As the name of the locality was very like Un-san, the site of the American mines, it was changed to *Gwendoline* to avoid confusion.

Finally, in 1901, the French also obtained a concession, which has now expired as work was not started due to lack of capital, and the Japanese obtained another one. So there are at present five mining concessions obtained by foreigners, and of these five, only the American operation is doing well and is very productive. In addition to some 70 Westerners, it employs over 3000 Koreans who are paid at the rate of 20 gold cents (about Italian lire 1.00) each. The German mines, which currently employ 9 Europeans, 7 Japanese, 6 Chinese and 275 Koreans, are still at the stage of research and experimentation, and although there is hope for a better future, for the time being they produce little or nothing.

The English mines yield more than the German mines but far less than the American mines. Very recently, however, new coal- and copper-bearing seams and deposits have been found within the limits of the concession area, so that an upturn in the concessionaire's business can be expected soon.

The provisions generally found in contracts governing mining concessions are the following: the Korean Government authorizes the concessionaire to choose an area of 260 square miles in any province of the empire, and grants the company the right to work any mine within that area for a period of 25 years. Work must begin by a specified time, at most 12 or 24 months after the contract has been signed; in exchange, a fee of 25% of net revenue is payable to the Korean government. The Americans and the British, however, following disputes, modified the initial contracts to allow them to make a one-off payment of as much as 200,000 yen to the Department of the Imperial Household, followed by annual payments of 25,000 yen for as long as the mines continue to operate.

As regards the choice of location, this has been restricted to some extent in the most recent contracts, starting with the contract for the French concession: the concessionaire can no longer choose areas which contain any of the so-called imperial mines - 43 in number - which are those the Koreans consider to be the best. Despite all this, the exploitation of Korea's mineral wealth still offers great scope for Western speculators. If the results obtained so far in most of the mines worked by foreign companies are not really very flattering, this is solely because the various locations were not chosen in a serious way. In most cases, the concessions were selected, without any prior study, by local speculators who chose any area that was reputed to contain a lot of gold, issued shares and having pocketed the corresponding premium, vanished into thin air, leaving the over-credulous shareholders in the lurch. To start a serious and promising enterprise, appropriate studies, geological surveys and soil tests should first be carried out, and only then a concession requested, once a place offering serious guarantees of good returns - there are many of them in Korea - has been identified.

Finally, the imperial mines themselves could be a source of profit for some private entrepreneurs, if the Korean government was able to decide on a more rational and consequently more profitable exploitation of these resources, entrusting their management to European engineers.

The location of the various imperial mines and foreign concessions is indicated in the attached explanatory sketch, which shows that Korea's mineral wealth is not limited to a few particular provinces, but covers the entire peninsula.

The following table shows the amount of gold exported from Korea in recent years, in Mexican dollars.

ANNO	ORO ESPORTATO		TOTALE
	in Cina	in Giappone	
	Dollari	Dollari	
1892	485,791	366,960	852,751
1893	493,651	425,008	918,659
1894	295,385	638,690	934,075
1895	400,223	952,706	1,352,929
1896	587,444	802,968	1,390,412
1897	1,086,543	947,536	2,034,079
1898	1,183,137	1,192,588	2,375,725
1899	883,905	2,049,477	2,933,382
1900	567,670	3,065,380	3,633,050
1901	136,150	4,857,201	4,993,351
1902	59,805	5,004,301	5,064,106

These figures, however, far from representing the whole of Korea's annual gold production, may show only half of it: since gold is subject to the payment of an export tax, it is natural that a not inconsiderable quantity is taken out of the country over its land border where there are no customs posts, and gold is also easily smuggled out by sea.

IMPORTS - The total value of imports rose from a mere 5 million Mexican dollars in 1892 to 10,940,460 dollars in 1900 and 14,696,470 dollars in 1901.

This truly remarkable increase in imports of foreign products, attributable to an over-confident view of the Korean market, unfortunately coincided with an exceptionally poor rice harvest, caused by the great drought of the previous year, and with a sharp depreciation of Korea's nickel currency. Now rice is the only wealth of the great majority of Koreans, and the depreciation of the currency only means for them an increase in the price of foreign products. So while imports of foreign goods have greatly increased, consumption has fallen, leaving importers with large stocks of unsold goods on their hands. As a result, a significant decline in imports is foreseen for the current year and possibly for the following year as well.

Cotton and cotton products top the list of imports in 1901, with a total value of 6,306,687 dollars. Consumption of cotton fabrics and yarns is enormous in Korea, as this is the only material used to make the clothes which all classes wear whatever the season. Cotton and cotton goods are imported from England, Japan and the United States, and in far smaller quantities from China.

The United States and Japan are the leading exporters of raw cotton and yarns, while almost all cotton cloth is imported from Manchester.

The following table lists cotton imports in 1901 by type of product and country of origin, as declared by the Imperial Customs department:

DENOMINAZIONE	Unità	Quantità	Valore (yen)
<i>Shirtings</i> grezzi	Pezze	322,918	1,354,922
Id. giapponesi	id.	19,157	38,362
Id. bianchi	id.	79,157	377,895
Id. giapponesi	id.	79	168
Id. lavorati	id.	14,457	65,379
Id. tinti	id.	158	161
<i>T. Cloths</i>	id.	20,339	45,599
Id. giapponesi	id.	9,459	20,836
Tralicci inglesi ed americani . .	id.	34,970	159,182
Id. giapponesi	id.	919	1,842
Indiane, cretonnes	id.	6,503	23,171
Crociati	id.	1,476	4,522
<i>Turkey red</i> (inglesi)	id.	6,815	18,855
Battiste e mussole	id.	10,274	18,653
Garze	id.	95,460	95,510
Tela (inglese ed americana) . .	id.	38,897	100,856
Id. giapponese	id.	189,554	785,407
Id. cinese	id.	171,235	708,270
Flanelle	id.	19,115	115,626
Id. giapponesi	id.	4,675	20,599
Fazzoletti	Dozzine	17,247	19,467
Asciugamani	id.	2,620	1,485
Filati (inglesi e indiani) . . .	Piculs (¹)	907	41,079
Id. giapponesi	id.	77,165	1,173,364
Articoli vari non precedentemente denominati	—	—	1,089,935
TOTALE			6,306,687

Koreans also import large quantities of raw cotton and wadding; they use wadding for padding winter clothes. In 1901, they imported 3584 *piculs* (1 *picul* = 60,454 kilos) of raw cotton worth 77,222 yen and 5164 *piculs* of wadding worth 143,510 yen.

Imports of woollen articles, although almost three times higher in 1901 than in previous years, continue to remain of very secondary importance, their total value being 162,786 yen.

Imports of silk articles also increased in 1901; 279,790 pieces of silk worth a total of 1,228,221 yen were imported, double the quantity imported in the previous year.

Imports of mineral oils for lighting were also very considerable: 2,463,631 gallons worth 615,598 yen from America, 19,260 gallons worth 5189 yen from Japan, and 997 *piculs* for a value of 21,082 yen from various sources.

In addition to those mentioned above, the main products imported by Korea in 1901 were the following:

Tessuti misti di lana e cotone	yen	16.112
Rame in sbarre (<i>piculs</i> 1591)	>	67.163
Rame in fogli, chiodi e filo di rame (<i>piculs</i> 727)	>	31.227
Ferro in sbarre, filo, fogli e ancore (id. 14.772)	>	80.567
Chiodi (id. 5014)	>	36.107
Ferro vecchio (id. 16.451)	>	56.596
Lamine di ferro galvanizzate (id. 3613)	>	35.199
Acciaio (id. 3811)	>	30.696
Nickel in sbarre (id. 869)	>	101.553
Ferramenta, oggetti in rame, bronzo, acciaio, ferro smaltato, coltelleria, ecc.	yen	191.424
Armi da fuoco e munizioni	>	378.186
Sacchi e corde da imballaggio	>	278.833
Candele (<i>piculs</i> 1817)	>	43.385
Zoccoli e sandali giapponesi (paia 161.563)	>	30.848
Abiti confezionati e mercerie	>	175.521
Carbone e coke (tonn. 8277)	>	61.198
Confetture (<i>piculs</i> 985)	>	11.039
Tinte e colori (aniline) (<i>piculs</i> 2456)	>	135.096
Farine (id. 14.243)	>	76.995
Frutta fresca e secca (<i>piculs</i> 8176)	>	33.132
Cereali e legumi (id. 23.326)	>	62.186
Stuoie (<i>piculs</i> 4465 e pezze 418.697)	>	528.770
Specchi	>	32.624
Macchinari	>	122.897
Vini, liquori, spiriti	>	84.430
Fiammiferi (grosse 562.338)	>	173.849
Medicine	>	94.905
Istrumenti da minatori	>	384.657
Aghi (migliaia 88.233)	>	22.454
Carta (<i>piculs</i> 6763)	>	78.965
Porcellane	>	78.396
Generi alimentari conservati, in scatola ecc.	>	189.635
Materiale ferroviario	>	273.923
Riso (<i>piculs</i> 82.224)	>	400.886
Sale (<i>piculs</i> 216.339)	>	135.954
Cuoio e cinghie di cuoio	>	47.512

All European or American products are imported, as I have already said, exclusively by the three or four firms I have named, which are only subsidiaries of the large Shanghai firms. Some of them also operate retail shops, like American general stores, in Cempulpo and Seoul, the only ones which cater for European residents. In general, however, the retail trade is entirely in the hands of the Japanese and the Chinese.

As for Italian products, there are none at all at present on the Korean market, with the sole exception of chianti from *Cogliati* of Empoli, vermouth from *Martini & Rossi* of Turin, and tinned foods from *Tosi & Rizzoli* of Parma, imported from Shanghai in very small quantities by *Rondon, Plaisant & Co* for the European community.

And yet, if an Italian firm were to set up in Korea it would find enough business, even just selling Italian products. The only difficulty would be getting them known; once they had become familiar, they could not fail to be appreciated and preferred to all the shoddy German goods which flood the Far East, surpassed, for poor

quality and cheapness, only by those crude imitations of European products which are the most marked feature of Japan's young industry.

However, we Italians would need to have more confidence in ourselves and in our strengths, to show more initiative, to make more of an effort. If the products of Italian industry are still little known in the Far East in general, and in Korea in particular, it is not because they are of poor quality, or too expensive, or because there is no Italian shipping line that connects these countries with our ports: no, the fault lies entirely in ourselves, in our complete lack of initiative. It is true that if Italian products could be shipped to Korea by one of our own lines, they could be marketed there on much better terms than at present, as they would not be burdened with the heavy additional freight charges that have to be paid now; but I repeat, even in the present state of affairs, there would still be plenty of scope for profitable ventures.

When, four or five years ago, a person of limited means, new to business, but with bold ideas and great initiative, ventured to open an exclusively Italian food shop in Shanghai, many people smiled and nobody believed that he would make a success of it. Today, his company is one of the leading firms of its kind in Shanghai: it has branches in many cities in the Far East and imports a large quantity of products directly from Italy.

I listed just now the main products currently being imported into Korea. Now, a good number of them could profitably be imported from Italy. There is always a great demand for items needed by western residents. There are relatively few of them today but their numbers are continually increasing, and a company that imported annually and at the right time of year a certain amount of wines, spirits, foodstuffs, furniture, winter and summer clothes, hats, shoes, household linen etc., would be sure to do good business.

There are also plenty of items that could easily be sold to the local population: cheap and brightly coloured blankets and carpets, rugs of very ordinary quality featuring animals, especially tigers, in the centre, alabaster objects, mirrors with very showy gilt frames, trinkets of all sorts, sugared almonds and candied fruits - the Koreans are gluttons for sweetmeats - , syrups and liqueurs, shoes, bicycles, etc., etc. All these things would sell well as long as they were reasonably priced.

In addition to this, it should be remembered that the railways, tramways, telegraph and telephone networks and electric lighting are gradually being extended and will require millions and millions of dollars of railway equipment, rails, sleepers, wires, telegraph and telephone equipment, motors, dynamos, light bulbs, insulators, etc., etc., - enough to ensure hefty profits for more than one enterprising businessman. Now some of these profits could very well end up Italian pockets if, I repeat, our industrialists dared to assert themselves more frankly and our traders showed more initiative.

But who has ever seen an Italian commercial traveller or an Italian company's catalogue or price list in Korea?

EXPORTS - The following table shows the main products exported from Korean ports during the year 1901 and the value of the quantities exported, with the exception of gold which I have already mentioned:

PRODOTTI	Unità	Quantità	Valore (yen)
Fave, piselli	Piculs	851,124	1,890,674
Bêche-de-mer	>	3,356	66,804
Bestiame vivo	Capi	13,611	169,349
Rame	Piculs	2,254	63,160
Ginseng rosso	Catti	18,431	515,955
Ginseng bianco	Piculs	12	1,188
Pelli di bue	>	26,253	650,415
Riso	>	1,384,247	4,187,353
Alghe marine	>	22,707	89,323
Spermaceti e carne di balena .	>	—	223,911
Grano	>	20,909	36,070

The total value of exports was 8,461, 949 yen, compared with 9,439,867 yen in the year 1900 and 4,997,845 yen in 1899.

When examining this table, it will seem odd that, given the poor rice harvest of 1901, exports of rice still amounted to 4,187,343 yen, a relatively high figure almost equal to the value of all exports a few years earlier.

In the first place, it should be noted that the harvest of 1900 was exceptionally good and that most of the rice exported in 1901 was simply the surplus from previous years loaded for export in the first months of the year, when the danger of drought had not yet been foreseen.

However, exports of this essential product were not suspended altogether, even when the dire consequences of a poor harvest began to be foreseeable or to be felt. A few words of clarification to explain this apparent contradiction might not be superfluous.

The export of rice to Korea is entirely in the hands of Japanese traders, who advance small sums of money to farmers in the sowing season, which have to be repaid from the proceeds of the harvest. A ban on the export of rice would therefore mean a financial loss for these traders. Now, after a period of prolonged drought, when there could no longer be doubts about the size of the harvest, the Korean foreign minister informed the representatives of the foreign powers in Seoul, on 24 July 1901, that the government would have to place an embargo on rice and other cereals and that, in compliance with the obligation laid down in the treaties to provide one month's notice, these cereals could no longer be exported as from 26 August. This measure, which showed that the Korean government could also sometimes make wise arrangements to protect its subjects, was highly commended by all those who already anticipated the fatal approach of the famine. However, the Japanese reacted sharply, claiming that Japan needed Korean rice, and, through their representative in Seoul, protested energetically, demanding the immediate withdrawal of the embargo. The Korean government, however, did not give in, and, increasingly worried about the approaching famine, signed a contract with the firm of *Rondon & Co.* of Cempulpo, for the supply of 300,000 sacks of rice from Annam at seven dollars a sack, the government to make an advance payment of 30,000 dollars.

Meanwhile, on 21 July a formidable Japanese naval force arrived in Cempulpo, under the command of Admiral Togo, consisting, no less, of the battleships *Shikishima*, *Asahi*, *Idzumo*, *Itachi*, and *Asama*, and various smaller vessels, one of which had on board the Japanese imperial prince Kwajonomiya. To coincide with this extraordinary show of force, the Japanese minister presented another formal request for the embargo to be lifted.

Faced with this Japanese reaction, the unfortunate Korean government had no choice but to give in: first the embargo on other cereals was suspended in September and then, in the following November, when the whole country was beginning to feel the sad effects of the famine, the embargo on rice was also lifted.

Around the same time there was great joy throughout Japan over the excellent rice harvest, which in 1901 was truly exceptional, totalling 110 million *piculs*, over 13 million *piculs* more than the previous year's harvest, also considered to have been a good one.

In Korea the feared famine came to pass and wreaked havoc in the countryside, where thousands and thousands of people literally starved to death in the harsh winter of 1902, while Japanese speculators made good profits. But let us leave this unpleasant subject and return to our comments on Korea's exports.

As already mentioned, rice is Korea's most important product, grown extensively throughout the peninsula, with the exception of the two provinces of Kang-uen Do and Ham-kieng Do, where it only grows in a few small coastal districts. There are three main species: a) *tap-kok*, the common variety that grows in ordinary rice fields, the staple food of the whole population; b) *ciun-gok*, or upland rice, harder than the previous one, used especially for making flour and the local beer; c) *whagiun-gok*, or mountain rice, which grows on the southern slopes of the mountains. This third variety is smaller and harder than the other two, almost a kind of wild rice, much used to supply army garrisons because it keeps well: while it is difficult to keep lowland rice for more than five years, mountain rice lasts for at least ten years or more.

Exports of beans and peas are second in importance: twenty different varieties are grown in Korea. Their total value was somewhat lower than in the previous year, when it was 2,368,545 yen.

Exports of ox hides, on the other hand, are continually increasing. When considered in conjunction with exports of live cattle, which are also constantly increasing - 3370 head of cattle, worth about 100,000 yen, were exported direct to Vladivostok from Uon-san alone in 1901 - it would seem that, as the secretary of Korean Customs rightly observes in his report, Korea is finally turning its attention to its splendid race of cattle, which, if properly bred, could constitute one of its best resources.

Exports of whale meat and spermaceti, which were almost non-existent before 1896, when they represented no more than 4388 yen, have grown considerably in recent years. Whales are found in large numbers off the east coast of the peninsula. The Korean government has granted fishing licenses in its territorial waters to three companies, one Russian and two Japanese, which pay a tax of around 100 yen for each whale. In 1901 a total of 43 whales were caught, 23 by the Russian company and 19 by the Japanese firms. The biggest whale was 65 feet long.

CUSTOMS - The word "customs" has a very different meaning in the Far East than it has in Europe, and in Italy in particular. When we say "customs officer" we immediately think of someone who, when you cross the frontier, turns all your luggage, so carefully packed, inside out, opens all your boxes, or, if he does not open them, invariably breaks them - in short, the man who periodically spoils what you dreamt would be your happiest

day, the day of your return home.

In the Far East, I mean in China and Korea, when we say "customs officer" we refer to the best of the European residents, the élite of the colonies established in the open ports. The fact is that, entirely thanks to Sir Robert Hart, the now famous Inspector-General of the Chinese Maritime Customs Service, the customs administration of the Celestial Empire, from which Korea's customs service was created, is one of the most wonderful organizations to be found in that part of the world. Although, as its name implies, its principal function, the one for which it was originally created, is to administer the customs service, it has gradually been given many other roles, some of them just as important, so that the work it does today would be done by half a dozen ministries in Italy. The Chinese Customs Service currently includes the following departments: the customs service proper in the open ports, the *likin* or inland customs service, the marine department, the hydrographic and meteorological service, lighthouses and maritime signals, port maintenance and development, the salt monopoly, the postal service, the administration of China's foreign debt, and the statistical service.

To meet the disparate needs of all these very important services and, as it turns out, in the most commendable way, the staff of the administration headed by Sir Robert must all naturally be, as they say, of the first order. The careers offered by the Service are the following:

The *Indoor staff*, or managerial career, which manages the different services and includes four classes of assistants and commissioners; the *Outdoor staff*, or ordinary career, which includes officers responsible for inspections, guards, warehouse workers, postal officers, staff of the port authorities, lighthouse staff, etc.; finally, the *Marine Department*, which includes the commanders and officers of the five cruisers attached to the Customs Service, and the personnel needed for maritime and river services. In addition to these categories there are also special technical corps, such as the *medical corps*, *civil engineers*, *interpreters*, etc.

The Chinese Customs Service employs about 850 foreign staff. Aiming to ensure a fair system of national representation, Sir Robert Hart ruled that the different nationalities should be represented in proportion to the size of the various Powers' general trade with China, but in reality the British are in a majority, followed by Germans, Americans, French, Danes, Norwegians, etc. There are naturally very few Italians, less than fifteen all told, I think, including six, if I am not mistaken, on the Indoor staff. In a country like ours, where so many young people go abroad every year in search of employment, it seems to me that a career in the Chinese Customs Service deserves more attention. Certainly few career paths can lead an alert, serious and zealous young man to gain an excellent position, both socially and financially, as quickly as this one. The difficulty is that very few people in Italy know of its existence, and so I trust I will be forgiven if, with the sole intention of showing our young people an excellent field to work in, I have spent a little time on these Chinese Customs – and, after all, the Korean customs service is in a sense derived from China's, so the digression is not entirely irrelevant. To complete the information given, I should add that applications for a post on the Indoor staff of the Chinese Customs Service must be addressed to its agency in London. Applicants must sit exams, which are very easy, to show that they have a good general education and a clear, if not profound, knowledge of China and its geography, history, legal system and trade. These exams are held in English, which is the official language of the Customs Service. Some knowledge of Chinese can be an advantage, but newly appointed employees will have to spend their first years in the Service tirelessly studying that extremely difficult language, and will have to sit periodic exams to show they are making progress; indeed, they will spend their first year in the Service in Peking doing nothing but learning Chinese. The starting salary is around 300 francs a month, soon rising quickly to much higher levels: commissioners of the various open ports earn several thousand lire a month. Every five years, employees are entitled to one year's leave on full pay.

When, with the signing of the first treaties, it became necessary to organize a customs service in Korea, Li Hung Ciang sent Mr. Mollendorf to the peninsula with a team of twenty assistants, mostly seconded from the Chinese Customs Service. They arrived in Korea in spring 1883, and immediately set about organizing the customs service, on the lines of the Chinese service, but completely independent of it. However, the structure of the organization they devised seems to have corresponded only very imperfectly to practical requirements, since Mr. Mollendorf had to retire. In his place Mr. E. F. Merrill, of the Chinese Customs Service, was sent to Korea, together with several other Chinese Customs officials, to reorganize the Korean customs service. While remaining completely autonomous, the Korean service from then on employed a number of Chinese Customs officials on temporary secondment for its own managerial staff.

This very important service has been headed for over ten years by Mr. MacLeavy Brown, to whom Korea is indebted for its admirable customs service, as good in every respect as China's. His task was not easy, since he was up against the more or less open hostility of those nations which wanted to establish absolute control over the peninsula and which would have seen their position consolidated had they been able to interfere directly in the running of the customs service, which provided the treasury with its biggest source of revenue. There were indeed not a few attempts to oust Mr. MacLeavy Brown and replace him with a Russian or a Japanese subject, as the case may be. It is really very fortunate that all these attempts have so far been thwarted, since international trade has benefited greatly from Mr Brown's wise and impartial administration.

The only three Italians residing in Korea are all employed by the customs service: Mr. Daniele Pegorini, of the Chinese Maritime Customs Service, head of Customs at Fusan; Mr. Borioni, harbour master of the port of Cemulpo; and Mr. Canali, engineer. A small colony, as can be seen, but one which is very honoured and whose members during their stay in the peninsula have earned general esteem and much goodwill for our country.

The following table records Korean customs revenue from 1886 to 1902. It illustrates very clearly the rapid expansion of Korean trade in recent years, with a well-run customs service.

Tavola comparativa delle riscossioni doganali dall'anno 1886 al 1902.

ANNO	Dazi di importazione	Dazi di esportazione	Tasse di tonnello	TOTALE
1886	132.757.12	24.812.11	2.708.75	160.277.96
1887	203.271.68	40.384.52	3.045.12	246.701.32
1888	219.759.81	43.330.62	4.124.55	267.214.98
1889	213.457.49	61.835.23	4.701.04	279.999.75
1890	327.460.11	178.552.14	8.587.90	514.600.15
1891	372.022.07	168.096.36	8.940.26	549.058.69
1892	308.954.15	123.212.24	6.247.05	438.413.42
1893	262.679.28	85.720.22	5,717.16	354.116.66
1894	357.828.34	115.779.33	7.398.64	481.006.31
1895	601.588.06	124.261.22	15.448.20	741.297.48
1896	448.136.16	226.342.45	17.304.75	691.784.36
1897	673.187.90	420.292.09	19.688.75	1.113.168.74
1898	740.421.38	237.732.68	22.295.95	1.000.450.01
1899	654.978.51	227.457.79	20.519.47	902.955.77
1900	688.806.73	384.525.31	23.885.39	1.097.217.43
1901	912.276.73	387.181.63	25.955.75	1.325.414.11
1902	813.620.76	354.969.87	36.175.75	1.204.776.38

APPENDIX
TREATY ON TRADE AND FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN ITALY AND KOREA

TREATY OF SEOUL (1884)

His Majesty the King of Italy and His Majesty the King of Korea, sincerely desiring to establish permanent relations of friendship and trade between their respective States, have resolved to conclude a Treaty for this purpose, and have designated as their respective Plenipotentiaries:

His Majesty the King of Italy: Cavaliere FERDINANDO DE LUCA, Commander of the Order of Saints Maurizio and Lazzaro, Commander of the Order of the Crown of Italy, awarded the first degree, second class, of the Chinese Order of the Two Dragons, etc., etc., his extraordinary envoy and plenipotentiary minister to His Majesty the Emperor of China;

His Majesty the King of Korea: KIM PIONG SI, president of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, dignity of the first rank, president of the Council of State, member of His Majesty's Privy Council and senior guardian of the Crown Prince;

Who, having exchanged their full powers, found in good and due form, have stipulated and concluded the following Agreement:

ART. I

1. There shall be perpetual peace and friendship between His Majesty the King of Italy, his heirs and successors, and His Majesty the King of Korea, his heirs and successors, and between their respective domains and subjects, who shall enjoy full security and protection for their persons and property in the domains of the other contracting party.

2. In the event of disagreements which may arise between one of the High Contracting Parties and a third Power, the other High Contracting Party, if requested, shall exert its good offices to obtain an amicable settlement of the dispute.

ART. II

1. The High Contracting Parties may each appoint a diplomatic representative to reside permanently or temporarily in the capital of the other, and may appoint a Consul General, Consuls or Vice-Consuls, to reside in each of the ports or cities of the other, open to foreign trade; and if they do not consider it necessary to send their own Consul to one of these ports or cities, may entrust the Consul of a friendly Power with the functions of Italian or Korean Consul. The diplomatic and consular representatives of both countries shall freely enjoy the same facilities to communicate personally or in writing with the authorities of the country where they each reside, and all the privileges and immunities that are generally enjoyed by diplomatic or consular officials in other countries.

2. The diplomatic representative and consular officials of each of the High Contracting Parties, and the individuals making up their official staff, shall have the right to travel freely in the domains of the other. The Korean authorities shall provide the said Italian officials travelling in Korea with a passport and any escort that may be deemed necessary for their protection.

3. The consular officials of both countries shall exercise their functions after receiving authorization from the Sovereign and Government of the country in which they each reside; they are not permitted to carry on any trade.

4. In the absence of a Consul or his substitute, Italian subjects in Korea and Korean subjects in Italy, may contact the director of the local Customs, who shall protect their interests in accordance with the regulations in force.

ART. III

1. Jurisdiction over the persons and property of Italian subjects in Korea shall be devolved exclusively to the Italian consular authorities, who shall investigate and judge all complaints brought against Italian subjects by any Italian subject or by any foreign subject or citizen, without any intervention by the Korean authorities.

2. If the Korean authorities or Korean subjects bring charges or lawsuits against an Italian subject in Korea, the dispute shall be heard and settled by the Italian consular authority.

3. If the Italian authorities or Italian subjects in Korea bring an accusation or lodge a complaint against a Korean subject, the dispute shall be heard and settled by the Korean authorities.

4. An Italian subject who commits an offence in Korea shall be judged and punished by the Italian consular authorities according to the laws of Italy.

5. A Korean subject who commits any offence against an Italian subject in Korea shall be judged and punished by the Korean authorities according to the laws of Korea.

6. Any complaint against an Italian subject, which implies a fine or confiscation due to violation of this Treaty or of the regulations that are annexed to it, or of any regulation that may in future be sanctioned by mutual agreement between the High Contracting Parties, shall be brought before the Italian consular authorities for decision, and all fines imposed and property confiscated in such cases shall belong to the Korean Government.

7. Italian goods confiscated by the Korean authorities in an open port shall be sealed by the Korean authorities and the Italian consular authorities, and held by the former until the Italian consular authorities have given their decision. If this decision is in favour of the owner of the goods, these shall be made immediately available to the Consul; but the owner shall have the right to recover them immediately by depositing their value with the Korean authorities, while the decision of the Italian consular authorities is still pending.

8. In all cases, whether criminal or civil, tried in the Italian or Korean courts in Korea, a duly authorized official having the same nationality as the defendant or the plaintiff shall have the right to attend the proceedings and must be treated with all the courtesy due to his position. He may, if he deems it necessary, summon, examine and re-examine witnesses and appeal against the proceedings or the decision.

9. If a Korean subject, accused of breaking the laws of his country, takes refuge in a house occupied by an Italian subject, or on board an Italian merchant vessel, the Italian consular authority, if so requested by the Korean authorities, shall take the necessary measures to have the said person arrested and handed over to the Korean authorities for trial. But without the permission of the appropriate Italian consular authority, no Korean official may enter the home of any Italian subject without the consent of the latter, nor board any Italian vessel without the consent of the captain or whoever is acting for him.

10. If requested by the competent Italian consular authority, the Korean authorities shall arrest and hand over to the said Italian authority any Italian subject accused of a criminal offence and any deserter from Italian warships or merchant ships.

11. It is hereby declared and agreed that the Italian Government shall renounce its right to extra-territorial jurisdiction over Italian subjects in Korea granted by this Treaty when, in the opinion of the said Government, the laws and legal procedure of Korea have been so amended and reformed as to remove the objections that at present exist to placing Italian subjects under Korean jurisdiction, and when Korean magistrates have been granted the same legal roles and the same independent position that Italian judges possess.

ART. IV

1. The ports of Cemulpo (Jenchuan), Wonsan (Gensan) and Pusan (Fusan) or, if the latter port is not approved, another port chosen in the vicinity, together with the city of Yanghwachin, or another place nearby that is deemed suitable, shall be open to Italian trade from the day this treaty enters into force. It is hereby declared that if all the other nations that have or may have treaties with Korea in the future renounce the right to have commercial establishments in the city of Hanyang, the same right shall no longer be claimed for Italian subjects.

2. In the aforementioned ports and cities, Italian subjects shall have the right to rent or buy land or houses and to build dwellings, warehouses and factories in general. They shall have the right to the full exercise of their religion. All arrangements for the choice of the site, the determination of its limits and the layout of the foreign district, and for the sale of the land necessary for this purpose in the various ports and cities in Korea open to foreign trade, shall be made by the Korean authorities in agreement with the competent foreign authorities.

3. These sites shall be purchased from their owners and prepared for foreign occupation by the Korean government, and the expense thus incurred shall be covered by the proceeds from the sale of the land. The annual rent of these sites agreed between the Korean authorities and the foreign authorities, shall be paid to the former, which shall retain for themselves a given sum as equivalent to the land tax, and the rest, together with any surplus remaining from the sale of the lots, shall be paid into a municipal fund to be administered by a municipal council, the constitution of which shall be determined by the Korean authorities in agreement with the competent foreign authorities.

4. Italian subjects shall nevertheless be able to rent and buy land or houses beyond the limits of the foreign districts and within ten Korean *li* from them. But any land so occupied shall be subject to the conditions, concerning compliance with local Korean regulations and the payment of land tax, which the Korean authorities deem appropriate to impose.

5. The Korean authorities shall allocate in each of the sites open to trade, and for no extra charge, a suitable plot of land for a foreign cemetery, for which no rent or tax shall be payable and which shall be administered exclusively by the municipal Council mentioned above.

6. Italian subjects are permitted to go wherever they please without a passport, within a distance of 100 Korean *li* from each of the ports and cities open to trade, or within distances to be agreed between the competent authorities of both countries. Italian subjects are also permitted to travel in Korea for pleasure or for commercial purposes, to transport and sell goods of all kinds, except books and other printed articles disapproved of by the Korean Government, and to purchase local products in any part of the country, provided however that they are equipped with passports issued by their consuls, countersigned or stamped by the local Korean authorities. These

passports, if required, must be shown in the districts through which Italian subjects may pass. If the passport is in order, the bearer will be able to continue on his journey and will have the right to procure all the means of transport that he may need. Any Italian subject who travels without a passport beyond the limits mentioned above, or who commits some serious offence during his journey in the interior, shall be arrested and handed over to the nearest Italian consul for punishment. Travelling without a passport beyond the aforementioned limits shall render the offender subject to a fine not exceeding 100 Mexican dollars without a prison sentence, or with imprisonment for a term not exceeding one month.

7. Italian subjects in Korea shall be subject to all police and other regulations for the maintenance of peace, order and good governance, which may be established by mutual agreement between the competent Authorities.

ART. V

1. In each of the ports or cities open to foreign trade, Italian subjects shall have the right to import from any foreign port or from any Korean open port, to sell or buy from any Korean or other subject, and to export to any foreign port or Korean open port, any kind of goods not prohibited by this Treaty, paying for the same the duties specified in the attached tariff. They may freely transact their affairs with Korean subjects and those of other countries without the intervention of the Korean authorities or third parties, and they may also exercise any business or industrial occupation.

2. The owners or consignees of all goods imported from any foreign port, on which the duties of the aforementioned tariff have been paid, shall have the right, when re-exporting the same goods to any foreign port and at any time within a period of thirteen Korean months, to receive a drawback certificate for the amount of import duties already paid, on condition, however, that the original packages and parcels containing the said goods have remained intact in the meantime. Such drawback certificates may either be redeemed by the Korean customs authorities upon presentation, or be received in payment of customs duties in any open port of Korea.

3. Duty paid on Korean goods, when these are transported from one open port of Korea to another, shall be refunded at the port of loading upon presentation of a Customs certificate proving that the goods have arrived at the port of destination, or on production of satisfactory evidence showing that the goods have been lost by shipwreck.

4. All goods imported into Korea by Italian subjects and on which the duty specified in the tariff annexed to this Treaty has been paid, may be transported to any other open port of Korea without payment of any duty, and when transported inland, they shall not be subject to any additional tax, customs duty, or transit fee, in any form and in any part of the country. Likewise, full freedom shall be granted for the transport to the open ports of Korea of all Korean products intended for export, and such products shall not be subject, either at the place of production or during their transport from any part of Korea to any of the open ports, to payment of any additional tax, customs duty or transit fee of whatever kind.

5. The Korean Government may charter Italian merchant ships for the transport of goods and passengers to Korean closed ports, and Korean subjects shall have the same right, but providing they have the approval of their own authorities.

6. Whenever the Government of Korea has reason to fear a food shortage in the Kingdom, His Majesty the King of Korea may temporarily prohibit the export of cereals to foreign countries from all or any one of Korea's open ports, and any such ban must be respected by Italian subjects in Korea starting from one month after the date on which it was officially communicated by the Korean authorities to the Italian Consul residing in the port in question, but must not remain in force for longer than is absolutely necessary.

7. All Italian merchant vessels shall pay tonnage dues at the rate of 30 Mexican cents per registered ton. Such payment, once made, shall entitle the vessel to visit any of Korea's open ports, or all of them, for a period of one hundred and twenty days without paying any other tonnage tax. All tonnage dues received shall be used to erect lighthouses and signals and instal buoys on the Korean coast, and more especially at the approaches to open ports, and to excavate or otherwise improve anchorages. No tonnage dues shall be imposed on boats or rafts used in open ports for the unloading or loading of vessels.

8. In order to bring into effect and secure the observance of the articles of this Treaty, it is agreed by both parties that the Tariff and the commercial Regulations annexed thereto shall enter into force at the same time as the Treaty itself. The competent Authorities of the two countries may from time to time revise these Regulations and the Tariff in order to include, by mutual agreement, such changes or additions as experience may suggest.

ART. VI

Any Italian subject who introduces or attempts to smuggle goods into any port or site in Korea not open to foreign trade, shall pay a fine equal to double the value of the goods, and these shall be confiscated. The Korean local authorities shall be entitled to take possession of these goods and arrest any Italian subject involved in the said smuggling or attempted contraband, but they must immediately send the arrested persons to the nearest Italian

Consul, or whoever acts for him, to be judged by the competent Italian judicial authority. The Korean authorities shall be entitled to retain the confiscated goods in their power until the case has been heard and settled.

ART. VII

1. If an Italian vessel is shipwrecked or runs aground on the coast of Korea, the local authorities must immediately take the necessary measures to protect the vessel and the cargo from any looting or robbery, and all persons belonging to the vessel from bad treatment, and must provide any other assistance which may be required. They must immediately inform the nearest Italian Consul of the accident and, if necessary, provide the shipwrecked persons with means of transport to the nearest open port.

2. All expenses which the Government of Korea may incur for the salvage, clothing, maintenance and travel of the Italian shipwrecked subjects, for the recovery of the corpses of the drowned, for the medical treatment of the sick and injured and for the burial of the dead, shall be refunded by the Italian government to the Korean government.

3. The Italian Government shall not be responsible for the reimbursement of the expenses incurred in recovering and preserving the shipwrecked vessel or its cargo. All these expenses must be reimbursed from the proceeds of the property and paid by the interested parties, when they take delivery of whatever has been salvaged.

4. The Government of Korea shall not ask to be compensated for expenses incurred by government or police officials who have gone to the site of the shipwreck, or for expenses incurred by officers who escort the shipwrecked persons, or for the expenses involved in official correspondence. All such expenses shall be borne by the Korean government.

5. Any Italian merchant ship, which is obliged by storm or lack of fuel or ship's supplies to put into one of Korea's closed ports, shall be allowed to carry out all necessary repairs and procure the supplies it needs. All expenses so incurred shall be paid by the captain of the vessel.

ART. VIII

1. The warships of each of the two Powers shall have the right to freely visit all the ports of the other and shall be entitled to obtain supplies of all kinds or to carry out repairs on the easiest terms. They shall not be subject to trade and port regulations, nor to the payment of port duties or taxes of any kind.

2. When Italian warships visit the closed ports of Korea, their officers and crew may go ashore, but may not enter the interior of the country unless they have been issued with passports.

3. Provisions and supplies of any kind for the use of the Italian navy may be landed in the open ports of Korea and stored under the supervision of an Italian employee without payment of any fees. But if all or part of these provisions or supplies are sold, the buyer will have to pay the corresponding customs duties to the Korean authorities.

4. The Korean Government shall grant every facility in its power to Italian warships engaged in hydrographic studies or coastal surveys in Korean waters.

ART. IX

1. Italian authorities and Italian subjects in Korea may employ Korean subjects as teachers, interpreters, servants or in any other legitimate capacity, without any restrictions on the part of the Korean authorities, and in the same way no restrictions shall be placed on the employment in any legitimate capacity of Italian subjects by Korean Authorities and Korean subjects.

2. The subjects of either of the two nations who go to the country of the other to study its language, literature, laws, arts or industries, or for the purpose of scientific research, shall receive all reasonable assistance from the local authorities.

ART. X

It is hereby agreed and stipulated that, from the day this Treaty enters into force, the Government, public officials and subjects of His Majesty the King of Italy shall enjoy all the privileges, immunities and advantages, especially in relation to the rights of import and export of goods and manufactures, which have been granted and may be granted in the future by His Majesty the King of Korea to the Government, public officials and subjects of any other Power.

ART. XI

Ten years after the date on which this Treaty enters into force, either of the two High Contracting Parties may, by giving notice to the other one year in advance, request a revision of the Treaty or the Tariff annexed to it, with the intention of including in them, by common accord, any amendments that experience may have suggested.

ART. XII

I. This Treatise is drawn up in three languages, namely Italian, Chinese and English, and each of the three versions has the same meaning; but it is especially agreed that should some difference arise in its interpretation the precise meaning shall be defined by referring to the English text.

2. For the present, all official communications addressed by the Italian Government to the Korean Government shall be accompanied by a translation into Chinese.

ART. XIII

This treaty shall be ratified by His Majesty the King of Italy and by His Majesty the King of Korea, who shall sign and seal it; the instruments of ratification shall be exchanged in Hanyang (Seoul) or elsewhere as soon as possible or at the latest within one year from the date of signature, and the Treaty, which shall be published by both Governments, shall enter into force from the day on which the corrected texts have been exchanged.

In witness whereof the respective Plenipotentiaries named above have signed the present Treaty and affixed their seal on it.

Done in triplicate at Hanyang this day, twenty sixth of June, one thousand eight hundred and eighty-four, corresponding to the fourth day of the fifth intercalary month of the four hundred and ninety third year of the Korean era, being the tenth year of the Chinese reign of KUANG HSO,

(Signed) FERDINANDO DE LUCA

(Signed) KIM PIONG SI