







**THE FLOWER BOYS OF SILLA (HWARANG)**

**Notes on the sources**

**By Father Richard Rutt**

**(盧 大 榮 神 父)**

[page 1]

**PREFACE**

So far as I can discover only three books have been devoted to the study of *hwarang*. The earliest, and in many ways the most interesting and attractive, was Volume 4 of the *Zakko* (雜攷) of the Japanese amateur scholar resident of Korea, Ayukai Fusanomosuke (鮎貝房之進). Subtitled *Karogo* (花郞攷), it was published in Seoul in 1932. It includes practically all the references to Korean sources which are needed for a complete study of the subject.

Mishina Shoei (三品彰英) published his *Shiragi Kara no Kenkyu* (新羅花郞の研究), after previously publishing a number of articles on the subject, in Tokyo in 1943. This is a larger work than Ayukai’s and attempts a more systematic presentation of the subject. Otherwise its chief contribution is the vast amount of comparative anthropological material which Mishina adduces.

The third work is in Korean, the *Hwarangdo Yŏn’gu* (花郞道研究) of Yi Sŏn’gŭn (李瑄根) published in Seoul in 1949. This work is of quite a different character, more in the nature of an essay on the spirit of *hwarang* as it appealed at the time of publication to Korea’s burgeoning nationalism. Much of the book is frankly speculative about the legacy of *hwarang* ideals in later centuries.

I have not been able to give the attention that is needed to the post-Silla references to *hwarang*. There is more than enough material here for another paper. But I do not believe, from what I have read in it, that it will in any way alter our opinions about the *hwarang* of the Golden Age.

R.R.

Seoul September 1961

[page 2]

**THE FLOWER BOYS OF SILLA (花郞)**

**I. Introductory**

The *hwarang* ideal has become a favourite symbol of modern Korea. It has been used as the name of a Youth Corps, it has been used in the name of the Army Officers Training School, as the name of a high military decoration and as the brand name of the cigarettes issued for the armed forces; it is the name of a bar in the Bando Hotel, and has been used as a professional name by a popular musician. It has a ring of romance and chivalry, a tone of national pride, in the two Chinese characters with which it is written a blend of masculinity and grace that makes it very suitable for all these purposes.

The usual translation offered for *hwarang* is “Flower of Youth” and the usual description of what the historical *hwarang* were is given as “an order of knighthood (or something similar) in the Silla dynasty.” Unfortunately the translation does violence to normal grammar of Chinese phrases and the description represents an idea that has grown up during the last thirty years. This paper is concerned with investigating something of what the truth about the hwarang really was.

The confusion of thinking about *hwarang* in Korea could scarcely be better illustrated than by the references to the subject in the *Unesco Korean Survey*.l) *Hwarang* are mentioned in nine places. There is a variety of interpretations placed on the word, and in several cases statements are made which have little or no relation to any historical evidence we have with regard to *hwarang*. Always the institution of hwarang is presented in an idealized and noble light.

1) Seoul 1960.

[page 3]

A typical instance of the current Korean interpretation of *hwarang* may be quoted from the entry under this word in *Tong-a’s New Encyclopedia*. (The translation is my own.)

Hwarang. Leader of a military band of the Silla era. Chosen from the young sons of the nobility by popular election. Belonged in hundreds or thousands to the hwarang bands. Origin not clear, but presumably from the young mens’ bands of the Han tribes. Sadaham who raised an army for the suppression of Kara in 562 is the beginning of hwarang history. Basic ideal was complete loyalty to the nation, righteouness and bravery. Frequently visiting mountain beauty spots they were also called kukson. Their activity was also called p’ungnyu or p’ungwolto. The five hwarang command-ments were: serve the king with loyalty, serve parents with piety, be faithful to friends, never retreat in battle, preserve life when possible.

This is by no means unfair as a summary of what most Koreans think of *hwarang*. Hence it comes as rather a surprise to find in Arthur Waley’s translation of the Chinese *Book of Songs* one of the rare English references to *hwarang*.

Waley is annotating his own translation of the archaic Chinese poem;

山有扶蘇 山有橋松

陽有荷華 隰有游龍

不見子都 不見子充

乃見狂且 乃見狡童3)

He translates the last two characters of the stanzas as “madman” and “mad boy” respectively, so that the song is that of a girl who seeks for her ideal, called Tzŭ-tu (子都) or Tzŭ-ch’ung (子充), but in fact can see only “a mad boy.”

2) 새 백과사전, Seoul 1959.

3) *Shih-ching*, I. vii. x. (詩. 風. 鄭 10)

[page 4]

Waley comments :

The ‘madmen’ were young men dressed up in black jackets and red skirts who ‘searched in the houses and drove out pestilences.’ (Cf. Commentary on *Tso Chuan* chronicle; Duke Min, second year. For the medley garb of these ‘wild men,’ see *Kuo Yu*, the story of Prince Shen-sheng of Chin.) In order to do this they must have been armed, for disease demons are attacked with weapons, just like any other enemy. It is therefore not surprising that the *Chou Li* (Chapter 54) lists them among the various categories of armed men...... Closely analogous were the famous “Flower Boys” of Korea, who reached their zenith in the sixth century A.D....... This is presumably the song with which the people in the house greeted the exorcists.4)

Although Waley speaks only of an analogy, his reference to *hwarang* is stimulating enough to prompt one to a further investigation of his material. The immediate result is rather disappointing. Of his three references to Chinese sources two are fairly obviously discovered in that wellknown and popular dictionary, the *Tzu-hai* (辭海). There under *k’uanp-fu* (狂夫), and not under the adjacent *k’uang-chu* (狂且, the phrase in the poem under discussion), will be found the reference to the *Tso Chuan*. The dictionary identifies *k’uang-fu* with *fang-shang-shih*. The *Tzu-hai* entry under *fang-hsiang-shih* (方相氏) gives the reference to the Chou Li,5) where the *fang-hsiang-shih* is described as a shaman or exorcist who wore bearskins and a mask with four golden eyes, as well as the red and black clothes. The reference to the *Kuo Yu*6) telling the tale of Prince Shen-sheng (申生) is in fact a doublet of the passage given from the Chu Hsi editions of the *Tso Chuan*,7) and is therefore not an

4) A. Waley, *The Book of Songs* (London, 1937) p. 222.

5) 厢夏官, 方相氏

6) 國語 卷七 晋語ᅳ 獻公十七年

7) 左傳 閔公 二年 附錄

[page 5]

additional reference at all. It does not describe the motley clothes either.

It is not my present purpose to evaluate Mr Waley’s interpretation of the Chinese *Book of Songs*, though I think that solely by the evidence adduced in these notes he has not made a very strong case for his interpretation on this point It is interesting that he has drawn attention to some points of similarity between *hwarang* and ancient Chinese exorcists. Perhaps he was unaware of the place of the bear in primitive Korean myth, or he might have been tempted to link the *hwarang* with Tan’gun (檀君). Also it must be noted that all his texts date from at least the 3rd or 4th century B.C. and purport to describe institutions of three or more centuries earlier. Thus his Chinese shamans must be at least nine centuries, and probably more, earlier than our Korean *hwarang* as known to history. There is no reason why they should not be, as he says, “analogous”, but we have not much to justify the comparison.

In some ways much more fascinating is the attention he also draws8) to an analogy with a Rumanian institution, which he developed at some length in the *Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society*.9) The Rumanians are the Calusari dancers, who appeared in London at the International Folk Dance Festival of 1935 and created something of a sensation by their religious attitude as well as by their technique.

The description of the Calusari is given by Professor Vuia, who accompanied them. He points out the strong slavic element in their dances and myth, and lists among the names of their dances such interesting words as *Călusul*, *Floricica*, and even *Floricica Călusului*. These would mean respectively “little horse”, “little flower” and “flower of the little horse”. They represent the fairies of

8) *Op. cit*., ibid.

9) *Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society*, London, 1935, P. 107

[page 6]

the waters, woods and hills. They carry wooden sticks representing swords. They are supposed to have power to heal. They have a tabu concerning water. They sometimes used a hobbyhorse, and formerly used flowers in their dancing. Though they are all male, they have a tradition that female impersonation was once a part of their performance. Nowadays (that is in 1935) their chief connection is with the departed and they have been baptized into the church as a Whitsuntide observance.

Mr Waley supplies a note: “An Ancient Korean Parallel to the Călusari”, in which he relies entirely on an article by Mishina Akiyoshi (三品彰英) 1) in *Rekishi to Chiri* (歷史 と 地理) 1930. At this point it will be enough to note that he points to parallels with the *hwarang* in that the *hwarang* have a foundation myth about two women, one of whom drowned the other in a stream; that dancing was one of their chief pursuits; that one of their titles was *kuksŏn*, which Waley translates as “national fairy”; and that they have some military connections.

It is tempting to draw all these things together and posit a common origin in Central Asia for the *hwarang* and the *călusari*, but the necessary material is lacking, and Mr Waley can do more than point out the parallel. In itself it is interesting.

But our purpose is to see what can be discovered about the *hwarang* themselves from the evidence available. It is slight. Indeed it must be admitted that it is only in the last two generations that Koreans themselves have become much aware of the *hwarang* and have elevated them to a position of symbolic importance in the national culture. The traditional treatment of the evidence has usually been very confucian in tone and

1)The name is given thus by Waley. In the *Korean Studies Guide* (University of California Press, 1954) it is given as “Mishina Akihide”. But in the colophon to his own definitive book on *hwarang* (see below, page 10, note 8) the *furigana* reading is given as “Mishina Shoei.”

[page7]

therefore to some extent misleading. But before treating of the texts we should pay some attention to the work of lexicographers and get some of the terms clear.

**II. Vocabulary**

**a. Hwarang (花郎)**

First of all there is the word *hwarang* (花郞) itself. The translation “flower boy” is probably the best, because it begs fewest questions as to the real meaning of the word, is literal and does no violence to either Chinese or Korean grammar. (The translation “flower of youth” is certainly grammatically, and possibly semantically, false).

Professor Yang Chudong (梁柱東)2) has declared that the original form of the word was simply the first half of it, the hwa (花). He does not explain why this title should have been used, nor why in later times the usual form of the title *hwarang* suffixed to a proper name should have been -*rang* (郞) and not *hwa*. He regards the character as having the same value in old Korean as it had in Chinese. He does not discuss the possibility that it may have been a way of writing some native Korean syllable.

Professor Yang’s argument is long and highly technical. It will be sufficient here to outline his conclusions. He believes *hwa* (花) was the original title, that the forms *hwarang* (both 花郞 and 花娘, the second character intended to distinguish the sexes, though there is confusion, for instance, in the *Samguk Yusa* accounts) and *hwado* (花徒) are essentially the same and represent a form pronounced *hwanae*, a collective noun comparable to the modern honorific (though steadily declining) classifier -*nae* (내). *Wonhwa* (原花 or 源花) can be reversed to form *hwawon* (花原 or 花源), and is equivalent to the pronunciation *hwaan* (화안) and cognate with *hwahan* (written as 花主) and *hwap’an* (花判) which are titles of ranks.

2) *Koga Yŏn’gu*(古歌研究) 2nd edition, Seoul 1960, pp. 372 ff.

[page8]

It seems impossible to go further than Dr Yang in discussing the original meaning of *hwarang* at present.

However the modern dictionaries are not yet done with the word. We find that they give the variant form *hwarangi* (화랑이) with or without the Chinese characters used in writing it, to mean a brilliantly dressed singer and dancer, similar to the *kwangdae* (광대). The emphasis is on the pretty clothes and the dancing. There is a variant form *hwaraengi*, and also *hwaryangi* (화랭이, 화량이) but these are regular local deviations.

In colloquial usage there is also *hwallyangi* (or one of the above forms) or even *hwanyangnom* (화냥놈) meaning a playboy and a lazy goodfornothing, and also the word *hwaryangnyon* (화량년), or something within the range of expected variations, meaning a slut or prostitute. I have met Koreans who say that it may refer to a male prostitute, but it is more normally used as given, with a pseudo-Chinese reading (花娘女), by Gale in his Korean-English Dictionary, and is the same as can be heard in the expression *hwaryangjil* (화량질) meaning illicit liaison, and the colloquial description of the lily-of-the-valley flower, *hwanyangnydnui sokkot karangi* (화량년의 속것 가랑이) or “courtesan’s petticoats showing.” This meaning can be traced back as far as the *Kyerim Yusa* (鷄林類事), a Chinese wordlist believed to date from the 11th century.

Lastly there is the meaning of shaman or shaman’s husband. This occurs in the forms *hwarang*, *hwarangi*, *hwaraengi* in various cases. The earliest recorded instance of it is in the *Hunmong Chahoe* (訓蒙字會), a list of Chinese characters for teaching to children, compiled with notes and an introduction by Ch’oe Sejin (崔世珍) in 1527, though Mr Nam Kwang-u3) also notes its appearance

3) Nam Kwang-u (南資祐); Koŏ Sajŏn(古語辭典), Seoul 1960.

[page9]

in *Chibong Yusŏl* (芝峰類說) a collection of notes and stories published in 1614. In *Hunmong Chahoe* and *Wae-o Yuhae* (倭語類解) an eighteenth century Japanese grammar by Son Sunmyŏng (孫舜明), it is given as the meaning of the Chinese character 覡, pronounced *kyŏk* (격), meaning a male shaman.

Murayama Chijun (村山智順) in his survey of Korean shamanism4) lists hwarang (romanised as *pharang*) as a word for a male mudang. Interestingly enough he also lists kwangdae as a male shaman title. Among the areas in which he notes the word as being in use at the time of his collection of materials are Chinch’ŏn (鎭川),Yŏngch’ ŏn (永川), P’ohang (浦項), Masan (馬山), and Hadong (河東), with an interesting variation of *hwanam* (花男)in Hwanghae Province.5) This gives a fairly even distribution for the word across central and southeastern Korea. It is doubtful whether Murayama’s investigations were at this point exhaustive enough to be conclusive, and the word was probably in use elsewhere as well, but the area indicated is precisely the area that is the legatee of Silla culture, and there is no reason to believe that the word *hwarang* for a shaman is of separate origin from the name of the historical *hwarang*.

This point is, however, brought out clearly in Akamatsu and Akiba’s work on Korean shamanism,6) where they point out that *hwarang* is also used to describe a female shaman’s husband, especially when he plays, sings, or dances to accompany his wife. Suggesting that *hwarang* meaning shaman’s husband is commonest in the provinces of Chungch’ŏng, North Kyŏngsang and Kangwŏn, they go on to say that it is used to mean a male shaman in South Kyŏngsang and the Chŏllas. This is in

4) Murayama Chijun (村山智順), *Chosen no Fugeki* (朝鮮の巫覡). Keijo. Chosen Sotokufu, 1932, page 22.

5) *Op. cit*., pp. 26 ff.

6) Akamatsu and Akiba (赤松智城, 秋葉隆) *Chosen Fuzoku no Kenkyu* (朝鲜巫俗の研究) Keijo 1938. Vol II, pages 31-2.

[page10]

sharp distinction to the quite different words used in more northerly parts of Korea where the tradition of Silla is weakest or non-existent.

So we have the word *hwarang* remaining common Korean usage until the twentieth century, but in more or less unsavoury connections — sorcery, laziness, laxity, and the life of the mountebank.

**b. Kuksŏn (國仙)**

A word that also appears in the modern dictionaries is *kuksŏn* (國仙). They give it the same meaning as *hwarang* in its historical sense. It is a word with religious overtones that cannot be missed, ana it is very hard to translate it satisfactorily into English. The basic meaning of *sŏn* is that of a fairy or an immortal, someone who has achieved great longevity, hence a hermit-sage, or a deified person. The character as written suggests a mountain man; and it is closely connected with taoist concepts.

As applied to the *hwarang* it first appears in the *Samguk Yusa* (三國遺事),7) and is connected with other uses such as *sŏllang* (仙郞) and *sŏndo* (仙徒). Sometimes the character even stands alone as in *sasŏn* (四仙). But in the *Samguk yusa* it is placed in conjunction with the story of the Maitreya Buddha, who there appears as a *sŏnhwa* (仙花).

Mishina Shoei, in his definitive work on *hwarang*8) gives a long but inconclusive discussion of the significance of this name.9) He suggests that the beautiful clothes of the flower boys may have suggested the title of fairy, and he notes that much of their activity was connected with mountains. He draws attention to the

7) See below page 15.

8) Mishina Shoei (三品彰英), *Chosen Kodai Kenkyu Dai ichi-bu: Shiragi Karo no Kenkyu* (朝鲜古代研究第ᅳ部新羅花郞の研究) Tokyo 1943. This is the standard work on the subject of *hwarang*, and I have made much use of it. Referred to hereafter as SKK.

9) SKK pages 246 ff.

[page11]

fact that the term *kuksŏn* is not used in the *Samguk Sagi* but only in the *Samguk Yusa* and subsequent writings. He concludes that it was a title which came into use later.

Professor Yang, however, draws attention in a note1) to the use of the same character *sŏn* (イ山) in the name of one of the official ranks of Koguryŏ, the *hŭbŭi sŏnin*2) (皂衣仙人), the “fragrant-clothed men” ᅳ though the first character is sometimes read as *cho* (皁) meaning “black” instead of “fragrant.” He concludes that *sŏn* represents the native Korean *san* meaning “a man” as in the modern words *sanai* (사나이) or *sŏnbae* (선배), so that the characters *kuksŏn* really represent the Korean word *pŭlsăn*, meaning, presumably, “a singing man.”

Waley3) translated the phrase as “national fairy,” believing that it was analogous to the primatial buddhist title *kuksa* and represented the highest rank of *hwarang*, but in this he was, possibly, mistaken.

Nevertheless it seems that for English translation it is hard to better the word “fairy,” remembering that fairies in the Orient are mystic beings that have little in common with the gauzy wraiths of romantic ballet or “A Midsummer Night’s Dream”. There seems to have been good cause for the choice of *sŏn* (仙) meaning “fairy” rather than *sŏn* (先) meaning “elder” in writing *kuksŏn* for *hwarang*, whereas the latter character was used as an alternative in the case of the Koguryŏ rank mentioned above. The translation “singing man” would be no less misleading if it carried no comment to explain it.

**c. P’ungnyu(風流), p’ungwŏl(風月)**

*Pungnyu* (風流) and *p’ungwŏlto* (風月道): are two phrases that are constantly used in connection with the activities of the *hwarang*. They are also hard to translate

1) *Op. cit*. p. 528

2) *Samguk Sagi* (三國史記 卷四十 職官下外 also 卷十五 太祖 and 次大王)

3) *Op cit*., cf above page 5, note 9.

[page12]

and do not make good sense if taken according to the normal values of the Chinese characters used. They certainly seem to mean the same thing. In modern usage, Chinese and Korean, they have come to have a wanton and erotic connotation, and also to mean “elegant” or “poetic.” In contemporary Korean, *p’ungnyugaek* (風流客) means a poet who delights in the beauties of nature and scenery. He is expected to delight also in the pleasures of the cup, after the example of the best poets of T’ang. *P’ungwŏlto* means, literally, “the way of the wind and the moon,” and suggests poetic romanticism. Whatever we may be able to discover about the possible Korean words for which these Chinese characters are made to do phonetic duty, it seems hard to believe that the characters were chosen entirely without reference to their semantic content. The real meaning may be other than what the Chinese suggests, as in the cases of *hwarang* and *kuksŏn*, but the meaning of the Chinese characters will suggest an overtone to the original Korean sense.

We cannot, however, overlook the fact that in Korea the word *p’ungnyu* (風流) has a meaning that the Japanese *furyu* and Chinese *feng-liu*, written with the same characters, do not have. This is the sense of “music”, due to the use of the characters as an transcription of the old Korean word for singing,5) *pul* (불) cognate with the modern verb *puruda* (부르다 to sing).

Later texts refer to hwarang sometimes simply as *p’ungwŏlchu* (風月主). *P’ungwŏl* is also a way of writing the same word *pul* and thus has the same meaning as *p’ungnyu*. Both undoubtedly derive from the *hwarang* practice of singing and dancing in the mountains.6) That the word has in later days been associated with *dolce*

4) An old method of writing Korean words with Chinese characters.

5) Cf.Yi T’ak (李鐸) *Kugohak Non’go* (國語學論攷) Seoul 1958, page 84f .

6) Cf. SKK page 255 f. for a detailed examination of this matter. For the philological argument see Yang Chudong, op. cit. p.528.

[page13]

*far niente*, and poetizing in beauty spots and connected with wine and lovemaking is not surprising. The case is somewhat parallel to the history of the word *hwarang* itself. In rendering it into English it is certainly most attractive to render it as “wind and moonlight music,” and though this may be a shade too romantic, it is probably not too far from suggesting the excitement which attended the *hwarang* meetings.

**d. Hyangdo (香徒)**

Yet one more name for the *hwarang* deserves consideration. It is uncommon, but it does occur in the *Samguk Sagi*7) where the hero Kim Yusin (金庚信) and his followers are said when he became a hwarang to have been given the title of *Yonghwa Hyangdo* (龍華香徒).

*Hyangdo* (香徒) literally means “frasrant one” or “incense man.” In later Korean usage it is used to describe the men who carry a bier, but that is obviously not the meaning here. In the *Samguk Yusa* it is used on occasion with the apparent meaning of “the devout buddhist laity.” Since the character *hyang* (香) has a close connection with the idea of devotion in Buddhist usage, where it is very common indeed, it seems probable that this was the sense in which it was used in this case, and Kim Yusin’s title would be something like “the Dragon-Flower devotee.”*8)*

It has been noted by Kim Kwangyŏng (金光永), in an article to which I shall refer again later,9) that the name Yonghwa is a regular buddhist term, being the name of the *naga-puspa*, which will be the bodhi tree of Maitreya Buddha when he comes to earth.

Finally it is interesting to note that Yu Ch’angdon (劉 昌淳) in his *Koŏ Sajŏn* (古語辭典)1) explains *hyangdo* as

7) 三國史記 卷四十一 列傳^” 金鹿信上

8) For details of this argument see SKK pages 264 ff.

9) *Hwarangdo ch’angsŏre taehan sogo* (花郞道 創設에 對한 小考) in *Tongguk Sasang* (東國思想) Vol 1 (第ᅳ輯), Seoul, 1958, page 32. See also below pages 24 and 61.

1) Seoul 1955.

[page14]

meaning a group that is half buddhist, half shamanistic. But he offers no evidence to support this interpretation.

**Ill The Sources**

The paucity of sources for early Korean history makes the study of it at once fascinating and frustrating. There is the excitement of interpreting the fragments and the extreme irritation of having not quite enough material to complete the picture. In no aspect of Three Kingdoms history is this more true than in the matter of the *hwarang*.

As is to be expected, we depend almost entirely on the evidence of the *Samguk Yusa* and the *Samguk Sagi*. The Chinese dynastic histories which provide a certain amount of material on other questions are no help with the *hwarang*. Even the material in the two Korean histories is sparser than one would like. In each case it consists of a very brief paragraph about the origin and nature of the institution, and beyond that only a series of dispersed references in the biographies of notables, stating that they were *hwarang*. From these scant references we must build up all that we can say is definitely recorded about the matter. Anything else will be a matter of conjecture.

Before turning to the two principal accounts, it may be well to state briefly the nature and quality of the two documents in which they occur.

The *Samguk Sagi* (三國史記) was compiled by Kim Pusik (金富試) by order of King Injong (仁宗) of Koryŏ (高麗) in 1145. It consists very largely of matter drawn from earlier sources now lost in their independent form. It is in the traditional annals and biography arrangement. First there are twenty eight books telling in order the annals of Silla (新羅), Koguryŏ (高句麗), and Paekche (百濟). There follow three books of chronological tables (年表), nine of monographs (志), and then ten books of biographies (傳).

[page15]

The compiler was a noted scholar, soldier and statesman of his time. He was identified with the movement towards the adoption of Chinese taste and standards, and disinclined to favour interpretations of history which did not comply with his own tastes and attitudes. Nevertheless his work has preserved for us much invaluable material which helps in the reconstruction of the picture of Korean culture before it became too heavily overlaid with Chinese elements. In the earlier periods his chronology is unreliable, but by the time that he comes to describe the *hwarang* there is little reason to mistrust his datings.

There are many reprints and editions of the *Samguk Sagi*.

The *Samguk Yusa* (三國遺事) deals with the same period, but was written a century later, by the monk Iryŏn (一然 1206—1289). Like the *Sagi* it has a traditional shape, in that it begins with a chronology and then turns to individual persons and places, but the form is much less strict. In fact the two works are in startling contrast. The *Sagi* is a fairly sober account of events, but the *Yusa* is an entertaining collection of anecdotes and wonders. But it is not to be disregarded as history for it seems, like the *Sagi*, to have drawn on sources not now available for many things, and it has preserved for us a number of early Korean poems which would otherwise have been lost. Also it represents an attitude to the Three Kingdoms period that is quite different from that of the *Sagi*. In the matter of the *hwarang* the prejudices of the two compilers are very markedly demonstrated, and can save us from accepting a view of the nature of *hwarang* that might otherwise be very onesided. Iryŏn certainly preserves for us an early tradition about history, and tradition is a matter of great value in the investigation of a social institution.

To turn then to the account of the institution of the *hwarang* as given by the *Samguk Sagi* first, as being [page16] the oldest account we have.2) The translation is my own.

Reign of King Chinhŭng (眞興王). 37th year (i.e., A.D. 576). Spring. At first he instituted (奉) the original Flowers (源花). In the beginning the rulers and ministers lacked understanding of their people and because they were worried they gathered many people together to play (dance?). After this behaviour had been observed they made their appointments. So two pretty girls were chosen, one called Nammo (南毛) and the other called Chunjŏng (俊貞). They had more than three hundred followers in their band. The two women grew jealous of each other’s beauty and finally Chunjŏng enticed Nammo to her home, plied her with wine till she was drunk, then pushed her into a stream and killed her. Chunjŏng was executed for this. The followers lost their unity and were dispersed.

After this, beautiful boys were chosen and arrayed in cosmetics and fine clothes, called Flower Boys (花郞), and chartered (?) They gathered followers in large numbers. They encouraged one another morally, and delighted one another with singing and music, playing among the hills and streams—there was nowhere that they did not go. Through this it was learnt who was good and who was bad, and the good ones among them were selected and preferred at court.

So Kim Taemun (金大問) says in his *Hwarang Chronicle* (花郞世記), “Good ministers and loyal subjects arose from among them, and they produced great generals and brave soldiers.”

And Ch’oe Ch’iwŏn (崔致遠) says in the preface to the *Mannang Pi* (驚郞碑序). “In our country there is mysterious and wonderful ‘way’(道) called *P’ungnyu*. Its origin is described in detail in the *Fairy Chronicle* (仙史). In fact it combines the three doctrines and so teaches the people. They practise filial piety in the family and loyalty to the country, which is the idea of the Minister of Justice of Lu (魯司寇, i.e., Confucius).

2) *Samguk Sagi* 卷第四 眞興王 三十七年

[page 17]

Their quietism and lack of teaching is the doctrine of the Recorder of Chou (周柱史, i.e, Lao-tzu). Their avoiding of evil and doing of good is the teaching of the Prince of India (竺乾太子, i.e., the Buddha).”

Also the *Account of the Country of Silla* (新羅國記) by Ling-hu Ch’eng (令孤澄) of Tang says: “They choose pretty sons from noble families and deck them out with cosmetics and fine clothes and call them Flower Boys (花郞). The people all revere and serve them.”

This whole account bristles with difficulties and obscurities. But before attempting to unravel any of them it is interesting to compare the same material as it is presented by the *Samguk Yusa*. The first thing to note is that the *Sagi* sets this question of the *hwarang* in what at least appears to be its chronological setting (though for its exact chronological setting see below page 20) in the midst of the chronicles. The chronicle section of the *Yusa* is little more than a table and contains no comments or explanatory material. So the *hwarang* are not mentioned in it. Instead the same story of the origin of the *hwarang* is given among the anecdotes on buddhist temples, apparently to explain the significance of the immediately following story which relates of a particular hwarang. Again the translation is my own3).

The twenty-fourth king, Chinhŭng. He was of the Kim clan. His name was Sammaekchong (彡夌宗) — sometimes given as Simmaekchong(深夌宗). He ascended the throne in the sixth year of the Ta-tung period of the Liang dynasty. He followed the will of his uncle King Pophung (法興, the previous ruler) by serving the Buddha and building temples in many places and by encouraging people to become monks and nuns. He also had a great devotion to the spirits. He chose pretty girls (娘) as *wŏnhwa*. A large group was collected and they were taught filial and fraternal piety and loyalty and sincerity. They were very helpful

3) *Samguk Yusa* 卷三 彌勒仙花

[page 18]

in governing the country. Eventually, Nammo and Chunjŏng (峻貞, the first character differing from that given in the Sagi), whose followers numbered between three and four hundred, were chosen. Chunjŏng was jealous of Nammo, and when Nammo had taken much wine and was drunk, took her secretly to the North Stream (or a stream outside the city), struck her with stones, and killed her. Nammo’s followers did not know where she had gone, so they dispersed, weeping sadly. But there was someone who knew the truth about the plot, who taught the children to sing a song about it in the streets. Nammo’s followers heard it and found her body in the North Stream. So Chunjŏng was put to death. The then king ordered all the *wŏnhwa* to be disbanded.

Some years later the king was concerned about the strengthening of the country. He realised that the first thing to organize was *p’ungwŏlto* (風月道). He again issued a decree and chose boys from good families who were of good morals and renamed them *hwarang* (花郞). Sŏrwŏn (薛原) was the first to be admitted as a *kuksŏn*. This was the beginning of the *hwarang*.

So a (his) memorial stone was set up at Myŏngju (溟州 now Kangnŭng 江陵), and from this time men began to respect their seniors and be gentle with their inferiors. Also at this time the Five Constant Virtues (五常),4) the Six Arts (六藝),5) the Three Tutors (三師),6) and the Six Chiefs (六正)7) were spread through the land.

4) This probably means benevolence, uprightness, propriety, wisdom and sincerity (仁義禮智信), but it may refer to the five relationships: affection between father and son, justice between ruler and subject, precedence between husband and wife, order between senior and junior, and good faith between friends. Cf Mencius 滕文公上

5) Ritual (禮), music (樂), archery (射) charioteering (御), writing (書), mathematics (數). Cf *Chou Li* 地官保氏.

6) Three ranks of court tutors adopted from the Latter Wei dynasty and nourishing in Korea during the Koryŏ period (太師, 太傅, 太保).

7) In the *Tso Chuan* (襄二十五年) the phrase means six commanders who were military officials; but it is also explained as six types of statesman: holy (聖臣), good (良臣), loyal (忠臣), wise (哲臣), pure (貞臣), and honest (直臣).

[page 19]

From this point on the text of the *Yusa* goes straight into the story of the mystic Maitreya Hwarang8) which is the principal purpose of the chapter.

The differences in the two accounts are minor affairs. It is clear that there was an institution called *wŏnhwa*. It seems that the accounts would have us believe that Nammo and Chunjŏng were people of Chinhŭng’s reign. These women had a moral purpose, but there are hints of a religious background, with singing and dancing for the good of the land. The national religion being a form of shamanism and the early kings of Silla having borne titles that include the title *ch’a-ch’a-ung* (次次雄), which is thought to be shamanistic, it would not seem unreasonable to suppose that these women were shamans or had a function that was shamanistic9).

Some commentators have doubted whether the two women who are named were actually living in the reign of Chinhŭng. But it is hard to deny this without entirely discrediting the *Yusa* story and making it hard to see the point of the *Sagi* version, although it would certainly be good to be able to point to a myth of death by drowning if one wished to establish a firmly religious background for the *hwarang* of the kind adumbrated by Waley in the passage mentioned earlier1). What is certain

8) See below page 26.

9) For the title *ch’a-ch’a-ung* see, inter alia, Suematsu Yasukazu (末松保和) *Shiragishi no Shomondai* (新羅史の諸問題) Tokyo 1954. page 59, and Yi Pyŏngdo’s annotated edition of the *Samguk Sagi* (對譯詳註三國史記) Seoul 1957, page 49. A further reflection on the relation of shamanism to the early rulers and government of Silla is roused by the suggestion that the famous “golden crowns” were shamanistic regalia. This is supposed by C. Hentz in his article *Schamanen Kronen zur Han-Zen in Korea*, Ostasiatische Zeitschrift, Berlin and Leipzig, 1934.

A recent Korean article adducing the shamanistic nature of the *wŏnhwa* can be found *in Tongguk Sahak* Vol 4(東國史學四輯), Seoul 1956: An Kyehyŏn (安啓賢) A Study of the P’algwanhoe (八關會考) page 35, also referred to below pages 20 and 54.

1) See above, pages 5 and 6.

[page 20]

is that the *hwarang* were instituted by Chinhŭng on the pattern of an earlier organization of women2).

A more interesting and intriguing problem is that of the reliability of the date given by the compiler of the *Sagi*. Many Korean translators of the *Sagi*3) treat the whole matter, from the first inception of *wŏnhwa* to the institution of the *hwarang*, as having happened in the 37th year of Chinhŭng. But it has often been noted that in the biography section of the *Sagi* the story of Sadaham (斯多含) counts him as a hwarang already at the time of the expedition against Kara (加羅) which took place in the 23rd year of Chinhŭng (A.D. 562). An attempt has been made by An Kyehyŏn4) to show that it actually happened in the 12th year of Chinhŭng, but this is yet to be regarded as a proven case.

Professor Yi Pyŏngdo5) points out that the 37th year is the last year of Chinhŭng. It was therefore the reasonable heading under which to put something that was known to have happened in that reign, but whose exact date was unknown. The strictly chronological method of the *Sagi* makes it difficult to place such intractable material. The only material put under the same year after the entry about the *wŏnhwa* and the *hwarang* is a note about a monk who studied in China “at this period”, and the record of the king’s death, which would naturally close the account of his reign in the chronological telling of it.

One striking aspect of the accounts as they stand

2) In passing we may note the opinion of Ayukai Fusamosuke (鮎貝房之進) quoted in SKK, page 117, that the *wŏnhwa* were primitive *kisaeng* (妓生) if not actually courtesans (娼). Mishina dismisses the idea, which seems untenable in view of the description given of them in the two accounts translated above. Yet the choice by dancing and the insistence on beauty does suggest court minions as much as it does religious purposes.

3) e.g., Kim Chonggwŏn (金鍾權) *Wanyŏk Samguk Sagi* (完譯三國史記) Seoul, 1960, page 66.

4) *Op. cit. ibid*. See also above page 19 note 9.

5) *Op. cit*. page 245.

[page21]

is how little support they give to the popular notion of *hwarang* as an exclusively or even primarily military organisation. We read only that great generals arose from among the *hwarang*, and this fact is quoted only by the *Sagi*, a book written by a general. When we come later to examine the accounts of individual *hwarang* we shall find that there is a higher proportion of military accounts in the *Sagi* than in the *Yusa*. This is not surprising, but it does make it clear that it is an error to regard *hwarang* as merely a type of soldier or even of knight.

On the contrary, the religious character of the *hwarang* is emphasized by both accounts. Ch’oe Ch’iwŏn’s account must be read in the light of his date (the tenth century AD) and his own background, which was almost entirely Chinese, since he had spent a long time at the court of T’ang6). Naturally he would wish to interpret *hwarang* in terms favourable to his own background—perhaps the first Korean to attempt to make Korean affairs look more respectable by giving them a Chinese explanation. In any case he does not claim that the *hwarang* have actually inherited Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism, but only that they resemble them, as, it may be noted, have most of the religious systems devised by Koreans in subsequent centuries. Ch’oe Ch’iwŏn noticeably fails to mention any connection with older native Korean religion. This is not a conclusive argument in any sense, since he may well have thought that such unphilosophical religions as Korea had before were beneath his and his readers’ notice. It may be guessed that the Mannang of the title of Ch’oe Ch’iwon’s work was a *hwarang* as the *nang* character suggests, but this is no more than a reasonable surmise. The name is otherwise unknown. His reference to the *Sŏnsa* or “Fairy Chronicle” may possibly be a way of referring to the *Hwarang Segi* or “Hwarang Chronicle” quoted in the *Sagi* immediately

6) *Samguk Sagi* (三國史記 卷第四十六).

[page 22]

before the passage from Ch’oe himself, but here again we are in the field of unsupportable conjecture.

The *Hwarang Segi* was written by Kim Taemun, and is known also from another reference towards the end of the *Sagi*. It is now lost, but it is believed that it may have been drawn on by Iryŏn in compiling the *Samguk Yusa*, as well as by Kim Pusik for the *Sagi*. Kim Taemun was a writer of the time of King Sŏngdŏk (聖德) of Silla. He became governor of Hansan-ju (漢山州) in 7047).

But if Ch’oe Ch’iwŏn’s account treats *hwarang* as a religious, or at least a moral, institution, the quotation from the Chinese source tells us of nothing but their external beauty8). This point is not made by the *Yusa* account. It is probably too much to assume, as some modern writers have done, that the meaning of the references to the prettiness of the boys is a figurative reference to their good moral character, since the phrase certainly means external beauty and there are the references to the fine costumes and cosmetics to enhance the suggestion of beautiful appearance as being an essential feature of the hwarang. It has been suggested that it was this question of beauty that was the reason for the name of “flower boy”.9) Mishina discusses the question of whether the costume of the *hwarang* was actually the dress of women1). In spite of professor Ikeuchi’s entirely proper insistence that there is no conclusive evidence that this was so, Mishina adduces a Japanese parallel, the *hekonise* (兵子二歲) of Kyushu with their cosmetics and girl’s *kimono,* and since he favours a shamanistic explanation of the origin of *hwarang*, points out that the wearing of the clothes of

7) *Samguk Sagi* 卷四十六.

8) For a note on the source of this quotation see Yi Pyŏngdo, op. cit. p. 249.

9) E.g. Yi Yŏsŏng (李如星) *Chosŏn Poksikko* (朝鮮服飾考) Seoul 1947, page 348.

1) SKK pages 125ff.

[page23]

the other sex is a characteristic feature of shamanism in Korea and other parts of Northeast Asia. It is impossible to go further than this. The point cannot be proved conclusively either way, since the existence of parallels is never a satisfactory substitute for direct evidence, and this is lacking.

The *Yusa* account also lacks the reference to the dancing among the hills and streams, though it mentions the importance of music when it says that the real reason for Chinhŭng’s efforts with the *hwarang* was the need to reinstate *pungwŏlto*. In the *Sagi* account the theme of playing and singing and dancing in groups in the open is very marked. It is hard to resist the interpretation of this as being a basically shamanistic activity. Mishina again treats this matter as a parallel to initiation journeys and pilgrimages in related cultures, but also adduces evidence from other sources on *hwarang* that will suggest the essentially religious nature of this activity even if it is not possible to prove that the purpose of the dancing in distant mountains was actually shamanistic2). This evidence will be dealt below with in the accounts of individual *hwarang*.

2) SKK pages 135ff.

3) 三國史記 卷三十二 Cf. also page 18 above.

[page 24]

But possibly the most striking feature of the *Yusa* account is the description it gives of the effect of the *hwarang* system. In spite of the obscurities involved in the terms Five Constant Virtues and Six Chiefs, it is clear that all the references are to non-buddhist ideas, and derive from pre-buddhist Chinese literature. In the work of a buddhist monk this is surprising. It is a striking argument that he at least did not regard the *hwaran*g as a primarily buddhist institution. This militates strongly against such a thesis as that of Kim Kwang- yŏng that the whole purpose of *hwarang* was purely buddhist4).

Mr Kim does however, draw attention to the fact mentioned in the *Yusa* that King Chinhŭng, whose reign was a long one, was a devout buddhist, and shortly before he died “shaved his head and took the robe with the name of Pobun (法雲)5)”. And this encourages us to consider the general circumstances of Chinhŭng’s period for the sake of the light they may throw on the institution of the *hwarang* at that time6).

Silla seems to have been comparatively late in receiving the full force of Chinese cultural influences, due to her geographical situation behind the mountain barriers of central Korea. But a great turning point in her history occurs in the early part of the sixth century. In 500 Chijŭng (智證) became king, and was the first ruler of Silla to adopt the Chinese title of *wang* (王). At the funeral of the previous king it was ordained that according to custom five men and five women should be buried alive with him, but oxen were substituted for the men and women. Then in 502 Chijŭng forbade the continuation of this cruel custom. In the next year it is recorded that he first decided

4) Cf. *op. cit*. above page 13, note 9, and below page 61.

5) *Samguk Sagi* 卷四

6) The references for the material in the following paragraph are in the fourth volume of the *Sagi*. For recent comments on the period see Suematsu, *op. cit*. page 19 note 9.

[page25]

which Chinese characters should be used in writing the name of the country (新羅). These two facts alone clearly mark a great step forward in the whole civilisation of the time.

Under his successor, Pŏphŭng(法興 514-540), however, even greater advances were made, and very rapidly indeed. In 520 a series of statutes was promulgated which codified the government and some at least of its customs, including the use of coloured robes as a sign of rank. In 528 Buddhism was declared the official religion of the state. In 532 the state of Karak (駕洛) was annexed, as the first move in Silla’s expansion and consolidation, finally in 536 the first Chinese style year title (年號) was used.

Thus the whole political structure of Silla was undergoing a great change immediately before the accession of king Chinhŭng in 540. It is also certain that there were important social changes, such as might be expected, going on at the same time. Early Silla does not seem to have been a purely patrilineal society. The marriage arrangements of the rulers were complex, but indicate that the female line was still important even though the rulers were males. However during the sixth century all this changed, and the society shifted to a more completely male-centred system.

Thus the *hwarang* came to prominence at a crucial period in the development of Silla, and were indeed, as the *Yusa* account stresses, a part of the national expansion and strengthening policy. To some extent one can expect to find traces of Chinese influence since these were the early days of Chinese cultural extension in the country. Thus the references to confucian moral principles are not surprising, although it would be doubtful that there was much depth in Korean confucian studies by this time. But of even greater interest is the change in the relative positions of the sexes. The switch from women to men seems to be typical of this age of transition. For age of transition [page 26] it naturally was, slowly building up to the emergence of the great culture of united Silla at the end of the century.

**IV. The Maitreya Hwarang Story**

It is convenient to treat the story of the Maitreya Hwarang (彌勒仙花) separately because it is dependent on the account of Chinhŭng and the founding of the hwarang in the *Yusa*7).

In the reign of Chinji (眞智 576-579) there was a monk at Hŭngnyun-sa (興輪寺) called Chinja (眞慈), who was for ever going in before the image of the Lord Miruk (Maitreya, 彌勒) and praying: “Great Holy One, deign to appear in this world as a *hwarang*, and let me always be near you to serve you.” His devotion and desire increased exceedingly until one night a monk appeared to him in a dream and said: “If you will go to Suwŏn-sa (水源寺) at Ungch’ŏn (熊川 now Kongju 公州), you will see the Maitreya as a *hwarang*. Chinja woke up amazed and happy and went in search of that temple. He took ten days to get there, kowtowing at each step of the way. Outside the door stood a lad in beautifully embroidered clothes who welcomed him with a radiant smile and led him through the wicket gate into the guestroom. Chinja went in, bowed to the boy and said: “Since you did not know me before, how did you come to welcome me so kindly?” The boy replied: “I too am a man from the capital, and I saw your reverence coming from a long way off, so I came to greet you”. Shortly afterwards he went out without saying where he was going. Chinja thought it was a coincidence and did not pay much attention to the matter. But he told the monks of the temple about the dream he had had and why he had come. “So please can I stay here in the lowest place and wait to see if Maitreya will came as a *hwarang*?” The monks thought he was crazy, but in view of his politeness and humility

7) *Ibid*, see above page 17, note 3.

[page 27]

they said, “South of here at Ch’ ŏnsan (千山) nearby, there has been a wise and holy man living for a long time. He is expert in such matters. Why don’t you go to him?” Chinja did as they said and went to the mountainside where the spirit of the mountain came out in the form of an old man and said: “What have you come here for?” “I want to see Maitreya as a *hwarang*”. The old man said: “You have already seen him outside the gate of Suwŏn-sa. What else do you want?” Chinja was amazed and went back quickly to his own temple.

A month or more later King Chinji heard about all this and summoned Chinja to his presence to ask about it. The King said: “The boy said he was a monk of the capital, and the Holy One would not speak empty words. Why don’t you search for him in the city?” Chinja noted the royal suggestion and gathered the faithful and searched high and low throughout the city, till he found a rapturously pretty boy playing and dancing under the trees by the road to the northeast of the Yŏngmyo Temple (靈妙寺). Chinja was amazed and said: “This is the Maitreya *hwarang*”. He went up to the lad and asked: “Where do you live? I should like to know your name”. The boy said: “My name is Mil (未尸). I lost my parents when I was tiny, and so I do not know my surname”. They got into a car and went back to the king, who took a fancy to the boy and made him a *kuksŏ*n. His followers were united in charity, but his manners and music were different from the ordinary. His *p’ungnyu* delighted the world for seven years, then he suddenly disappeared. Chinja grieved deeply. But by bathing himself in Mil’s grace, and continuing in his purity he was able to live in penitence following the way (道).

The relater adds that the character *mi* sounds like the first character of Mirŭk (彌勒), while the character *ri* (l 尸) looks like the character *ryŏk* (力). So it seems that the name is a riddle writing of Mirŭk. The Holy One was not merely moved by the devotion of Chinja, but appeared several times for the sake of the country. [page 28] Even to the present time a mountain spirit (神仙) is called Maitreya Hwarang, and a mediator is called *mil*. This is all Chinja’s legacy. Still, too, roadside trees are called “sighting of boys” (見如) or more colloquially *sayŏ* (似如) or *inyŏ* (印如) trees.

The temptation to interpret fairy tales is strong. In this tale the most striking thing is the fact that a *hwarang* is Maitreya and that he is connected so firmly with trees. Mishina discusses the possible connection with dendolatry,8) which is an ancient practice in Korea, and also relates the story to the previously mentioned fact9) that when Kim Yusin became a *hwarang* his followers were known by the name of the bodhi tree proper to Maitreya. There may be a hint here of connections between *hwarang* and primitive devotions. But the story is typical of the contents of the *Samguk Yusa* and has a lively attractiveness. It’s context moreover highly colours the interpretation of *hwarang* that the *Yusa* suggests. It is steeped in religion, and has no trace of militarism.

The elucidation of some of the linguistic details of the passage must await further studies in old Korean than are as yet available. The explanation that is offered of the reading of the second character on the name of Mil is odd. Professor Yang has shown that it can be read as final *l* in other texts of the *Yusa*1) But in any case the significance of the name is clear enough. We shall come across the name of Maitreya again in the stories of the *hwarang*. He seems almost to have been their patron.

**V Later historical references.**

Before going on to the investigation of the records of *hwarang* individuals, it will be interesting to see what

8) SKK pages 72ff.

9) See above page 13.

1) *Op. cit*. page 93.

[page 29]

has been the tradition of the Korean historiographer of later days with regard to the question.

Three books seem worth consulting.

First the *Tongguk Tonggam* (東國通鑑) by Sŏ Kŏjŏng, (徐居正) completed in 1484. In this book, under the 37th year of King Chinhŭng of Silla2). we find an abridged version of the passage already quoted3) from the *Samguk Sagi*. It contains most of the part before the quotation from Kim Taemun, with a few minor changes in the characters, but stops short before the mention of statesmen and generals.

However under the accession year of the same King Chinhŭng we find the note that “Silla chose handsome boys of good character and called them *pungwŏlchu* (風月主), seeking good men to join the groups, to encourage filial and fraternal piety, loyalty and sincerity”. And under the 27th year a record of one Paegun (白雲) becoming a *hwarang* at the age of 14, otherwise known only from the *Samguk Sajŏryo*, (三國史節要), compiled about the same time from materials dating from a generation earlier than the *Tongguk T’onggam*.

Next the *Taedong Unbu Kunok* (大東韻府群玉), an encyclopaedic dictionary of Korean matters compiled by Kwŏn Munhae (權文海) in 1588, contains articles on *wŏnhwa, hwarang*, and *kuksŏn*. The first two consist of short quotations from the *Samguk Sagi*. The third notes that *kuksŏn* is the same as *hwarang*. It says again that Paegun (白雲) became a *kuksŏn* at the age of fourteen but in the reign of King Chinp’yŏng (眞平王 579~632). Another reference is added, to Min Chongyu (聞宗儒 1245-1324), the distinguished statesman of Koryŏ who as an infant prodigy of learning was taken into the court and favour of the King. He is therefore compared to the young *hwarang*.

2) *Tongguk Tonggam* 東國通鑑 卷五.

3) See above page 16.

[page 30]

Again we notice a tendency to sidestep any military aspects of *hwarang* history.

Lastly there is the *Haedong Yŏksa* (海東繹史) of the later eighteenth century, compiled by Han Ch’iyŏn (韓到淵). This quotes the same piece of the *Sagi* as does the *Tongguk T’onggam*, prefixing it with the quotation given in the *Sagi* as from Ling-hu Ch’eng, but here ascribed to the *Ta-chung I-shih* (大中遺事) which was the book in which Ling-hu himself had quoted the sentence.

Later history books, even those written as early text books in the modern style before the Japanese annexation in 1910, never say more and usually say less than this about the *hwarang*. Many Koreans now middle aged are scarcely aware of having heard of *hwarang* until after the liberation in 1945. The tradition of the historians was limited, and it is most noticeable that the idea of *hwarang* as a military cult does not become prominent until the days when the Japanese are promoting the idea of *bushido* (武士道). Either from imitation or emulation, it is at that time that the *hwarang* are presented as primarily military. How much justification there was for this attitude we shall find in considering the accounts of individual *hwarang* in the *Sagi* and the *Yusa*.

**IV Individual Hwarang**

There are a number of *hwarang* recorded by name in the sources. Their biographies, or the anecdotes about them, throw a little light on the *hwarang* institution in almost every case, so the examination of each indiviaual has more value than the mere creation of a list of names.

We have already mentioned a few *hwarang* by name: Sŏrwŏn, presumed to be the same man as Wŏllang4), of whom nothing more is known than has already been

4) See above pages 18 and 23.

[page 31]

said; and Paegun, who is mentioned, on what original authority we do not know, in the *Tongguk T’onggam*5) But neither of these gives much information about the status or activity of *hwarang* that is not implicit in the two accounts of the institution already given, beyond the fact that Paegun was married, and the age at which he became a *hwarang* was fourteen.

References to *hwarang* in the *Samguk Sagi* and the *Samguk Yusa* may be divided into two kinds: the biographies or anecdotes which tell us definitely of any man that he was made a *hwarang* or had been one; and the references to men whose names are given with the suffix *nang* (郞), which is reasonably supposed to indicate that the man was in fact a *hwarang*. In the latter cases there are sufficient indications in the majority of the stories, as will become evident, to establish the principle.

It seems best to take them in chronological order before considering the differences between the general impressions made by the sum of the accounts in each book. The earliest actually dated is Sadaham in the *Sagi* in 562; the latest is Hyojong in the *Yusa* in the second half of the ninth century, thus covering a range of some three hundred years.

Sadaham (斯多含) was of noble birth, since he was not only a descendant of an earlier ruler, but belonged to the aristocratic rank known as *chin’gol* (眞骨) the second of the exclusive and aristocratic so-called “bone ranks” of Silla. It seems from the *Sagi*6) account that although he was a youth of excellent character he was not able to become a *hwarang* as soon as some of his friends thought he was worthy. When he did, his followers (從) numbered a thousand, and he was

5) See above page 29.

6) 史記卷四十四 Sadaham is obviously a Silla name transliterated in Chinese. I follow normal Korean practice by transcribing all names in modern Korean pronunciation, except the few where Dr. Yang has suggested an old Korean pronunciation. Cf. above page 7 note 2.

[page 32]

personally interested in all of them.

At that time, A.D. 5627) the king ordered Isabu (異斯 夫) to attack the little state of Kaya (加耶 or Kara 加羅 or Karak 駕洛), and Sadaham begged to be commissioned in the expeditionary force. In view of his extreme youth (he was about 15 or 16 years old), the king was reluctant, but he finally gave in and commissioned the lad as a commander (貴幢裨將). Sadaham then persuaded Isabu to let him and his large band of followers lead off with the attack on the gate of Chŏndallyang (旃檀梁), which they took by surprise and thereby brought the war to an early conclusion.

As a reward the boy was given three hundred prisoners of war for his own, but he set them all free. So the king tried to reward him with land, but it was only when pressed by the royal will that he accepted anything at all.

Very shortly afterwards, when Sadaham was seventeen, his friend Mugwan (武官), with whom he had sworn friendship to death, died of sickness. Sadaham mourned him for seven days, and then died himself.

An interesting story in many ways. It reveals several facts about the *hwarang* and their times. Firstly we learn of the rank from which *hwarang* were taken, the *chin’gol* in this case. Secondly that he became a *hwarang* at the age of fifteen or earlier, but there was some delay about it. Thirdly that although he was a *hwarang* he had some difficulty in getting permission to take a leading part in the war, or for that matter to get into the war at all, even though it was an aggressive war planned in advance by the king who himself founded the *hwarang*, Chinhŭng. Lastly we seem here to to find a suggestion that the members of his band were not called *hwarang* themselves, but are referred to only as *nangdo*, the followers of the *hwarang*. The suffix *nang* by itself

7) 三國 史記 卷四.

[page 33]

however is given in the case of the name of Mugwan-nang, Sadaham’s bosom friend, who is unlikely to have been less than equal to him in rank, and so offers another indication that we can rely on the fact that this suffix as a title does indicate that a man was a *hwarang*.

The next group of *hwarang* known to us by name belong to the reign of the following king, Chinp’yŏng (眞平王 579-632). It is again in the *Sagi* that we find the name of Kim Hŭmch’un (金欽春). His son held the same rank as Sadaham’s father (級飡). His name is also written Kim Hŭmsun (金欽純). He was grandfather of the famous general Kim Yŏngyun (金令胤). He was an upright and excellent youth and became a *hwarang*. Later, under King Munmu (文武王 661-681) he became prime minister (宰臣) and filled the office with honour. In 660 he was ordered by the king to go out with Kim Yusin8) to assist the T’ang general Su Ting-fang (蘇定方) in the war against Paekche. They commanded 50,000 men. At the battle of Hwangsan (黃山 now Yŏnsan 連山) he encouraged his son Pan’gul (盤屈) to go into the thick of the battle where it was almost certain he would be killed. He was. It is not recorded that Pan’gul was a hwarang.9)

The *Yusa* lists under the same reign (Chinp’yŏng), three *hwarang* names, and assigns to each a number. No 5 Kŏryŏl (居烈), No 6 Silch’ŏ (實處 or Tolch’ŏ 突處), and No 7 Podong (寶同).1) They are told of as going to visit the Diamond Mountains (楓岳) with their followers. The story is of little historical interest with regard to *hwarang* as it deals chiefly with how they stopped on the way because of heavenly portents, which were removed by the efforts of a monk, whose song is preserved.2) At the same time some Japanese visitors or raiders

8) See below, page 35.

9) 史記 卷四十七

1) 遺事 卷七 融天師彗星歌

2) See below, page 48.

[page34]

withdrew to their own country. The story is mainly interesting as a specific instance of *hwarang* travelling to distant mountains.

The *Yusa* also contains another *hwarang* of the same reign. This is in many ways an odd tale even for the *Yusa*. It tells of a monk called Hyesuk (惠宿) who had belonged to the band of the *hwarang* Hose (好世). The principal story about him is told as happening after he had retired and become a monk, and Hose had “removed his name from the Yellow Book (黃卷)”, which evidently means that he had retired from the ranks of the *hwarang*. However twenty years later another *hwarang*, the *kuksŏn* Kudam (瞿旵), comes hunting near the place where Hyesuk is living, and the story really concerns their meeting. They begin by stripping off their clothes and racing and playing together. Kudam is upbraided in a particularly unpleasant fashion by the monk for his selfishness and greediness, when the monk ironically offers the boy a piece cut from his own leg after Kudam has wolfed all the fish they were sharing.

For our purposes the chief point of interest is the Yellow Book. It may have been the name of the roll of *hwarang*, or it may have been a conventional phrase for retirement to say that his name was “removed from the Yellow Book” since in earlier days the word was used in China to refer to important records.3) But we also note that an ex-*hwarang* follower might become a monk.

Also for the reign of Chinp’yŏng is recorded the name of Pihyŏng (鼻荆郞).4) He is presumed to be a *hwarang* only because of the character suffixed to his name. The story tells how he was born to a woman whom the king Chinji (眞智王 576-579) had loved, but as a result of the king’s intercourse with her sometime after his death. The boy was taken into the palace, but from the time he was fifteen he used to go off every

3) The story is in the *Yusa* 卷四 二惠同塵. For the Yellow Book see also below page 39.

4) 運事 卷一 挑花女

[page35]

night to streams and hills where he met and sported with the spirits (鬼). He was persuaded by the king to get the spirits to build a large bridge, and even to find a suitable spirit to help with the government, who was adopted into a noble family and was very useful, but finally turned into a fox and had to be chased and killed by Pihyŏng himself.

Whatever may be the facts behind this weird tale, we notice that the age of the *hwarang* is fifteen, and that he plays by streams. His power over the spirits seems to be unusual, and is remarked as such by the king. Nevertheless, it must be an old tradition about the *hwarang* that he could control the spirits.

With the next man we are on much surer historical ground, as one generally feels when dealing with the *Sagi.* This man is kim Yu-sin (金庾信), one of the greatest of Korea’s heroes.5) The *Yusa* also contains a story about him, saying he became a *kuksŏn* and a skilled swordsman at 18, but it is full of apparitions and wonders. The *Sagi* treats him to a longer biography than any other individual of any kind, allowing him three complete sections (卷) to himself. He became a *hwarang* at fifteen, and we have already twice noted that at that time his followers were given a name connected with the Maitreya Buddha. Perhaps no other *hwarang* has contributed so much to the current popular idea of the institution as Kim Yusin. He has been built into novels6) and his part in the wars through which Silla united the whole peninsula under her rule has contributed to the oft repeated statement that the purpose of the *hwarang* was for the fighting of this war. Even elements in his story which are not clearly connected with his status as a *hwarang* have been transferred to all *hwarang*. A striking example is that of his vigil in the rock cave of Chungak (中嶽). It fits so easily into popular ideas about the initiation of a mediaeval

5) 史記卷四十一, 四十ニ, 四十三, 遺事 卷一 金庚信

6) e.g., Chu Yosup (朱耀燮) *Kim Yusin, the Romances of a Korean Warrior of the 7th Century* (in English), Seoul 1947.

[page36]

knight. Sometimes elaborate descriptions of the investiture of a *hwarang* have been invented.7)

However the evidence of his military appointment comes when he is 34 years old. The rest of his story is of his sagacity and courage as a general. He was the most famous general in the wars of unification. He was present fighting with the armies of T’ang when Paekche was defeated in 660, and again at the battle of P’yŏng- yang in the following year.

He lived to the remarkable age of 79, and was given a magnificent state funeral. He had five sons, four daughters and at least one bastard.8) This last fact reminds us that chastity has never been proposed as binding on the *hwarang*. In fact Kim Yusin has left a legacy of folktales clearly demonstrating that in his youth—the very period when he should have been most active as a *hwarang*—he was involved in illicit liaisons.9)

Here is the military *hwarang* par excellence. But the honest reader must note that the *Sagi* really tells us practically nothing about the difference it made to Kim Yusin that he was ever a *hwarang.* For all that the *Sagi* has so much to say of him, he may well have been just one of those “great generals” who rose from the *hwarang* ranks.

The next examples come from the period of Kim Yusin’s life. In the year 6271) there was a famine in the land as a result of which some of the young people stole grain. One man called Kŏmgun (劍君) refused to share in it. He was a follower of the *hwarang*

7) Cf., Chu Yosup. *op. cit.* pages 3ff. This is a pleasant tissue of material from the *Yusa* etc, but it is quite without any historical warranty. Also 孫晋泰 韓國民族史槪論 (Seoul, 1948) p. 129.

8) 三國史記 卷四十三

9) Cf. Ch’oe Sangsu (崔常壽) *Hanguk Mingan Chŏnsŏl Chip* (韓國民問傳 說集) Seoul 1958, page 214. The same story is to be found in the Tongguk Yoji Sungnam (東國與地勝覽 卷二十ᅳ 天官寺).

1) 三國史記 卷四十八

[page37]

Kŭnnang (近郞). In fear lest he should reveal their crime, his companions resolved to kill him. He knew of this, and in spite of the fact that Kŭnnang tried to dissuade him, he went to the banquet at which he knew that he was to be served poison, and ate it and died.

When Kŏmgun protested that he would not share the grain, he said that since he had learned *p’ungwŏl* from Kŭnnang he could not do it. The story is quoted to demonstrate the principles inculcated in *hwarang* training. Yet it was Kŭnnang, the *hwarang,* who tried to persuade his inferior, Kŏmgun, to run away rather than be a martyr for honesty.

No indication of the ages of people is given in this story, but Kŏmgun’s rank as a local official is given (舍人). It is well down in the list of precedence.

Kim Hŭmun (金歆運) died in battle in 655, although it had been pointed out to him that he could have avoided the engagement and that his death would probably never be known as a glorious one. As a boy he had been in the band of the *hwarang* Munno (文努), and heard the praises of the glory of those who died in battle and had been inspired by them, so that people said that he would never turn back if he ever went on the battlefield. He was another involved in the wars of unification.

But the compiler of the *Sagi* adds to his account of Kim Humun2) a quotation (論) from his earlier account of the foundation of *hwarang*, including the quotation from Kim Taemun about generals and statesmen (with the variations in characters that were followed by Sŏ Kŏjŏng in editing the *Tongguk T’onggam*),3) and adds that this is an example of what Kim Taemun meant. He says that by the third generation of *hwarang* there were more than two hundred of them,

2) 三國 史記 卷四十七

3) See above page 29.

[page38]

and all their names and great deeds are recorded in their biographies (傳記).

The only remaining example in the *Yusa* is that of Kwanch’ang (官昌).4) His name is sometimes given as Kwanjang (官狀). He was a soldier’s son, who became a *hwarang* as a boy, and was an expert horseman and archer by the time he was sixteen. He was apparently very little older when he was a commander in the army fighting against Paekche at the battle of Hwangsan (黃山 now Yŏnsan) in 660. His father encouraged him to go into the thick of the battle, and he was captured, but the Paekche general on seeing the face of a boy when the vizor was lifted, refused. to kill him, and sent him back because he was so young. The lad stayed just long enough to drink some water from his cupped hands and returned to the battle. This time he was killed and his head was sent back on a horse. He was posthumously honoured with a title by the King. The record is astonishingly alive when it speaks of the words of the father on receiving his son’s head. He wiped the blood with his sleeve and said, “My boy’s face seems alive. But he died for the king. There is nothing to grieve about”.

Kwanch’ang and Kim Hŭmun are the last *hwarang* recorded in the *Sagi* with glorious battlefield deaths. Hence the appending of the quotation from Kim Taemun after the end of the account of Hŭmun, who comes last, in spite of the reverse in the chronological order of his death and Kwanch’ang’s. After this the only *hwarang* mentioned in the *Sagi* come in the story of Kŏmgun given above. We have no more stories so good of military *hwarang*, for these are notably missing from the *Yusa*, where the remainder of our material is to be found. However the *Yusa* does record the death of two more *hwarang* at the battle of Yŏnsan: Changch’ullang (長春郞) and P’arang (罷郞). It says

4) 三國史記 卷四十七

[page39]

no more than that their spirits later appeared to the king in a dream and had to be helped with buddhist prayers5).

Nevertheless there is an unmistakably military air about the story of Taemara (竹旨 or 竹曼 or 智官) and the young Siro (written as 得烏 or 谷烏)6). They are recorded as of the time of King Hyoso (孝昭王 692-702). Siro was of medium rank and had “been enrolled in the *Yellow Book of P’ungnyu*”(隷名於風流黃卷). The story speaks in terms of almost military discipline. Siro disappeared for ten days. Since he belonged to Taemara’s band, Taemara enquired of the youth’s mother where he was. (There is actually no note of his age, but the presumption is that he was still a mere lad). She said that he had been given an appointment by a provincial official named Iksŏn (益宣). A band of 137 set out with Taemara to find him. Iksŏn finally gave him up only as the result of a generous bribe. This news came to the ears of the *hwaju* (花主, presumably the *hwarang* leader), who had Iksŏn punished.

The *Yusa* chapter closes with an account of the mysterious events before the birth of Taemara. The suggestion is that his birth was due to the intervention, if not the actual transmigration of the soul, of a hermit from Chukchiryŏng or Taemara Pass (竹旨嶺), whence his name. We note that an image of Maitreya was set up in memory of the hermit.

Taemara was a lieutenant of Kim Yusin during the unification wars, and Siro’s song in his honour is recorded. He was also Prime Minister of Silla (宰相).

If the chronology is correct, the abduction of Siro must have happened more than thirty years after the time that Taemara had been associated with Kim Yusin,

5) 遺事 卷一 長春郞.

6) 遺事 卷二 孝昭王代 See also below page 49. For the Korean readings of the names see Yang Chudong, *op. cit*. pp. 69ff.

[page40]

because the *Yusa* account says that he served under Queen Chindŏk, (who reigned from 647 to 654) as well as the subsequent kings. Assuming him to have been very young at the time, he could not have been under fifty by the time of King Hyoso. This is older than the other evidence leads one to expect to find an active *hwarang.* But one feels always wary about the accuracy of the *Yusa*, and not much could be reliably built on its chronology in such details, especially since the main purpose of the author in telling the stories at all seems to be the recording of adventures and wonders. Mishina suggests that the incident belongs to the reign of Chinp’yŏng, and only the song to the reign of Hyoso7). But maybe the explanation is even simpler than that. The compiler knew that Taemara had served as minister under four kings, the last of whom was Sinmun (神文) whose reign immediately preceded that of Hyoso. Although the chronological system of the anecdotal sections of the *Yusa* does not have the rigidity of the *Sagi*, it would have been tempting for the compiler, if he did not know exactly when the Siro incident took place, to have given the story of Taemara under the reign in which it was presumed that Taemara died. The general chronological carelessness of the section is shown by the fact that the story of Taemara’s birth is given after the story of the Siro incident, and that Giro’s song, said to have been composed “earlier” (初), is given right at the end. The important fact that emerges out of all this being that the story of Taemara and Siro does not give us the evidence, which is equally lacking elsewhere, that the *hwarang* initiates remained *hwarang* all their lives. The others stories in the *Yusa* indicate that a man could leave the *hwarang*. There is no reason to suppose that “once a *hwarang* always a *hwarang*”. It seems to me far more probable that as the boys grew up they ceased to be regarded as *hwarang*.

However here we have our second reference to the

7) SKK p.66. Cf. also 三國史記 卷第五 眞德王 三年

[page 41]

Yellow Book, and our first to the *hwaju,* who seems to have been a person of considerable influence. It is not stated that Iksŏn was a *hwarang*, but on the other hand it is not stated that he was not, so we cannot say whether there was any particular jurisdiction being exercised by the *hwaju* over him. No indication of Taemara’s rank is given, but Iksŏn is stated to hold a rank (阿干) three degrees higher than that (級干) held by Siro.

In the *Yusa* chapter8) about the image of Buddha at Paengnyul-sa (栢栗寺), there is a story of another *hwarang* of Hyoso’s reign. He is actually said to have been a *kuksŏn*. He is spoken of as having a thousand men with “gemmed shoes” (珠履), among whom his best friend was Ansang (安常). His own name was Purye (夫禮). He went off with his men to the mountains of Kangwŏn province to a place called Kŭmnan (金蘭, now T’ongch’ ŏn 通川), and there he was captured by bandits—possibly Malgal (靺鞨) tribespeople. The rest of the story tells of how he was joined by Ansang, how the King was much distressed at his loss, and went to consult the sacred harp (玄琴) and pipe (神笛), but found them missing too. The parents of Purye prayed to the buddha in Paengnyul-sa for some days, when suddenly he and his friend appeared behind the image, bringing the lost musical instruments.

At the end of the chapter the compiler adds that the popular opinion that Ansang was a member of the band of the *hwarang* Chunyŏng (俊永郞) is unprovable. It was known that Chinjae (眞材), Pŏnhwan(繁完) and others belonged to Chunyŏng’s group, but it was not possible to tell them all.

So far as this story throws any light on the nature of the *hwarang* it is chiefly in giving us yet another example of the journey to the distant mountains of

8) 遗事 卷三 栢栗寺.

[page 42]

Kangwŏn, and although there is no definite description, the story does seem again to assume a degree of organization in the *hwarang* groups. It would read, as would other stories, very intelligently, if the word *kuksŏn* meant the *hwarang* leader. However it reads equally well if it does not. There is nothing warlike about the characters. But they are living after the period of Silla’s great military glory.

The next recorded name of a *hwarang* is half a century later, and by the time he comes into the records he is no longer a *hwarang*9). This is Wŏlmyŏng, the buddhist monk (月 明師). In the nineteenth year of King Kyŏngdŏk (景德王 742-765) two suns appeared side by side in sky, and stayed like that for ten days. A soothsayer said that when the right monk (緣僧) appeared and chanted a hymn, the portent would pass away. So an appropriate altar was prepared by the King. The monk who passed by in such a way as to satisfy the requiremenents was Wŏlmyŏng. He protested that he had belonged to a *hwarang* band (國仙之從), and so could compose a song in Korean (鄉歌) but was not expert enough to do so in Sanskrit. Nevertheless the king insisted, the song was sung, and the sun came right again. The song is recorded1).

The chief interest in the story for our present purpose is the note that he had left the *hwarang* band, though it must be noted that he is not explicitly stated to have been a *hwarang* himself. Also that the ability to sing songs in Korean is a natural result of having been a *hwarang*. There is some interest too in the fact that the story has further elements of Maitreya worship in it. When the King rewarded Wŏlmyŏng, the gifts of tea and crystal rosary beads which he gave him were removed by a pretty boy who disappeared into a picture of Maitreya. But this aspect of the tale and the song

9) 逮事 卷五 月明師환率歌.

1) See below page 50.

[page43]

itself must be dealt with a little later2).

Our next *hwarang* is very near in date to Wŏlmyŏng if not actually contemporary. His name is Kilbo (耆婆)3) and he is known only through a song addressed to him by a buddhist monk4) It is in this song that we find the title hwap’an5) given to Kilbo. His name is buddhist, and suggests longevity.

The next example comes from the reign of Honan (憲安857-861) a century later than Kilbo. It is actually a story of the King Kyŏngmun (景文 reigned 861-875), who as Ungnyŏm (膺廉) became a *kuksŏn* at the age of eighteen. The previous king had called him when he was still a *hwarang* and asked him the most wonderful thing he had seen on his *hwarang* journeys. He said he had seen a man of high worth take a low seat, a rich man wearing simple clothing, and a nobleman who concealed his splendour. As a result of the good character shown by these answers he was married to the king’s daughter and appointed successor to the king, who had no sons. Later in life he himself arranged for *hwarang* to go to the Kŭmnan6) mountains and there four of them composed 300 songs (possibly in honour of the number canonized in the *Shih-ching*) to help with the governing of the country. The *Yusa* preserves the names of the songs, but not the texts7).

In the reign of Hŏngang (憲康 875-886) we have the name of Ch’oyong (處容). He was said to be one of the seven sons of the Dragon of the Eastern Sea (東海龍). These had all danced before the king. Ch’oyong had gone to court and later married a beautiful girl

2) See below pages 50 and 62.

3) For this reading of the Chinese characters in old Korean see Yang Chudong, op, cit., page 319.

4) See below page 51.

5) See above page 7.

6) 遺事 卷二, 四十八景文大王.

7) The names of the other *hwarang* mentioned are *kuksŏn* Yowŏn (邀元), Yŏhun (譽听). Kyewŏn(桂元) and Sukchong (叔宗).

[page 44]

given to him by the king. A disease spirit took the form of a man and got into bed with her. Ch’oyong drove it away with a famous song and dance. He therefore became regarded as a man powerful with demons, and his picture was later used to frighten devils from houses. This is an interesting case of *hwarang* and shamanism being connected. The song will be dealt with presently8).

The last recorded hwarang name is that of Hyojong (孝宗)9). He was of the time of Queen Chinsŏng (眞聖女王 887-897). We hear of his dancing at the Namsan Posŏkchŏng (鲍石亭), a well-known haunt of spirits, and of his relief assistance to a needy family of an old woman and her daughter, in which all his followers cooperated1). This is the nearest thing in all the *hwarang* stories to any note of chivalrous action to damsels in distress. But he was really helping the family, not rescuing the girl.

Ch’oe Namsŏn (崔南善) in his edition of the *Yusa* treated one more name as being that of a *hwarang*. This was Kim Hyŏn (金現)2). The story about him is concerned with wonders involving tigers who are really pretty girls, and Kim’s romances. Since the title *nang* is not added to his name, but he is merely described as *nanggun* (郞君), it seems very doubtful whether he was a *hwarang* or not. In any case the story has no hints that I can recognize as at all helping in our understanding of the *hwarang* and their practices or purposes.

Apart from a few details, such as the Yellow Book and the exact age at which they became *hwarang*— always in the teens and mostly early on—these accounts

8) See below page 52. The story of Ch’oyong is in the *Yusa* 卷二 處容歌.

1) 遺事 卷五 貧女養母

2) *Yusa* 卷五. The character (郞) is also suffixed to the name of the third century Yŏnorang (延鳥節), but the date and legend logether make it clear he was not a *hwarang*.

[page 45]

of individuals really do little more than support the accounts given with regard to the earlier founding of *hwarang* by King Chinhŭng. We know that some of them were soldiers; we know some details of the journeys that some of them took to visit distant mountains—generally the Diamond Mountains. We have more information about their musical activities. We learn that they could and did retire from the *hwarang*: it was not a case of once a *hwarang* always a *hwarang*. We have one possible, but very doubtful, instance of an elderly man, Taemara, being concerned in the administration of *hwarang*. We have a number of stories of shamanistic activities.

The correct interpretation of all these facts depends on the attitude which we take towards the books in which they are recorded. No-one will feel very surprised to find that the military *hwarang* are mostly found in the writings of the soldier statesman Kim Pusik, while the eldritch stories of the *Yusa* stress the religious element in their activity and their buddhist connections. But this division depending on prejudice and personality is a valuable reminder that the apparent distinction in time, by which the military lads all appear to have lived in the first century of *hwarang* history, and which may lead us to a simple explanation by which after the occasion of war was removed the institution deteriorated until it became effete, is not necessarily valid in all respects. Because the military stories are all done with by the middle of the seventh century, it does not follow that the dancing and singing and courting of spirits never happened in the same early period, or were not equally important at that time.

On the other hand it must be admitted that the accounts of the institution of *hwarang*, backed by the quotation from Ch’oe Ch’iwŏn, are very late indeed. It could be argued that they represent a late tradition, emphasizing the current activities of *hwarang* in the late [page 46] Silla period, whereas in their earlier days it was the warriors of Hwangsan who had been typical of the institution and its purpose. This is the common interpretation given today. Unfortunately it is not in fact the only possible interpretation of the sources, nor necessarily the best from the historian’s point of view. It is as likely that the warrior boys were a transitory phenomenon in an institution which was primarily religious or moral. I have pointed out several times already the details which I believe weaken the case for interpreting the *hwarang* as essentially military, even in the Sagi accounts of the heroes. It seems most likely that *hwarang* were to the people of Silla something of what the Boy Scouts or the Boys’ Brigade have been to the English in this century: a band of adolescents of high purpose, who could not avoid being both religious and at least quasi-military, sometimes very military, because that was the nature and need of the society in which they lived.

**VIII The Hwarang Songs**.

Our knowledge of the vernacular poetry of Silla is restricted to a meagre collection of fourteen pieces, usually known as *hyangga* (鄉歌), preserved in the *Samguk Yusa*. It is not usual to doubt that they really represent the songs of the period they claim to come from. The only other poems of the same genre are those of the monk Pyŏn Kyunyŏ (邊均如). There are eleven of these. He lived from 917 to 973, spending most of his life under the Koryo (高麗) dynasty after the disintegration of Silla. His eleven surviving poems are recorded in a biography compiled in 1070 (*Kyunyŏ Chŏn* 均如傳). They are buddhist, didactic and devotional. Thus all the texts we have of Silla poetry are very late.

The study of these poems is fraught with many difficulties, not least linguistic ones, owing to the fact that they are written in the complex system called *idu* (吏讀) using Chinese now ideographically, now phonet- [page 47] ically, in a primitive and clumsy attempt to record native Korean sentences. The initial work of deciphering these poems in modern times was done by Dr Ogura Shimpei (小倉進平)3). But the labours of this great pioneer have been largely superseded by the work of Dr Yang Chudong4).

Although there are debatable matters yet in the details of understanding the *hyangga*, the conclusions of Dr Yang are at least sufficiently established to give us a fair interpretation of the songs insofar as they affect our knowledge of the *hwarang*. But since the original texts are meaningless without extensive linguistic commentary, it seems that it will be enough here if I offer straightforward translations into English, prescinding from the discussion of either the philological or the literary aspects of the poems. The curious can refer to Dr Yang’s work and to the notes in such a work as Dr Kim Sayŏp’s history of Korean literature5) of which I have also made considerable use.

However, I will prefix the translations with the note that at least three names are used to describe this genre. The names are *hyangga* (鄉歌), *tonnorae* or *tosolga* (兜率歌), and *saenaennorae* (詞腦歌 or 思內歌). The etymology of these words is a matter for discussion, but we shall not be far from the meaning of them if we regard it as being “Korean song”, except in the case of *tosolga*, which could also be a religious hymn, and must be mentioned again more specifically later.

The corpus contains six songs that were written by *hwarang* or about *hwarang*. Two them are by one man, so five authors are represented. One of them is apparently defective. Again it will be best to take them in chronological order as nearly as possible.

3) 鄉歌 及 吏讀研究 Seoul, 1929.

4) *Op. cit*., above page 7 note 2. Many writers treat the *Toijang-ga* (悼二 將歌) of the eleventh century as *hyangga*, bnt their form is notably different.

5) 金恩库: 改稿國文學史 Seoul 1956.

[page 48]

The first claims to be quite early, from the reign of Chinp’yŏng (579-632). It has already been referred to6)

*The Song of the Comet* (彗星歌)

See the fort by the Eastern Sea

Where Gandarva used to play.

The islanders have come,

There are the beacon flames.

But the moon, hearing

The Three Flower Boys are visiting the hills

Quickly shows her beams.

A star sweeps a road.

Some say: “See, a broom-star!”

Lo! The moon has gone down.

Now, what comet could this be?

According to the *Yusa* story7) the author was the buddhist monk Yungch’ ŏn (融天師). The Gandharva (乾達婆) are the musicians of Indra, the sky god, associated with the moon and medicine, and also with ecstasy and eroticism. Yang Chudong suggests that the whole phrase means a mirage8). The word for comet is etymologically “broom-star”.

The song is not by a *hwarang*, it adds nothing to what we have already learned from the accompanying story about the three youths and their connection with the buddhist monk. It is of interest to us in the *hwarang* connection, chiefly as indicating what their songs could be like. The same is true of most of the following songs too.

6) Above page 33.

7) Cf. above page 33 note 1.

8) *Op. cit*. page 574.

[page 49]

The next song is the one written by Siro about the senior hwarang, Taemara. In spite of the doubt referred to above about the *Yusa*’s dating of this story, it seems reasonable to attribute the song to the reign of Hyoso (692-702), or earlier.9)

*Song of Yearning for the Flower Boy Taemara* (慕竹旨郞歌)

The whole world weeps sadly

For departing Spring.

Wrinkles lance

Your once handsome face.

For the space of a glance

May we meet again.

Fair lord, what hope for my burning heart?

How can I sleep in my alley hovel?

Again there is little here to detain us, beyond noting the intensity of the expression of devotion.

About fifty years later come the next two songs, from the reign of Kyŏngdŏk (742-765), both by the same singer, Wŏlmyŏng.1) Wŏlmyŏng was no longer a *hwarang* when the songs were written, but he states clearly enough that the first of the two was written in the *hwarang* style. In the *Yusa* it is described as a *tosolga*. In other connections this word is taken to refer to the refrain or genre of Korean songs of Silla,2) but in this case it is undoubtedly an ordinary buddhist term and refers to the Tusita Heaven (兜率天) within which is the pure land of Maitreya. In fact this is a devout song in honour of Maitreya. It is unusual in that the *Yusa* itself provides a Chinese paraphrase of it.

9) See above page 40. Also, for an earlier date and another interpretation of the song, Sin Susik (辛秀植:) in 국어국문학 No. 23, Seoul, 1961. Pp. 13ff.

1) See above page 42.

2) Cf. Yang Chudong *op. cit*. page 525.

[page50]

兜 率 歌

龍 樓 此 日 散 花 歌

挑 送 靑 雲 一 片花

殷 重 直 心 之 聊 使

遠 邀 兜 率 大 僊 家

Or, in translation from the Korean:

*The Tusita Hymn*

O flowers scattered here today,

As we sing the scattered petals song,

Heed the orders of this upright heart

And haste to serve Maitreya’s throne.

It is notable that the character used to indicate Maitreya in the Chinese translation (僊) is a variant of the character (仙) used so often to indicate the *hwarang* themselves. According to the story Maitreya answered the prayer in person.

The second song is a prayer for a departed soul.

*Song for a Dead Sister* (爲亡妹營齋歌)

Here is the road of life and of death.

Were you afraid

When you left, not even saying:

“I am going now”?

Like fallen leaves borne here and there

On the early autumn wind,

Though born from the same branch

We know not whither we go.

How I strive to perfect my road, waiting

To meet you in the abode of Amitabha.

This is strictly a buddhist song, relevant to *hwarang* solely because of the history of the author.

The next song dates from the same reign, and is attributed to the monk Ch’ungdam (忠談師). Its con-[page 51] nection with *hwarang* is merely that it praises one of them. The *Yusa*1) gives no further information about the circumstances of its composition.

Song in Praise of the Flower Boy Kilbo (讚耆婆郞歌)

Moon

Appearing fitfully

Trailing the white clouds,

Whither do you go?

The face of the Flower Boy Kilbo

Was reflected in the pale green water.

Here among the pebbles of the stream

I seek the bounds of the heart he bore.

Ah, ah! Flower Boy hero,

Noble pine that fears no frost!

There is little here to comment on for the sake of learning more about the *hwarang*. At this distance of time it is hard even to perceive the exact nuance of the emotion. But we do know that the author was in the habit of making a libation of tea every year to Maitreya at the Samhwaryŏng (三花嶺), which may have been a *hwarang* memorial.

The last of the series is the latest song recorded by the *Yusa*, and possibly the most famous of all. It is said to date from the time of Hŏn’gang (875-886). It is the shaman song that passed into the repertoire of the Koryŏ dynasty in an extended form and was believed potent against diseases.2) Neverthless on reading its earliest version one is subject to many imaginative possibilities as to what its origin may have been. It belongs to the story of Ch’ ŏyong.3)

1) See above page 43.

2) Cf Kim Sa-yop, *op. cit*., page 291.

3) See above page 44.

[page52]

Chŏyongs Song (處容歌)

Playing in the moonlight of the capital

Till the morning comes,

I return home

To see four legs in my bed.

Two belong to me.

Whose are the other two?

But what was my own

Has been taken from me. What now?

Again the text of the song adds nothing to what we can learn from the story itself as already recounted.

In fact the songs do not materially help in our reconstruction of the *hwarang* picture at all. They are interesting as being the nearest we are ever likely to get to the actual words and thoughts of the *hwarang*. But even so they are full of obscurities and difficulties It is easy but dangerous to treat modern translations of such old texts as though the full implications of the English were present in the mind of the original writer. We cannot accurately fathom the emotions of their structure and meaning. But they do give us a glimpse of the degree of sophistication to which poetry in Old Korea had arrived, and infuse a little life into our discussion of *p’ungnyu*.4)

4) After completing the above section on the *hwarang* songs I first had opportunity to examine Peter Lee’s *Studies in the Saenaennorae — Old Korean Poetry* (Serie Orientale Roma XXII), Rome 1959. This was the first discussion of the poems of Silla to be published in the English language, and is of great interest to readers of English who are not familiar with Korean. It is in the main a digest of Dr Yang’s work.

Mr. Lee translates *hwarang* as ‘knight.’ I believe I shall have here adequately demonstrated why I believe this to be a misleading translation. His versions of the songs differ in several respects from my translations given above.

I notice in addition that Mr Lee seems not to have been acquainted with Mishina’s book on the *hwarang*, and so he accepts the fact that Taemara was still a *hwarang* though in old age, and thus commits himself to the corresponding interpretation of the song and story in question. (*Op. cit*. page 106).

[page53]

**VIII The Hwarang after Silla**

Fascinating though the problem of the *hwarang* of Silla is. it is scarcely more fascinating than the problem of how they faded from the scene. That the institutions of any dynasty should become effete with the decline of the ruling power is not in itself remarkable, and this seems to what happened to the *hwarang*. I think that Professor Reischauer has begged altogether too many questions in his statement that “The Hwarang bands lost their fighting prowess and degenerated into groups of effeminate dilettantes”5) partly because he relies on the common modern idea that the *hwarang* were primarily warriors, but also because the word effeminate seems stronger than the evidence will support.

Indeed the factor that makes the disappearance of the *hwarang* so interesting is the suggestion that their development was not so much a matter of degeneration as of specialisation in some aspects of their original activities in the changed conditions of later society. I said early in this paper that the lexicography of our subject shows that the word *hwarang* has come to be connected with shamans and travelling singers. Since music and religion are significant elements in our earliest descriptions of *hwarang*, it seems altogether too much to ask us to believe that some vital sea-change overtook the *hwarang* of late Silla and they changed their character completely, although that is the view that some modern writers would urge us to take.

There is however the danger of the contrary error, which would ride equally rough shod over the paucity of the evidence and accept as proven what is in my view only the best tenable hypothesis, that the *hwarang* were a religious cult that was the direct ancestor of the

5) E. O. Reischauer and J. K. Fairbank, *East Asia the Great Tradition*, London,I960, page 415.

[page 54]

later dancing boys. This is the view represented by Ayukai and Mishina.

The writers of the Koryŏ period (918-1392) have a group of references to the subject that read more like reminiscences than historical accounts, explaining Koryŏ facts in terms of Silla history. The material has been fully collected by the two Japanese scholars, and a full discussion can be found in Mishina’s work.6)

The key point in the matter seems to be the *palgwanhoe* (八關會) a festival of the Koryŏ dynasty which is recorded as having been founded in the 33rd year of the reign of Chinhŭng, the Silla king who organized the *hwarang.* At this festival the dancing of a group called the sŏllang (仙郞) was a distinctive feature. I have already quoted the article by An Kyehyŏn7) in which he argues for an earlier date for the founding of the *p’algwanhoe* and also for the fact that the *hwarang* performed at it from its inception.

This festival continued to be observed throughout the Koryŏ dynasty, only finally disappearing with the advent of the Yi and their strictly confucian policies. It was a blend of buddhist with earlier Korean religious elements. In the later days the *sŏllang* who took part in it were understood by the men of the time to be the direct descendants of the *hwarang*. The tradition of touring the country to sing and dance in the high places was remembered. The four known as the *Sasŏn* (四仙), An Sang (安詳), Yŏngnang(永郞), Sullang (述郞), and Nam Sŏkhaeng (南石行), whose name was later associated with a religious dance (四仙舜), were especially recalled in the Tongchŏn area. They are clearly the men mentioned already.8)

In the Koryŏ dynasty the name was given to youths

6) SKK pp 273ff.

7) Above page 19 note 9.

[page 55]

trained in buddhist monasteries, and under the reign of Ch’ungnyŏl (忠烈 1275-1308) the title of *sŏllang* was in use for such lads at the palace.9) And then Ayukai discovered that there was an apparently revived military significance for the word at this period. But the references suggest that by this time there was an antiquarian element in ideas about the institution.

There is thus ample evidence that the idea of *kuksŏn* neither died nor came into disrepute during the Koryŏ dynasty, although the classic institution and the word itself seem to have been no longer in use. The next problem is how did the name get transferred to the wandering players, and why did the word *hwarang* survive with them when it was a Silla word, and the later words were *sŏllang* and *kuksŏn*?

So far as I can discover we have only one literary link between the *hwarang* and the players8). This tells us that the masked dance plays and the Ch’ŏyong dance were performed at the *p’algwanhoe* of the Koryŏ court. When, during the Yi dynasty, the masked dance play became the property of the lower classes and its religious origins got more heavily overlaid with peasant satire and slapstick at the expense of the clergy and gentry, it might be natural for the players to be called by the name they had had in the days when it had been a court performance.

A possible explanation of the vocabulary difficulty may be suggested by the fact that the Koryŏ court was centred on the central and north western part of the country, whereas the term *hwarang* has survived better in the South and East where the original *hwarang* had lived.

8) Cf. *Tongguk Yŏji Sŭngnam*, article on T’ongch’ ŏn (通川). Also above page 41.

9) Cf. SKK pp 287ff. Cf also note on Min Chong yu above page.

8) The details of references to the *Koryŏsa* and others are given by Yang Chaeyŏn (梁在淵) in his paper on the Sandaegŭk (山臺戱) in the 30th Anniversary Commemoration Theses of Chungang University, Seoul 1955.

[page 56]

This area also incidentally represents some of the most strongly buddhist parts of the country during the Yi dynasty, and the connection between the wandering players and the buddhists is an important one. Even long after the players had become much busied with satire against the monks, they were normally sheltered in the temples during the off seasons, and they were at times associated with the bands of begging monks and others working for the temples or other rural communities and which were called kŏlliptae (乞粒險) and performed dances and acrobatic tricks very like those done by the troupes of male entertainers called *sadangp’ae* (寺堂牌 or 男寺黨牌). Either of these groups might be associated also with shamanistic activities (*kut* 굿) and various sacrifices. In any case the troupes would almost certainly contain boys called *hwadong* (花童) or *hwarang* (花郞)9) (For an account of their sexual behaviour see the following section).

These were a low class of society, generally outcast or even feared by the common people. Racially many of them derived from the so far little studied *mujari* (무자리, 揚水尺)1), the so-called “Korean gipsies”, who appear in the Three Kingdoms period as nomads keeping cattle and selling basketwork. In later days they were noted for producing exorcists and as the forbears of the strolling players, prostitutes, butchers and other low caste trades. They were of very different stock from the first *hwarang*, it would seem, but in the end their descendants inherited the *hwarang* name.

The transference of the *hwarang* title would seem to have been a natural one. If the latter day *hwarang* lacked the qualities that gained universal reverence for their forerunners, at least the popularity which they did enjoy was based in what were essentially the same activities transferred to another social plane.

9) cf Ayukai *op. cit* pp 78ff.

1) cf. Ch’oe Sangsu, *A Study of the Korean Puppet Play*, Seoul 1961.

[page57]

**IX The Question of Homosexuality**

The question of homosexuality in connection with *hwarang* needs to be considered if only because Ayukai2) has brought it up. But there is also the fact that the latter-day *hwarang*, the players, are notoriously a homosexually liable group.

During the Yi dynasty homosexual practices were regarded with disgust by the confucian gentry. The early apologists of the dynasty held paederasty as one of the crimes of the Koryŏ kings. The most famous case is the scholar-painter-calligrapher King Kongmin (恭愍王 reigned 1352-1374) who towards the end of his life appointed royal catamites called *chajew*i (子弟衛) five of whose names are recorded: Hong Yun (洪倫), Han An (韓安), Kwŏn Chin (權瑨), Hong Kwan (洪寬) and No Sŏn(盧瑄)3).

The word used to describe homosexual activity in the *Koryŏ Sa* in this connection is the Chinese literary expression *lung-yang-chih-ch’ung* (龍陽之寵, Korean pronunciation *yongyang-chi-ch’ong*), which does not have the expected reference to the two male symbols, the dragon and the sun, but refers to a favourite of the feudal lord of Wei (魏) who was known as Lung-yang4). This is a very intellectual expression and has little bearing on the subject in Korea. Like such modern expressions as *namsaek* (男色) and the more figurative *kyega*n (鷄姦) it is literary.

But the Korean language has a native vocabulary on this subject which is not obviously created by a figurative use of words. In Chinese, as in English, the relevant vocabulary is entirely either figurative or learnedly concocted. But in Korean we find *piyŏk* (비역) as a verb and a verbal noun, while both myŏn (면) and

2) *Op. cit*. page 36.

3) 高麗史 列傳嬖辛二 金興度傳

4) See 戰國策 卷第二十五 魏四

[page 58]

*t’otchangi* (톳장이, possibly a figurative expression) are used for a catamite. For native words of no clear etymological significance to have survived suggests that the practice has at some time had an appreciable place in the culture.

It is certain that homosexuality was well known in rural society during the Yi dynasty. I have heard of it from older men in the villages of South Kyŏnggido, and Bishop Cooper has spoken of its occurrence in the same area at the beginning of this century. There is a vaguely unsavoury reputation sometimes connected with the *chibang yangban* (地方兩班) or provincial gentleman, but I heard in the villages more of the practices of the lower classes, among whom, for instance, paederasty seems to have formed a recognized outlet for a young widower, and caused very little stigma to be attached to his favourite who on growing older could turn to normal sexuality in marriage. I was told that the presents, especially of clothing, given to the boy would make his status public knowledge in the village.

Something of this is also reflected in the salacious chatter of village youths and in some versions of the *Kkoktu Kaksi* (꼭두각시 ) traditional puppet play of Korea. In these the wastrel hero, Pak Ch’ ŏmji (朴僉知), who is a satire on the provincial *yangban*, is made to have spent some of his money on a pretty boy, *midongaji* (美童아지)5), and a number of coarse homosexual puns are introduced. Collections of coarse anecdotes such as the *Myŏngyŏp Chihae* (蓂葉志諧) of Hong Manjong (洪萬宗, flourished, during the reign of Sukchong 1675-1721) contain tales, though not many, of like ‘import. It is also noticeable that the essentially innocuous expression used in the *Kkoktu Kaksi* text referred to, *midong* (美童), meaning a goodlooking boy, usually carries overtones of paederasty. It is used thus in Korean translations of the bible to translate the Hebrew *qadesh* or male prostitute6).

5) Ch’oe Sangsu (崔常壽), A Study of the Korean Puppet Play, Seoul 1961.

6) I Kings xv. 12, xxij. 46, et al.

[page 59]

But the word *midong* and the reputation for homosexuality were particularly attached to the wandering players and musicians. It was almost normally assumed that the all male teams used the boys as catamites. They were dressed attractively, often in girl’s clothes, though not always, and on occasion it seems that they were also prostituted. Professor Ch’oe Sangsu tells me that regular *berdache* marriages were sometimes entered into within the bands, and he has met and interviewed such cases.

Song Sokha in the work already referred to7) speaks of the *namsadang* as troupes of peformers whose chief purpose was to earn money as boy prostitutes, and says that they were formed on the analogy of the strange husband-and-wife teams for travelling prostitution which were a feature of rural Korea from the middle of the Yi dynasty onwards. He claims that the male teams were not set in circulation until the end of the dynasty, but adduces no evidence for this statement. He points out that they were often associated with buddhist temples and with young monks collecting alms for their establishments. It is in such a connection that one may come across the word *namch’ang* (男娼) or boy entertainer.

The *namsadang*, however, were also associated with shamanistic practices. Very occasionally one can still meet them performing *kosa* (告祀) and other religious ceremonies in the Korean countryside, were the boys have a specific role in the dancing. The connection of shamanism with homosexuality is a little obscure. Transvestitism is a common and well attested practice for shamans of both sexes, although in the recent periods transvestitism among Korean adult male shamans does not seem to have been normal. Homosexuality among the shamans of Siberia is attested by various writers8),

7) *Op. cit*. page 102.

8) Cf Ch’oe Namsŏn (崔南善) *Salman Kyodapki* (薩滿敎剳記) in Kyemyŏng (啓明) No. 19, Seoul, 1927.

[page60]

but modern Korean shamanism has diverged in many respects from the forms found in the more primitive cultures of north-east Asia, and it would be rash, without further evidence, to suggest too close a relation between shamanism and homosexuality in this country.

The *namsadang* itself is not a very clearly defined institution. It shades off into the allied groups of begging monks on the one hand and into the village farmers’ bands on the other. I do not know of any really adequate study of this aspect of Yi dynasty society. I know of one case where the village band maintained a *midong* chosen for his good looks, who was not expected to work, but to dress prettily and entertain the labourers. He had reached the age of twenty and still held this position, which was beginning to be thought of as undesirable by other people. There was no clear imputation of paederasty, but a strong sense of inversion setting in.

This then is the Korean background on the subject. It is strikingly different from the luxurious literary and theatrical homosexual tradition in China, and even more so from the glamorized and pseudo-chivalrous homosexual code of late mediaeval Japan, with its manuals and novelettes. It is a matter belonging to a lower stratum of Korean life, with possible primitive religious connections, though they are now exceedingly dim ones. And against that background we must consider Ayukai’s9) suggestion that the *hwarang* of Silla may have been a homosexual cult.

The chief bases for the contention are the constantly stressed prettiness of the boys, their gay clothes and cosmetics, the extreme of affection displayed in such a story as that of Sadaham1) and the foundation myth about the women, especially if the latter is taken in conjunction with the theory that the *hwarang* cult was inspired by an ancient shamanistic cult.

9) *Op. cit*. page 36.

1) See above page 32. Cf. also Siro, above page 39 and An Sang, page 41.

[page61]

Mishina has shown that none of the arguments are conclusive. Even the story of the Miruk hwarang,2) though it has romantic tones in it, is not necessarily any more homosexual than the poems of St John of the Cross. On the other hand in any organization of young men inversion is bound to appear to some degree. To assert that the *hwarang* never practised it would temerarious in the extreme. Yet it cannot be proved that it ever occurred at all.

The evidence that after Silla times the people who carried on the name of *hwarang* of ten indulged in homosexuality is another matter. I have said enough to show that among them if anywhere could such activity be found in Korea a couple or more generations ago. It does not by any means mean that the habit was handed down with the name. There were many other ways also in which the *hwarangi* of the Yi dynasty differed from the *hwarang* of Silla.

**X The Hwarang and Buddhism**

I have already referred3) to an article by Mr Kim Kwangyŏng in which he attempts to explain *hwarang* as a highly imaginative effort on the part of King Chinhŭng to spread the buddhist faith in Silla by organising a band of young men who would model themselves on the ideal of Maitreya Buddha, as he had previousy tried to model young women on Avalokiteshvara (觀世音) but failed. Mr Kim adduces in evidence all the references to Maitreya in the sources on *hwarang*.

This is an interesting and courageous attempt to align one of the great features of Korea’s past, one which is today highly valued, with the buddhist faith. While the

2) See above page 2b.

3) Above pages 13 and 24.

[page62]

enthusiastic buddhism of King Chinhŭng and the fact that the *hwarang* lived in a profoundly buddhist society are beyond dispute, Mr Kim’s thesis will not, in my opinion, stand. It is interesting as being non-military, but all the evidence is circumstantial, and none of it constitutes proof.

I have already several times commented on the frequency with which Maitreya appears in the *hwarang* source material. Mishina has collected the material together4) in one section of his book. The correct way to interpret this material is not clear. The fact is that Maitreya worship was extremely popular in Silla in the early days of buddhism. Dr Clarke has suggested that this popularity was possibly connected with earlier devotions of the Koreans and represents a buddhist baptism of some primitive cult.5) But he admits that this is a suggestion rather than a tenable hypothesis.

Maitreya worship seems to have been a feature of the vanguard of buddhism as it moved northwards, and was part of the setting in which the *hwarang* appeared. It is probably the stories about the visions of young boys and youths that are most striking among the stories relating *hwarang* with Maitreya. But even then it is difficult to say exactly why the *hwarang* visions should have been identified as Maitreya.

Another interesting story is told of *hwarang*, the tale of the *Sesok Ogye* (世俗五戒 Five Secular Commandments). On this the best modern comment is that of Yi Kibaek (李基白) who in his *Kuksa Sinnon* (國史新論) has recently said that even though there is no documentary evidence for connecting the *Sesok Ogye* with the *hwarang*, yet there can be no doubt that the *Sesok Ogye* represent the *hwarang* spirit.6) It would seem to me to be more accurate to say that there is no doubt that the *Ogye* were typical of the

4) *Op cit* pages 258 ff.

5) C. A. Clarke *Religions of Old Korea*, New York, 1932. Page 64.

[page63]

age rather than of the *hwarang* institution. Naturally the institution reflected the spirit of its times.

The original story occurs in the *Samguk Sagi*7) and also in the *Samguk Yusa*.8) It tells how two youths, Kwisan (貴 山) and Ch’wihang, (箒項) went to visit Wŏn’gwang Pŏpsa (圓光法師) and asked him for aphoristic teachings by which they could order their lives. Wŏn’gwang was famous as a recent returnee from study abroad in the Sui period. He flourished a generation later than Chinhŭng, the founder king of the *hwarang*. He gave an answer in five commandments which were possible for men to keep who had not embraced the regular life of a monk with its ten commandments. The commandments were:

Serve the king with loyalty 事君以忠

Serve parents with piety 事親以孝

Treat friends with sincerity 交友以信

Never flee the field of battle 臨戰無退

Do not kill without necessity. 殺生有擇

The mixed confucian and buddhist background of these rules is obvious, and fits well with what Ch’oe Chiwŏn said of the syncretism of the *hwarang*, indeed of the period and place. But it seems an unwarranted assumption to say that this has any more than a merely contemporary relationship with the *hwarang*. There is no evidence that Kwisan or his friend were *hwarang*, though they were certainly warriors.

I suspect that the reason for the constant repetition of the story of the *Ogye* in connection with *hwarang* is due to the fact that in his *Kuksa Taegwan* (國史大觀), which is Korea’s most popular general historical textbook, Professor Yi Pyŏngdo (李丙燾) recounts the

6) *Op. cit*. page 76.

7) 三國史記 卷第四五 贵山傳

8) 三國遣事 第四 圓光西學

[page 64]

story immediately after he has discussed the *hwarang*.9) Previous writers, such as Dr Ikeuchi (池內宏) had discussed the *Ogye* without reference to the hwarang.1)

However reasonable it may be to assume that the *Ogye* reflect the spirit of the *hwarang*, it is impossible, because of the dating, to regard them as a formulation of the *hwarang* code. It is more than likely that there was a great deal more to being a *hwarang*, especially from the religious and musical points of view, than is described in the *Ogye*.

**XI The Organization of the Hwarang**

I have mentioned already the several different *hwarang* terms which are used to refer to the members of the movement. I have also pointed out that some sort of authority was on occasion exercised with the groups even off the battlefield. Some Korean writers have gone so far as to draw up a chart, albeit a simple one, of the organization of the *hwarang* bands.2)

It is important to recognize that such an effort represents nothing more than a conjecture, however reasonable it may be. The terminology is not clearly defined by the sources. Thus the full significance of *kuksŏn* as opposed to *hwarang* is debatable. Some prefer to regard *kuksŏn* as the national leader of the whole *hwarang* movement, others to equate it with *hwarang*. Either case may be plausibly supported.

There is also good reason to think that *hwarang* were noble and that they led the larger groups of followers called *nangdo* or some similar name. It is easier to support the idea that *hwarang* were the officers of

9) Kuksa Taegwan, Seoul. 1957 edition, page 127. But cf. also the novel *Wŏnhyo Taesa* (元曉大師) by Yi Kwangsu (李光洙) (Seoul 1956 edition) page 223.

1) Eg. *Shigaku Zasshi* 史學雜誌, 四五編 八號, Tokyo 1929, page 30.

2) Eg. Yi Sŏn’gŭn, op cit, page 13.

[page 65]

the movement than that all the members were properly called *hwarang*, but here again the evidence of the sources is not definitive.

Finally we must note that the *Samguk Yusa* contains two titles, *hwaju* and *hwap’an*, which are not easily fitted into the hierarchy at all, although the *hwaju* at least had considerable disciplinary powers. The solution may possibly lie in in some as yet unexplored possibility that the terms we have in Chinese are transcriptions of a smaller number of Korean words.

As for the ceremonial usages of the *hwarang*, we have no idea whatsoever as to what they were. Intelligent guesses might be made, but no more.

Nor can we say anything with certainty about their discipline, though it seems clear enough that they had something of the sort. And we have no idea as to how much life they had in common apart from their excursions.

**XII Conclusion**

So the material available on the *hwarang* still leaves us with more questions unanswered than we would like, and therefore with the temptation to interpret the evidence to suit our own predilections.

Certain facts stand out clear and indisputable. The institution in its finest form appeared when Silla was at a crucial juncture of its political, social and cultural history. It was composed of young lads in large numbers, with a story that they replaced women who had fulfilled the same function before them. They were an elite, and out of them sprang great citizens and soldiers. They were great travellers and music was an important part of their activity.

Then there are slightly less obvious facts, such as that a man did not necessarily remain a *hwarang* for life.

[page66]

Beyond this we are in the realm of interpretation.3) The most popular one for some time has been the one which reads the evidence in terms of modern patriotism and stresses the mililtary aspect at the expense of all else.

Another point of view siezes on all the religious indications in in the sources, and would regard the *hwarang* as a kind of shaman, or at least a shamanistic type of institution.

A third, of which I have said nothing further because it seems to me that there is so very little justification for it, is the explanation of *hwarang* in terms of an educational movement as such a thing is understood today.

The same kind of considerations influence the way in which different people will prefer to explain the origin of the *hwarang*, whereas all we can say for certain is that they were organized into their final form by King Chinhŭng.

As with so much else in early Korean history, we know something of the external facts but we cannot be sure of the heart of the matter. The *hwarang* of Silla remain for us a pageant of beautiful boys, dancing in the mist with powdered faces and jewelled shoes, softening an age of barbaric splendour with their adolescent gentleness as much they ennobled it with their courage. The mist adds its own fascination to the picture. Like the boys themselves, it is as native to Korea as her blue hills.

3) Yet even so careful a work as Evelyn McCune’s *The Arts of Korea* (Tokyo 1962) makes statements about *hwarang* for which there is no evidence in the sources. *Op. cit*. pages 81 and 91.