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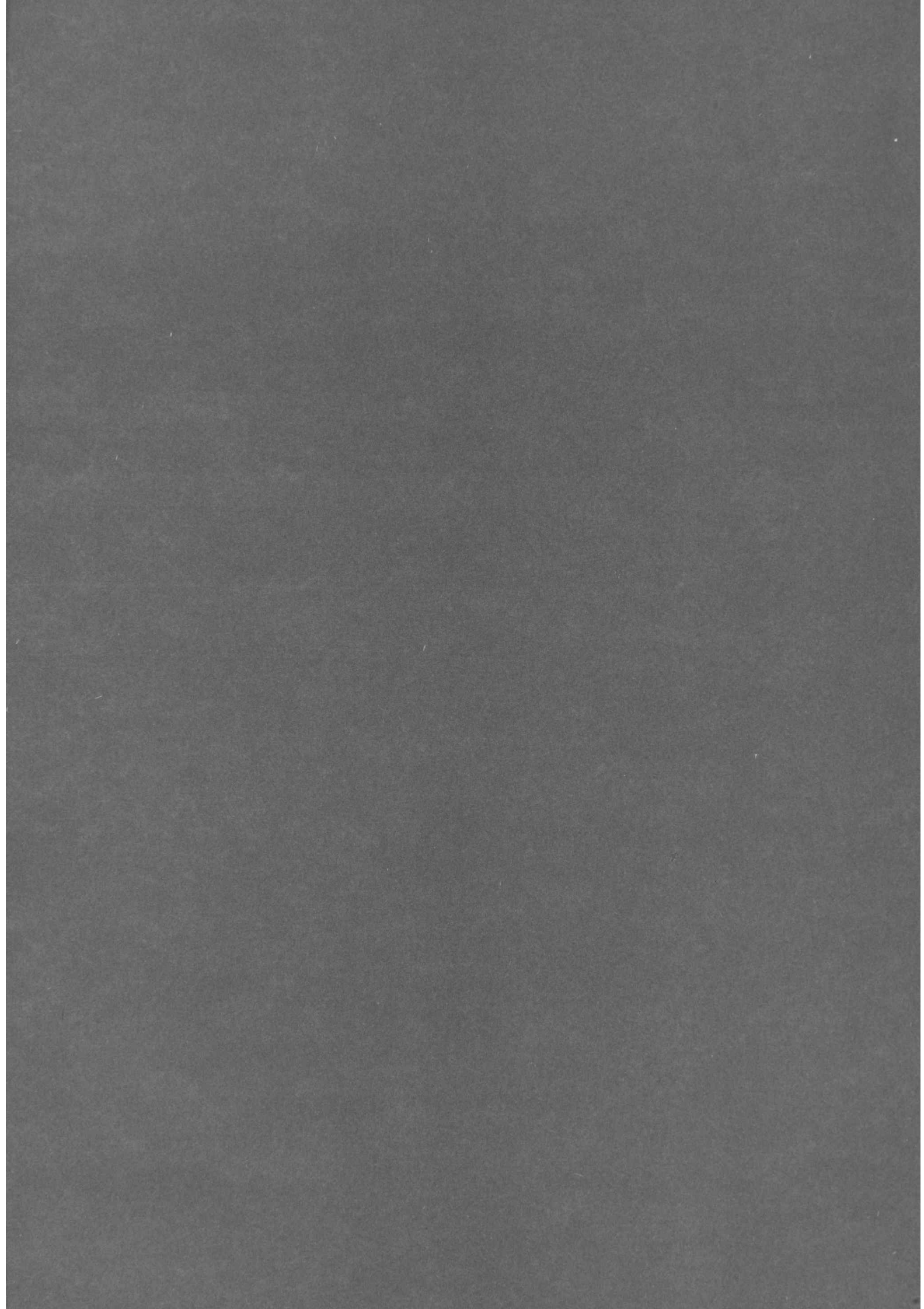
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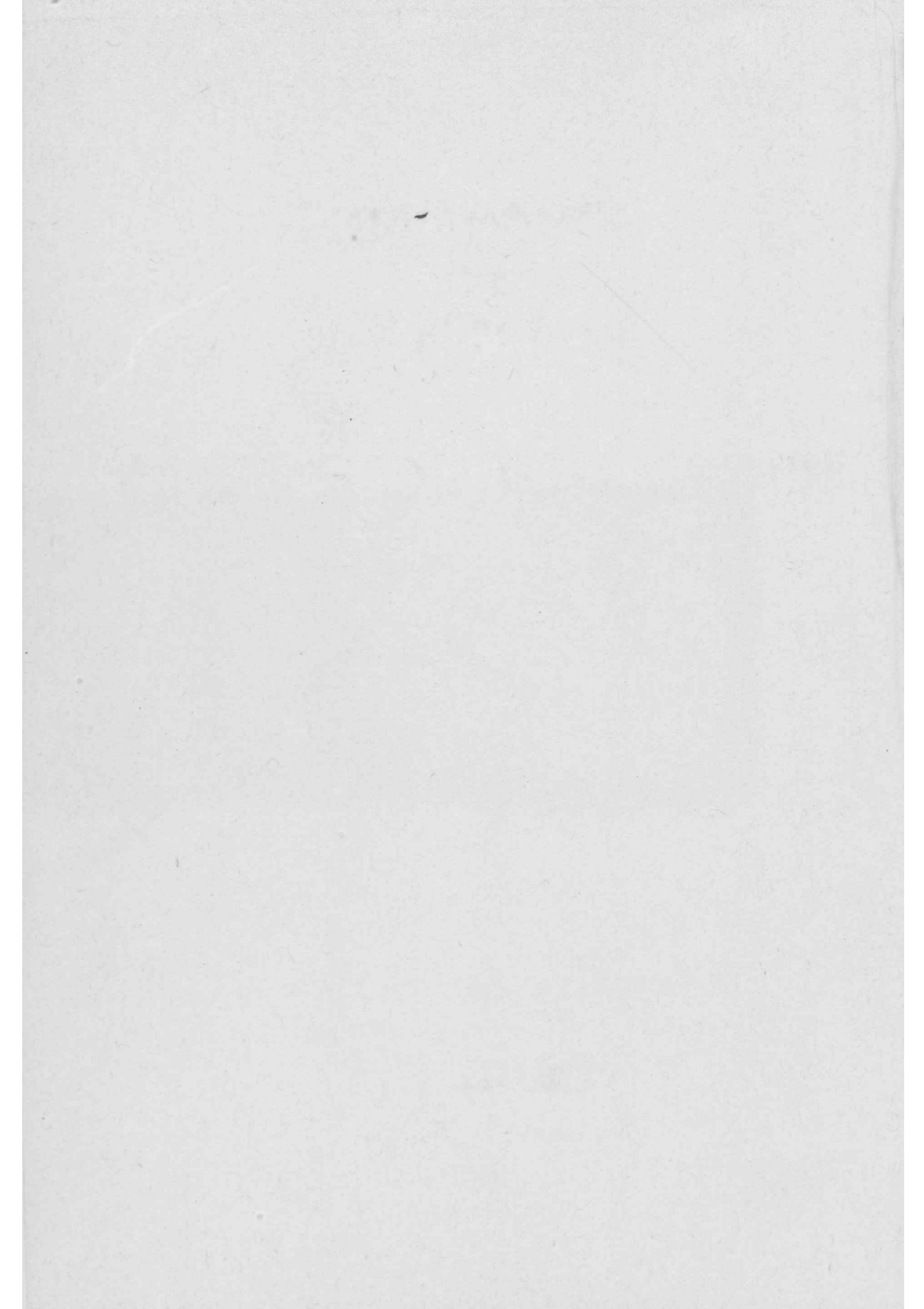
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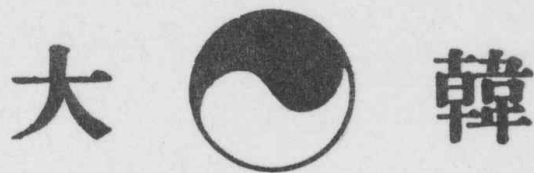
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VOLUME XLII

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September 1966









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## CERAMIC HISTORY OF THE YI PERIOD

by G. St. G. M. Gompertz

Pottery and porcelain are the best-known and in some respects the most important artistic products of Korea. The reasons for this are, first, that the celadons and other wares of the Koryō period have become so famous and are considered equal to the finest products of Sung China and, second, that the much less known porcelains of the Yi period have exercised enormous influence on Japanese ceramics and hence on the work of leading artist-potters in Japan, England and America. It is with these later Yi period wares that I propose to deal to-night, because you will not be able to find any comprehensive survey in any Western language, whereas the Koryō wares have been the subject of many articles and a few books, which are available to those interested.

The study of Koryō pottery has been impeded by the lack of reliable information concerning most of the specimens which have survived. This has resulted mainly from the wholesale pillaging of ancient tombs by unauthorized excavations. However, a few examples were recovered from dated tombs under proper scientific supervision, while many others were found to bear inscriptions which provided some evidence of the time when they were made.

When we come to the Yi period, the situation is still more baffling. The burial of ceramic and other wares in tombs persisted for only a short period until the strict observance of Confucian precepts put an end to the practice. Just when this took place is difficult to determine. The founder of the dynasty, King T'aejo, was a devoted Buddhist, but his successors rejected Buddhism and favoured the Confucian ethic. This was declared to be the basis of national policy and, by royal edict of 1421, the Crown Prince himself was enjoined to worship at the Confucian Shrine. The imposition of severe restrictions on Buddhism followed three years later, and finally, in 1472,

all Buddhist monks were expelled from the capital<sup>1</sup>.

Thus, with very few exceptions, all extant specimens of Yi pottery and porcelain have been preserved above ground and handed down from one generation to another without any record or indication of their date and origin, while the destructive invasions by the Japanese in 1592-8 and the Manchus in 1637 resulted in serious losses over and above the constant attrition caused by fires and ordinary wear and tear, for most of the vessels were in daily use for serving and storing foodstuffs or as accessories to the scholar's writing-desk.

Some other obstacles to the study of Yi pottery and porcelain have been described by Dr. Okudaira, who was the leading scholar in this field during the first half of the century, and the following passage from his contribution to the *Tōki Kōza* lecture series is worthy of quotation:

*"The Yi period in Korea covered some five centuries from 1392 to 1910. Consequently to say that a ceramic ware is a product of the Yi period indicates very little concerning its date. Furthermore there are as yet no scientifically determined periods for the ceramic history of the Yi dynasty and the obstacles in the way of drawing up a satisfactory system may be summed up as follows:*

(1) *Little progress in technique in the craft of ceramics.*

*No epoch-making development took place during the Yi period as at the Ching-te-chen potteries in China. However, the news that blue-and-white ware was being made successfully in China soon reached Korea, stimulating activity in the manufacture of white porcelain and finally resulting in the same class of ware being made in Korea. It is known definitely that white porcelain was being made during the reign of King Sejong in the early part of the Yi period and I think it would be correct to regard the perfecting of white porcelain*

1 For an account of Confucianism in Korea see Youn Eul-sou *Le Confucianisme en Corée*, Paris, 1939, also Key P. Yang & Gregory Henderson, An Outline History of Korean Confucianism, *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. XVIII, No. 1, November 1958, pp. 81-101, February 1959, pp. 259-76.

as the starting point in the ceramic history of the Yi period. It is significant that some 136 porcelain and 185 stoneware factories were in existence in Korea at this time, as recorded in the *Sejong Sillok* or annals of King Sejong's Reign (1419-50).<sup>2</sup> This, together with the later establishment of the Punwŏn kilns, forms the basis for the ceramic history of the Yi period. Unfortunately there is no publication worthy of study at the present time excepting the report on the excavation of the kiln sites at Kyeryong-san by the Government-General of Korea.<sup>3</sup> This investigation seems to have revealed one thing in particular, namely that the structure of the ancient kilns was the same as that of the 'split bamboo' ascending type kilns used to this day at Punwŏn and other places. Of course, to reach a final conclusion on this matter we must await further excavations with studies and projections of early kiln sites. But it seems clear that a method of manufacturing porcelain was developed early in the Yi period and continued in use for about five hundred years, viz. manufacture in an ascending type kiln on the slope of a hill utilizing richly endowed porcellaneous clay as the raw material. It is a well-known fact that, in other details besides the style of constructing kilns, Korean potters adhere closely to tradition and the old order.

(2) Names and products of potters not definitely known.

It has been said that Yi period pottery lacks any *Kakie-mon* or *Ninsei* and it is true that Yi wares never bear the names of individual potters who became famous or whose works can be identified at the present time. While the names of potters are often inscribed on Yi wares, nothing further is known about them. It is clear that there were skilled craftsmen in the

2 *Sejong Sillok*, geographical section. The complete list of pottery kilns is given in Chōshōken-Shujin's article: "Stray Notes on *Mishima* Ware (in Japanese)," *Tōji*, Vol. VII, No. 2, June 1935, pp. 19-26, also in the chapter: "Extract from the Geographical Section in the *Sejong Sillok* (in Japanese)," *Sekai Tōji Zenshū* (Catalogue of World's Ceramics), Tokyo, 1956, pp. 225-30.

3 Ken Nomori & Sōzō Kanda, *Shōwa Ninendo Koseki Chōsa Hōkoku* (Report of Investigation of Ancient Remains for the Year 1927), Chōsen Government-General, Seoul, 1929.



Yi period comparable with those in Japan and it is difficult to account for the fact that their fame did not spread far and wide to be recorded in ceramic history. The reason for this anonymity must be sought in the social position of the potters and further in the social conditions which prevailed in the Yi period.<sup>4</sup> The potters were divided into categories and held their positions hereditarily; they were brought up with the potter's wheel and worked at it until they died. They could indulge in no ambition in life beyond the making of their wares. Besides the official potters who worked for the government there were many others who made a living by bartering their wares for rice and cloth. In this somewhat primitive society they could not gain the patronage of wealthy people by making outstanding wares. No such event took place as the emergence of a merchant class, supporting a colourful and many-sided popular culture, as in Tokugawa Japan, so that Yi period culture became the monopoly of the royal house and court. Since Yi wares were made by unknown potters, there is no potters' lineage nor any anecdotes about potters.

(3) Few specimens having dates inscribed.

From the Ming period onward, Chinese wares made at the imperial factory bear inscriptions of dates or special names but this is not the case with Yi period pottery. Sometimes one sees high grade blue and white dishes bearing characters such as "made in the Wan-li era" on their base, but this is merely conventional decoration copied from Chinese wares and has no real significance. It was employed in the late Yi period when Chinese influence was at its height. We also frequently notice ceramic wares bearing cyclical marks but none of these goes back further than two hundred years and it is difficult to determine the cycle to which they refer. Thus, not only was there no custom of inscribing dates in the Yi period, but there are very few ceramic wares which show the date when they were made. Moreover, we can find few if any wares which

4 This is discussed by Gregory Henderson in his article: "Pottery Production in the Earliest Years of the Yi Period," *Transactions of the Korea Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol. XXXIX, 1962, pp. 5-22.

*have been handed down with some definite tradition regarding their make. Finally, no investigations have been made at the Punwŏn and other kiln sites. People merely give a rough estimate of the date when Yi wares were made.*<sup>5</sup>

The first attempt to divide Yi ceramic history into periods was made by Asakawa in 1922. He suggested four divisions, which he described as follows: 'In the early Yi period, lasting about one hundred years, the tradition of Koryŏ celadon persisted, but *mishima*<sup>6</sup> ware—i.e. ware having decoration in white slip—was made extensively. Also hard-paste white porcelain began to appear. In the middle Yi period, lasting about one hundred and fifty years, hard-paste white porcelain flourished and *mishima* ware declined, while blue-and-white began to gain favour. In the late Yi period, lasting some two hundred years, blue-and-white flourished and hard-paste white porcelain showed signs of declining. There was also a change in the type of finish as regards white porcelain. Moreover, the increased use of brassware resulted in a falling-off in ceramic production. The last period of about fifty years saw an almost complete loss of the age-old tradition: the official Punwŏn kilns became a private industry which paid taxes to the government and employed Japanese craftsmen.'<sup>7</sup>

It will be evident that this was merely a rough, provisional division and left a good deal to be desired. Dr. Okudaira did not consider it satisfactory and felt that it needed some revision. The basis for the system he proposed, which has gained general acceptance in Japan, was set forth as follows:

'Since 1922 when Asakawa's periods were first suggested, excavated wares of all dates have come to light; many inherited wares also have become known and kiln studies have been made. However, it is doubtful whether we have yet reached the stage where a scientific division into

5 Takehiko Okudaira, "Ri-cho(Yi Period)," *Tōki Kōza* (Lectures on Ceramics, No. 20, 193, pp. 9-13.

6 *Mishima* is the Japanese name for the Korean *punch'ōng*.

7 Hakukyō (Noritaka) Asakawa, *Chōsen* November 1922.

periods can be made. This is because so many important questions remain to be solved, for example the dates when *mishima* ware was first introduced and finally came to an end. It is generally accepted by students of ceramics that *mishima* ware was no longer made after the Japanese invasion of 1592-8, the chief reason for this view being that there is no known *mishima* epitaph bearing a date later than 1592. Another problem is that so much is still obscure concerning the origin and development of Punwŏn, the institution which occupied such an important position in the history of Yi porcelain. Even the date when the name Punwŏn was first used is unknown. The records show that Yi blue-and-white was introduced during the reign of Sejo (1456-68), but no evidence has been found with regard to the types of wares involved. There are many other unsolved questions, and indeed we are confronted by numerous obstacles both in establishing a chronological system and in studying any part thereof. However, the desire to make a start on the study of Yi period ceramic history has led me to attempt subdivision into periods, though these will naturally require revision and modification as time passes by. Since the Korean civilization of the Yi period cannot be grasped without due consideration for the relationship with China, I should like to divide Yi ceramic history into two broad sections, the first being when there was close contact with Ming culture and the second being when the contact was with the culture of Ch'ing, calling these respectively the first half of the Yi period and the second half. It will be a matter for debate just where the dividing line between the two periods should be drawn. The invasion of Korea by the Manchus forms an important political landmark; however, it was only as a matter of form that Korea subsequently paid tribute to Ch'ing: in fact—albeit surreptitiously—the Koreans looked down on Ch'ing culture, considering the Manchus northern barbarians, and continued the use of Ming year-titles (*nien-hao*). It was not until the latter part of the K'ang-hsi era that the Koreans gradually came to recognize Ch'ing culture. In the year 1718 the Punwŏn kilns were moved to the upper reaches of the



Kyōngan river in Kwangju district.<sup>8</sup> To the best of my belief this is the first time that the name Punwŏn was used, so I would like to consider the period before this year as the first half of the Yi period and the time thereafter as the second half.<sup>9</sup>

Dr. Okudaira went on to subdivide each half of the Yi period into three sections, the first three being:

1. 1392-1464
2. 1464-1598
3. 1598-1718

At first there was a succession of able rulers and the country was pervaded by an invigorating atmosphere. The staple product during both the first two sections was *punch'ōng*, or *mishima*, ware. There were several different classes of the ware, known to the Japanese as *koyomi-de*, *hakeme*, *hori-hakeme*, *e-hakeme*, *kohiki*, etc.; but the subject of *punch'ōng* ware is a study in itself and will not be considered in any detail here; the points to be stressed are that *punch'ōng* is a stoneware, basically similar to Koryō celadon though coarser in texture, and that the volume of production throughout the first two centuries of the Yi period was enormous, the whole of southern and central Korea being studded with *punch'ōng* kilns. However, it must not be imagined that this was the sole type of ware to be produced. Black glazed, or *temmoku*, ware and white porcelain also were widely manufactured, often in the same potteries whose main product was *punch'ōng*; and it was at this time that white porcelain was perfected. The reign of King Sejong (1419-50) may be regarded as the high-water mark of the early Yi period. A later ruler, King Sŏnjo (1568-1608), is said to have remarked, in Johnsonian style, 'Sir, look at the record of Sejong's reign—at that time everything was precise: when it comes to books, they are very clear.'

According to a contemporary literary source, the *Yongjae Ch'onghwa* by Sŏng Hyŏn (1439-1504), white porcelain was used exclusively in the royal household of

8 About 20 miles east of Seoul.

9 Takehiko Okudaira, *op. cit.*, pp. 14-15.



King Sejong. The *Sejong Sillok*, or official annals of the reign, contain several references to ceramic wares. The most important of these is the census of pottery factories mentioned earlier, which was carried out in 1424-5, and the lists of 136 porcelain and 185 stoneware kilns which resulted. In 1424, at the request of a Ming envoy, the Kwangju kilns were ordered to make large, medium-sized and small white porcelains for presentation to the Emperor Yung-lo, a testimony to the high quality of Korean white porcelain at this early date. In 1428 a gift of porcelains from the Emperor Hsüan-tê included 'five large dishes with blue decoration and five smaller dishes also decorated in blue.' Ten years later a further gift from the Emperor comprised six table wares, three having blue decoration of dragons among clouds and three decorated with lions.

In the eighth month of 1464, according to the *Sejo Sillok* or annals of King Sejo's reign (1456-68), an official in Chölla Province discovered cobalt ore at Sunch'ön, in the extreme south, and presented the King with a porcelain decorated in blue from this native source.<sup>10</sup> This is the first official reference to blue-and-white made in Korea, though it is probable that cobalt was obtained from China some years earlier—Koyama cites references in the *Yöl-lyösil Kisul* which indicate that blue-and-white was produced in 1457 and 1461.<sup>11</sup> It was for this reason that Dr. Okudaira suggested the year 1464 as an appropriate terminal date for the first of his sections. In 1466 a petition was submitted to the King asking that the manufacture of white porcelain be restricted to wares made for the royal household. This request was sanctioned, and local authorities were enjoined to keep registers of places where white kaolin was mined and to take all necessary measures to prevent unauthorized use.<sup>12</sup> It seems that the native sources of cobalt blue were unsatisfactory or inadequate, for the *Yongjae Ch'onghwa* states that cobalt was imported from China, the decoration used

10 *Sejo Sillok*, XXXIV

11 Fujio Koyama, *Chösen*(Korea), Vol. 6, of Series: *Töyö Kotöji*(Ancient Oriental Pottery), unpagged section on blue-and-white.

being similar to that seen on Chinese wares, but the material was scarce and costly, so that it was impossible to obtain an adequate supply. A report that it was in general use in China led to inquiries whether there was any satisfactory substitute for the much-prized 'Mohammedan Blue' and the response was that a cheaper, locally-produced, cobalt was employed when Mohammedan Blue was not available; but even this local cobalt could not be procured by the Koreans.<sup>13</sup> For this reason very little blue decoration could be used; some blue-and-white as well as plain white porcelain was to be found in the royal household of King Sejo, but for about one hundred years its use outside the palace was prohibited except for wine vessels required by the warrior class.

The Japanese invasion of 1592-8 was an unmitigated disaster for Korea and for its ceramic industry. Not only was the greater part of the country devastated and scores of potteries either destroyed or abandoned, but hundreds of the potters themselves were taken captive and carried off to Japan in the hopes that the industry could thus be transplanted and such coveted wares as the 'Ido bowls' and other Tea Ceremony requisites made on Japanese soil. In fact the invasion is sometimes known in Japan as the 'Pottery Wars,' and Dr. Okudaira had good grounds for ending his second section with the year 1598, which saw the final withdrawal of the Japanese armies and must mark the nadir of the ceramic industry of Yi period Korea. Indeed, the sufferings of the Korean people had not yet come to an end; the country was repeatedly swept by famine, and economic conditions were still so bad in 1628 that the official manufacture of pottery was suspended for one year.

It is not surprising that public morale was undermined in consequence, and an ordinance issued by the Ministry of Laws in the year 1616 admonished the people for relaxing rules and infringing regulations. The ordinance starts as follows: 'The order of the country has become

12 *Sejo Sillok*, XXXIX.

13 *Yongjae Ch'onghwa*, X.

loose and the distinction between the upper and lower classes has disappeared; there is no difference in the style of writing; the use of high-grade wares has become promiscuous; when it comes to clothing and table wares, rules are broken shamelessly....Such articles as ornamental wares, dinner wares, chairs and tables are made for the common use at public expense; yet they are stolen and used privately or are casually borrowed and lost. This is not the fault of this Office: it is due to the prevailing disregard for the distinction between public and private property.' The ordinance proceeds to further improprieties and prescribes the correct usage for various types of ware. Thus white porcelain made at the official kilns was for the sole use of the royal household and blue-and-white should only be used by the Crown Prince's household. Ordinary white wares were for the use of government officials, and so on. Hereafter those potters who manufactured copies of official wares secretly in violation of the law should be punished by death. Government officials found to be breaking the law should be punished under the ordinance concerned with the appropriation of royal possessions. Government employees clandestinely borrowing wares from the official warehouses should receive punishment under the same ordinance.<sup>14</sup>

From a brief note in the *Kwanghae-gun Sillok* or annals of the reign of Kwanghae-gun (1609-23), it is evident that blue-and-white porcelain could not be made in 1618 because no cobalt had been imported from China since the Japanese invasion, as the country lacked the means for continuing foreign trade.<sup>15</sup> It is believed that decoration in iron-brown and copper-red was used extensively at this period as a substitute for cobalt blue, since the necessary materials were obtainable locally. But the greatest change in ceramic manufacture as a result of the Japanese invasion was the disappearance of *punch'ong* ware; it seems that famous potteries like those at Kyeryongsan were abandoned and never afterwards revived. Since there were probably as many as two hundred potteries making *punch'ong* ware, this was an epoch-making de-

14 *Kwanghae-gun Sillok*, CII.

15 *Ibid.*, XXVII.



velopment. Henceforth the primary product of the Korean kilns was to be porcelain rather than stoneware, though various types of stoneware were still made at local kilns for common use, and it was not until the Punwŏn factory became a flourishing institution during the first half of the eighteenth century that the production of porcelain made rapid strides. Before this took place, however, Korea was destined to suffer another destructive invasion, this time from the north. Korean loyalty to the Ming dynasty resulted in a deterioration of relations with the Manchus, and in 1637 a large Manchu army invaded the country and besieged the King and his main forces in the fortress of Namhan-san near Seoul. Capitulation became inevitable, and Korea's slow recovery from the Japanese spoliation of 1592-8 was further delayed. Indeed the economic state of the country was such that a return to normal conditions cannot be deemed to have taken place until the reign of King Sukchong(1675-1720).

We now come to the second half of the Yi period, which Dr. Okudaira subdivided as follows:

1. 1718-1752
2. 1752-1883
3. 1883-1910

It was in 1718, according to the *Sukchong Sillok*, that the Punwŏn kilns were moved to the upper reaches of the Kyŏngan river in Kwangju district, some twenty miles east of Seoul.<sup>16</sup> Their exact location at this time is believed to have been in the vicinity of Kumsa-ri. It seems that the official factory had originally been established in Seoul, but shortage of fuel and other materials necessitated a move outside the city boundaries. At first the factory was set up in the foothills of Pukhan, the

16 *Sukchong Sillok*, LXII

17 The existence of high-grade porcelain kilns in the Kwangju district at an early date is proved by references in the *Sejong Sillok*: thus they are shown in the census list of 1424-5 and were required to make white porcelains for the Emperor Yung-lo in 1424(see page 10). They are also mentioned in the late fifteenth-century works *Yongjae Ch'onghwa* and *Sinjŭng Tongguk Yŏji Sŭngnam* as kilns making wares for the royal household(see page 14).



mountain which overlooks Seoul, but later it was moved further away and the date of transfer to Kwangju may actually have been much earlier than indicated by the official record.<sup>17</sup> The Kyōngan river is a tributary of the River Han, and in 1752 the kilns were again transferred, this time to Punwōn-ni on the banks of the Han itself. No doubt the reason for this final move was that the broad and navigable River Han afforded facilities for the transport of clay and wood-fuel from other localities. The clay used at the Punwōn kilns came from such places as Ch'unch'ōn, Hwach'ōn, Ich'ōn and Yanggu to the north and east of Seoul, and from Hyōpch'ōn and Chinju far to the south. In 1883 the maintenance of the Punwōn kilns out of state revenue became too costly and it was decided to terminate government support; however, the kilns continued as a private undertaking.

The name Punwōn indicates that the factory was a branch or subsidiary of the *Saong-wōn*, the office in charge of the preparation and serving of food for the King and court, or Bureau of Royal Cuisine. Besides looking after the food for the palace, this office was entrusted with the arrangements for ceremonial banquets, excepting those held for envoys or other honoured guests, which were controlled by the *Yebin-si*. The manufacture of table and other wares for the palace and court formed part of its responsibilities, and for this reason 480 skilled potters came under its control, 380 of these being stationed at the official factory and 100 at local kilns where miscellaneous wares were made for court use. The *Yongjae Ch'onghwa* states: 'In order to make porcelain wares white clay should be used and great care exercised over the firing. While there are many kilns in all provinces which make these wares, the best are produced at Koryōng. They rank equal with the wares made at Kwangju. Every year, from Spring to Autumn, the *Saong-wōn* officials supervise production and arrange for deliveries to the government. The products are recorded and graded, and the makers of the best pieces are awarded prizes.' The *Sinjūng Tongguk Yōji Sunghnam* of 1481 also refers to the Kwangju kilns as follows: 'Every year the *Saong-wōn* officials take painters

with them and supervise the making of wares for the royal household.'

The *Saong-wŏn* owned various forest lands, and all these who obtained their supplies of wood from this source were required to pay taxes, which were allocated to Punwŏn to defray the cost of fuel, potters' wages, etc. By 1744 it seems that this source of revenue had proved insufficient; the best clay was henceforth requisitioned from Kwangju, Yanggu, Chinju and Kŏnyang and loaded on vessels for delivery by sea and river to the official kilns. At the same time the right was conceded for Punwŏn officials to collect a ten per cent tax levied on vessels and rafts using the Han River. Within a few years Punwŏn was located at the confluence of the Han and Pukhan rivers and, as most of the wood-fuel and timber for Seoul came by this route, collection of the prescribed toll constituted a regular and substantial income. As recorded in a contemporary verse, 'at 3 o'clock all the ships loaded with wood and timber congregated and Punwŏn officials collected the tax.'

An interesting record has been preserved of the workers employed at the Punwŏn factory at the time of King Chŏngjo(1777-1800) and King Sunjo (1801-34)when it was at the height of its prosperity. The details are as follows:

Supervisor	1
Clerical assistants	20
Handymen	6
Watchmen	2
Throwers	10
Finishers	10
Dryers	10
Clay crushers & Water mixers	10
Clay kneaders	10
Firing men	7
Head firing men	2
Assistant firing men	7
Fire adjusters	2
Painters	14
Glaze preparers	2

Glaze applicers	2
Graders	2
Ash handlers	2
General hands( various categories)	433

The total comes to 552.<sup>18</sup> It is clear from this that the operations were well organized, with an economic division of labour. The products were allocated to the royal household, the court and government departments or used in ceremonies held at the royal tombs and palaces. Some of them were set aside as royal gifts for use both inside the country and outside. The total annual production aggregated as much as 13,720 wares during the latter part of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. After meeting official requirements, the kilns produced wares for general use; it is evident also that there were private kilns in the vicinity which made similar wares, though not of the same high quality.

An account of investigations at the Punwŏn kilns was published by Takumi Asakawa in 1927, but no systematic studies or excavations have been carried out by trained archaeologists. Asakawa believed that the earliest kilns were established by Buddhist monks and that they made porcelains with incised decoration and designs painted in iron-brown together with plain white wares. Some of the earliest blue-and-white porcelains seem to have been made at a group of kilns located near the village of Wusan-ni: 'here were found thin white porcelain shards with designs of arabesques and scenery traced in clear "Mohammedan Blue" which it would be difficult to identify as Korean if found at any other place than a kiln site and having no obvious defect or firing damage, so close are they in style to Ming wares.' Plain white porcelain shards, however, were more abundant than blue-and-white. The later kiln sites at Punwŏn-ni yielded an increased number of blue-and-white shards, but ordinary wares made for the royal household became commonplace and standardized; not only this, but the forms gradually deteriorated, while the contemporary porcelains showed a

18 Takumi Asakawa, *Chōsen Tōji Meiko* (Study of the Names of Korean Pottery Wares), Tokyo, 1931, pp. 139-42.



complete loss of individuality.<sup>19</sup>

The scenic attractions of the place where the Punwŏn kilns were situated drew many visitors and sightseers, especially as they were beside the River Han, about half-way between Yŏju and Seoul, and could thus be easily reached by boat. There were villas on both banks of the river, and the kilns were frequented by men of literary and cultivated taste who became interested in the technique of pottery making. Some brought with them painters to draw designs to their liking, and scholars were particularly concerned with placing special orders for brush stands, water droppers and other articles for the writing-desk. Vessels and dishes decorated with Han River scenery became popular among the Punwŏn wares.

Dr. Okudaira states: 'The types of wares produced included almost everything that could be made with potter's clay. For wine there were flat pots, angular flasks, bottles and small heating-bottles; for dinner wares there were plates, dishes, bowls, covered vessels and boxes in tiers; and for the writing-desk there were water droppers, brush stands, brush racks, brush washers, painters' dishes, dishes, ink-slabs and seals made with every sort of originality and ingenuity. For toilet wares there were pots and dishes for powder and bottles for oil and water on which every type of skill and artistry had been lavished. There were also such ceramic wares as head-rests, candle-stands, sun-dials, flower-pots, smoking utensils, toy horses for children and sets of chess for men. All this reflects the peaceful and stabilized period from the reign of King Yŏngjo (1725-76) to that of King Ch'ŏlchong (1850-63), by which time a mature culture had been restored and was prospering.'<sup>20</sup>

The first part of the second half of the Yi period, *i.e.* from 1718 to 1752, is often known as the Punwŏn, Kumsa-ri, period and the second part, from 1752 to 1883, as the Punwŏn, Punwŏn-ni, period. During the nineteenth century cobalt blue became more plentiful and was used

19 Takumi Asakawa, "Study on the Punwŏn Kiln Sites (in Japanese)," *Daichowa*, December 1927.



to excess for producing elaborate and often fussy decoration. The forms also lost their spontaneity and either followed conventional lines or became unduly complicated in a striving for effect. In 1883 the government withdrew its support, but the kilns continued in a private capacity. Japanese craftsmen were engaged from the Arita and Kutani potteries and such alien methods as transfer printing came into use. This naturally resulted in dereliction of the long-maintained tradition, and the industry grew increasingly commercialized until, during the second decade of the present century, the kilns were finally closed down.

\* \* \*

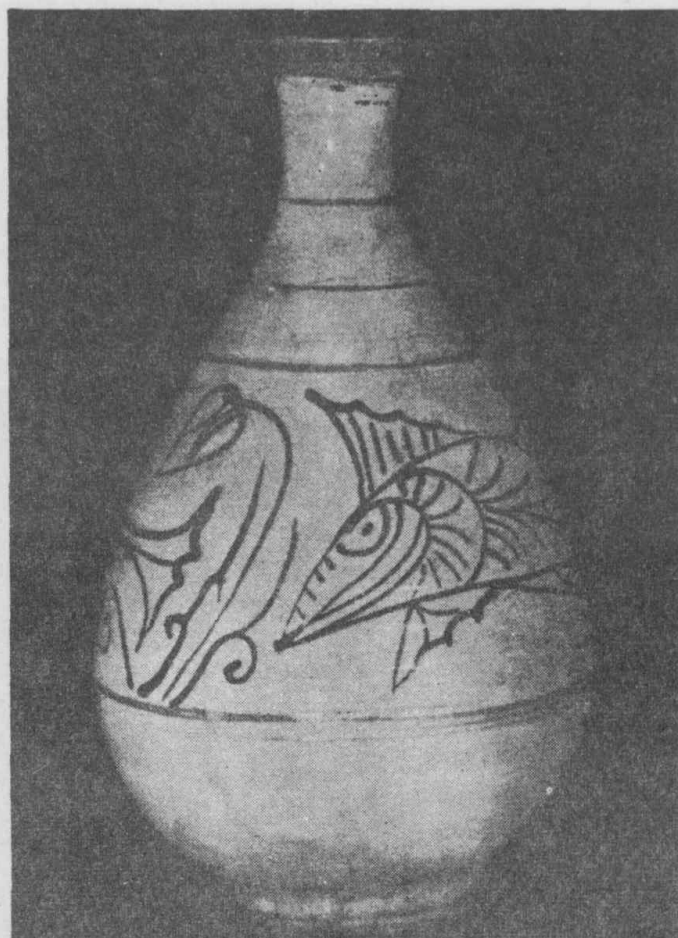
While the divisions suggested by Asakawa were too vague to be of much value, it cannot be said that the more precise dating proposed by Dr. Okudaira possesses the requisite validity, except where it marks the Japanese invasion and the end of the official factory at Punwŏn. Thus the discovery of cobalt ore in Korea in 1464 does not denote the beginning of blue-and-white porcelain, for there is evidence that blue decoration had been employed some years earlier; nor was it of any great moment, since chief reliance continued to be placed on China for the supply of cobalt blue and it must be assumed that the native source proved unsatisfactory. Again it is unlikely that the date 1718 selected as the dividing-line between the first and second halves of the Yi period had any special importance, for the records quoted above (see page 10 and footnote 17) indicate that official wares were being made in the Kwangju district at least as early as the fifteenth century, and this is supported by the discovery of blue-and-white shards of the earliest type at the kiln sites near Wusan-ni. It seems likely that the year 1718 merely marks the transfer of the official kilns from Wusan-ni to Kumsa-ri, a distance of but a few miles. The further move of some three miles to Punwŏn-ni in 1752 is likewise devoid of significance, for there is nothing

to show that the decline of blue-and-white began at this time.

Everything considered, there is much to be said for the system adopted by Tanaka and used by present-day Korean scholars of dividing the Yi period into two halves, with the Japanese invasion of 1592-8 as the line of demarcation.<sup>21</sup> We have seen that the leading class of ware made up to this time was *punch'ōng* of which there were many varieties, while the years subsequent saw the rise of porcelain and particularly of blue-and-white. There is accordingly good reason to regard this division as the best that can be made in the present state of knowledge and the simplification it involves seems all to the good when we consider the questions raised by Dr. Okudaira's elaborate scheme with its somewhat artificial boundaries.

21 Toyotaro Tanaka, *Ri-cho Toji-fu* (Yi Period Pottery), Tokyo, 1942, pp. 266-7.





1. Punch'öng ware bottle with fish design painted in black on a background of brushed white slip; made at the Keryong-san potteries, 15 th/16 th century. Height 11 5/16 in. Owned by Mr. Yi Hong-kun.

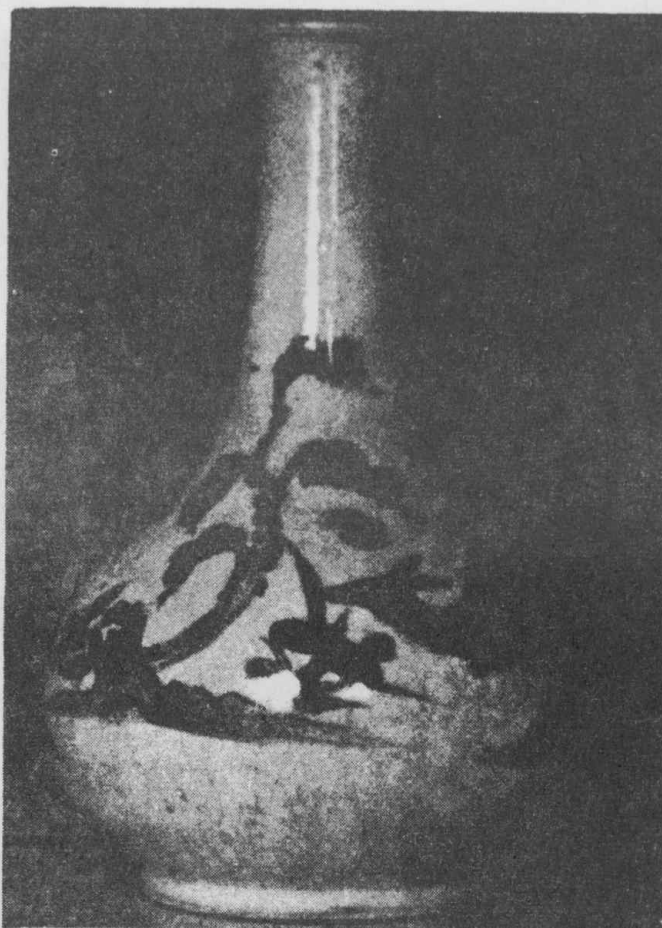


2. Punch'öng(mishima) ware bowl of standard type covered with stamped patterns over which white slip has been brushed. 15 th century. Diameter c. 7 in.





3. Pilgrim flask of white porcelain decorated with bamboo design in iron brown. 17th century. Height 7 3/4 in. Author's collection.



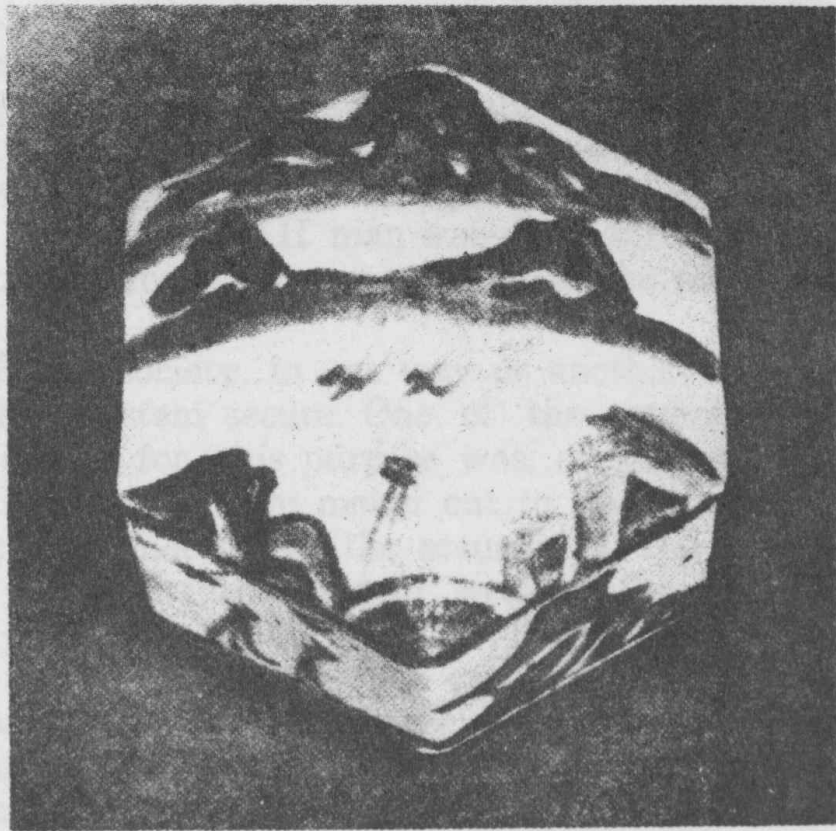
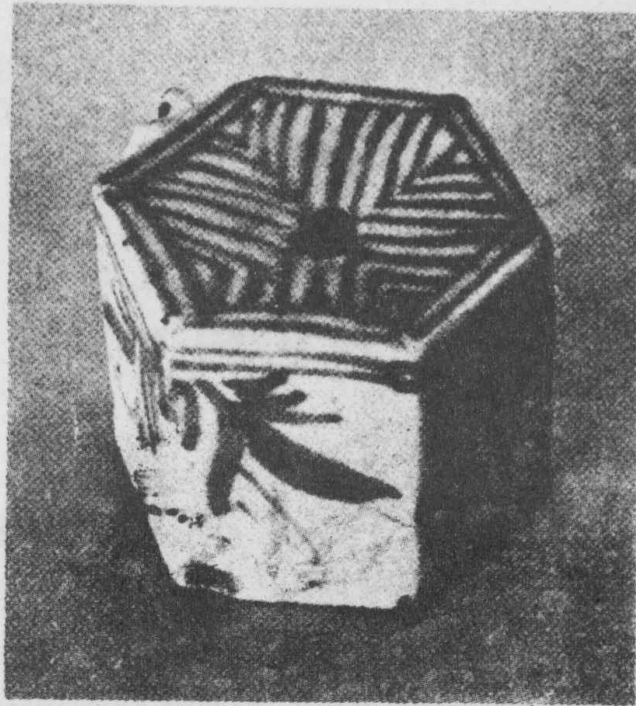
4. Wine-bottle decorated in cobalt-blue with deer, tortoise and crane. 18 th/19 th century. Height 10 3/8 in. Author's collection.



5. Dish decorated in cobalt-blue with crane flying amid clouds. 18 th/19 th century. Diameter 5 5/8 in. Author's collection.



6. Jar of baluster shape, bulging at the shoulder, painted in iron-brown with clusters of grapes. 17th/18th century. Height 21 in. Ehwa Women's University Museum.



7/8. Water-droppers for the scholar's desk. Decorated in cobalt-blue with designs of leaves and Han River scenery. Probably made at the Punwŏn potteries. 18th/19th century.





AN HISTORICAL STUDY OF DISCRIMINATORY  
LEGISLATION AGAINST THE DESCEND-  
ANTS OF CONCUBINES IN  
KOREA, 1415-1894 A.D.

by Hahm Pyong-choon

I

Down through the history of mankind, a privileged class has always tried to maintain its favored position and power to the exclusion of those belonging to inferior classes. This desire to preserve and fortify their privileged status usually manifested itself through the enforced belief, either ethical or religious, that the natural order of human society calls for rigid separation of several classes and subservience of those belonging to lower classes to those of upper classes. It was invariably asserted that classless social order was against nature and hence immoral. Ordered social life was thought possible only if supported by a class system. If man was to be different from beasts, he had to know his proper place in the social order.

Every society, in one way or another, sought to have its class system secure. One of the several agencies at its disposal for this purpose was, of course, legal norms. Legal sanctions were meted out to those whose acts in some way undermined the security of the class system. Any act that threatened to weaken the class structure was punished most severely. When a servant killed his lord or master, the English called it *petit treason*. The Koreans as well as the Chinese reserved the most cruel form of punishment, cutting the flesh of the condemned in small pieces while he was still alive, for a slave who killed his master. This kind of act was always thought of as endangering the basic fabric of ordered living. Penal sanctions were liberally used to keep the fundamental scheme of

class structure intact.

It was always in the interests of a privileged class to keep itself separate and exclusive from the rest of society. Since membership in a privileged class was usually determined by birth, it was imperative for each class to keep its blood pure and unadulterated. Every premodern society had some sort of legal norm that tried to prevent intermingling of blood among several different classes. The Twelve Tables of Rome contained such a provision.<sup>1</sup> The Laws of Manu, the code of Hindu Law, contained such a provision in its most emphatic form. The consequences of illegal marriage usually entailed expulsion and degradation of the higher-caste spouse from the higher class to which he had belonged prior to the proscribed marriage to the lower class status of the other spouse.<sup>2</sup> Particularly painful consequences of such a mixed marriage, however, were customarily reserved for its half-breed offspring.<sup>3</sup>

The privileged class of the Korean society during the

1 Jolowicz, H.F., *Historical Introduction to the Study of Roman Law* (Cambridge at the University Press, 1952), p. 13.

2 Some of the provisions of the Laws of Manu pertaining to this matter are to be found in Chapter 111, as follows.:

15. Twice-born men who, in their folly, wed wives of the low (Sûdra) caste, soon degrade their families and their children to the state of Sûdras.

16. According to Atri and to Gautama, the son of Utathya, he who weds a Sûdra woman becomes an outcast, according to Saunaka on the birth of a son, and according to Bhrigu he who has male offspring from a Sûdra female, alone.

17. A Brâhmana who takes a Sûdra wife to his bed, will (after death) sink into hell; if he begets a child by her, he will lose the rank of a Brâhmana.

19. For him who drinks the moisture of a Sûdra lip, who is tainted by her breath, and who begets a son by her, no expiation is prescribed.

*The Laws of Manu*, trans. G. Buhler (Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1886), pp. 78-79. It is, however, not clear whether the same proscription would have applied to concubinage. The language of the provisions emphasize "wedding" a Sûdra "wife." If a Brâhmana had sexual intercourse with a Sûdra female and had a son born of her not as a (first) wife but as a "concubine," the prohibition might not have applied. Also, the injunction seems to have been only against wedding a female of "Sûdra" caste, leaving marriages to females of two other lower castes outside its scope.

Yi dynasty (1392-1910 A.D.), the *yangban* class, also tried to maintain its purity by excluding the offspring of mixed marriages from its ranks.<sup>4</sup> It did not, like the Hindu, prohibit the mixing of blood itself. It did not condemn those *yangban* who had sexual relationships with women of inferior classes. It did not expel recalcitrant members or deprive them of their *yangban* status. It merely sought to protect the purity of its blood by excluding the offspring of mixed marriages from the enjoyment of those privileges and immunities appertaining to a *yangban*. The exclusion was accomplished through a royal decree which was later turned into a provision of a code, that barred

3 Some of the pertinent provisions of the Laws of Manu are as follows:

X. 5. In all castes (varna) only those children who are begotten in the direct order on wedded wives equal in caste and married as virgins, are to be considered as belonging to the same caste as their fathers.

X. 6. Sons begotten by twice-born men on wives of the next lower castes declare to be similar to their fathers, but are blamed on account of the fault inherent in their mothers.

IX. 178. The son whom a Brâhmana begets through lust on a Sûdra female is, though alive (pârayan), a corpse (sava), and hence called a pârasava (a living corpse). *Ibid.*, 402-403, 364.

4 It is customary to divide the Korean society of this period into four classes. The highest class was called *yangban*. This word means the two branches of bureaucracy, civilian and military. The second highest class was called *chungin*. The word means men of middle class. This class was composed mainly of petty officials of government agencies. They were very powerful because they handled the day-to-day operations of the government and without their technical knowledge the actual administration was impossible. The third class was called *sangin*. It means ordinary or common people. Those who were engaged in agriculture, manufacturing and commerce belonged to this class. The lowest class was called *ch'ônin*. Slaves, butchers, prostitutes, shamans, etc., belonged to this class.

In which of these four classes we should include the descendants of concubines is a difficult problem. It could very well be argued that they constituted a separate class by themselves. The actual social status of each one of them seems to have been determined by the official rank and political power of his father and former class status of his mother. Thus, if his father was a *yangban* of low rank and little power and his mother was a former slave-girl, his social standing was even lower than that of a *sangin*. On the other hand, if his father was a *yangban* of high rank and great power and his mother was *sangin* or even *chungin*, his social standing was even slightly higher than that of a *chungin*.



the descendants of mixed marriages from taking the *kwagō*, a kind of civil service examination. Inasmuch as the membership in the *yangban* class was dependent upon one's ability to pass the examination and to progress to a higher position on the bureaucratic hierarchy, the deprivation of the right to take the examination effectively degraded them to an inferior class status<sup>5</sup>.

The discriminatory law we are about to study was unique to Korea. Neither China nor Japan had such a law. This fact, along with the currently prevailing concern of mankind with the problem of racial discrimination, has led the writer to investigate the circumstances and the social forces that led to the enactment of such legislation, and to analyze the consequences—mostly unforeseen at the time of enactment—flowing from its enforcement.

## II

Prior to the founding of the Yi dynasty in 1392 A.D., polygamy was the prevailing mode of married life. Under the polygamous marriage system, all the wives and their offspring were placed on the same footing. As the new dynastic rule commenced, however, a drastic change came upon the marital life of the nation. Henceforward, there was to be one lawful wife and any other women espoused

5 One could easily think of the possibility of falsifying one's birth and taking the examination. But this was a very difficult thing to do in a closed society such as Korea of this period. Any such cheating, if discovered, was severely punished. Furthermore, every applicant was required to specify the names of his ancestors for eight generations on both paternal and maternal sides. Also, he had to state the name of his father-in-law. One feels strange to read about this type of practice being repeated in Hitler's Germany. In 1935, Max Amann, *Presseleiter*, required newspaper publishers to trace their own and their wives' racial "purity" back through four generations. Hale, O.J., *The Captive Press in the Third Reich* (Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press, 1964). During the periods immediately following the Hideyoshi and Manchu invasions, however, there were in fact a few who succeeded in lying about their ancestry and attained relatively high ranks in the bureaucracy. But they were eventually discovered and made common slaves in far-off islands after receiving their share of public floggings.

by a man already married were to be designated concubines.<sup>6</sup> By a royal decree issued in the fifteenth year of King T'aejong (1415 A.D.), the third monarch of the dynasty, the descendants of concubines were to be barred from a dozen or so of the highest offices of the kingdom. This edict naturally had immediate repercussions in the pattern of marriages among the *yangban* class. It in no way disrupted already existing concubinages. Male *yangban* continued to have concubines. But in arranging

6 The status of concubines needs some explanation. They were usually of lower class origin. No *yangban* female ever became a concubine. When a *yangban* took a concubine (there was no legal or customary limit to the number), and if the woman was from the second or third class, he would usually go through a modified form of wedding ceremony. A few rituals would be omitted from the standard ceremony, or a modification would be made in the costumes of the bridegroom. A concubine was usually given a separate house. But sometimes a few concubines with their children would live under the same roof with the legitimate wife and her children. If a wife showed jealousy, the husband had the right to divorce the wife. No virtuous wife was supposed to show jealousy when her husband took a concubine and brought her into the house to live together.

A concubine occupied a lower position in a household. She had to stand while the wife sat down and she had to use language that showed respect when she addressed the wife. Also, she was subordinate to the legitimate wife in respect to her legal rights. For example, if a man killed his wife, the penalty was death by hanging. But if he killed his concubine, the penalty was flagellation and exile. The actual position of a concubine, however, was not always inferior to that of a legitimate wife. A man might become so enamoured of a concubine, especially when he was old and the girl was very young and smart, as to completely desert his legitimate wife and children. The man might give all of his property and income to his concubine, impoverishing his legitimate family.

If a concubine was a former slave girl, no ceremony of any kind would be held. In this case, a man would buy the girl and live with her. If the girl was his own slave, there would be no problem. But if the girl was owned by someone else, then he had to pay for the girl and make her a *sangin*. Otherwise, any children born of a female slave would belong to the owner of the slave. Although a wife might not show jealousy, it was only natural that she hated concubines from the bottom of her heart. Her resentment and burning hatred must have been indelibly etched on to the minds of her children from childhood. Under these circumstances, it was only human for a man of legitimate birth to treat another of illegitimate birth with hatred and vengeance. He must have felt that he was avenging his mother's unhappiness when he discriminated brutally against the offspring of concubinage.

marriages for their children, they began to insist on the legitimacy of prospective children-in-law. Every *yangban* became very reluctant to give his daughter to a son or a grandson of a concubine, or to receive a daughter or a granddaughter of a concubine as a legitimate spouse of his son or grandson. No *yangban* relished the prospect of his descendants, at least of his legitimate wife, being degraded to the status of second-class *yangban*. He wanted to have his family remain full-fledged *yangban*.

How did this kind of royal decree ever get promulgated? Through the centuries, the descendants of concubines held one Sŏ Sŏn, who was T'aejong's chamberlain, responsible for the issuance of the discriminatory decree. As to the reason why he recommended the issuance of such a royal edict, people were wont to adduce his personal jealousy and animosity against one Chŏng Tojŏn. For his meritorious service in the overthrow of the old Koryŏ dynasty and the establishment of the new dynasty, Chŏng attained very high office and became a powerful personage in the government. Sŏ is said to have had a personal grudge against Chŏng whose favorite slave had once humiliated him. But one chamberlain's personal enmity with one of the chief vassals cannot have been a sufficient reason for the issuance of such a royal decree. Historical records indeed show that Sŏ did in fact recommend the promulgation of the decree. But there must have been some other, and far more substantial, reasons for its promulgation. What were those reasons? For one thing, T'aejong had his own reasons for issuing the discriminatory decree. His reasons can be found in the circumstances that led to his accession as the third monarch of the dynasty.

The founder of the dynasty, T'aejo, had two wives. His first wife had died before he founded the dynasty. By his first marriage he had six sons and by his second two sons. As soon as the new dynastic rule commenced, the matter of designating the royal successor became the most important question of the day. Among his eight sons,



the fifth, Pangwŏn, who later became T'aejong, was most able and had done most for the founding of the dynasty. Therefore, most courtiers recommended that Pangwŏn should be designated the crown prince, although in ordinary days the eldest son ought to be so designated. But T'aejo tended to favor the two sons of his second marriage. The second wife was very much alive and wielded much influence upon his thinking. Due to his (or it may be more correct to say, his second wife's) insistence, his youngest son was finally designated as the crown prince. This understandably made ambitious Pangwŏn very unhappy. He decided to do something about it. But he had to wait for six years. In the seventh year of T'aejo (1398 A.D.), the opportunity he had been waiting for for the past six years finally arrived. Fearing a bloody fight for the throne among the royal princes, Chŏng recommended to the king that all the royal princes should be ordered out of the capital and dispersed to the countryside. Thereupon, Pangwŏn counterattacked by charging that certain of his father's chief vassals were conspiring with his half-brothers to eliminate all the princes of his father's first marriage. With a few of his personal retainers, he killed Chŏng and a few others who were loyal to the crown prince. He also killed both his half-brothers.

In this bloody family quarrel, Pangwŏn used the precedence of age as his justification. Then he had his oldest living brother, Panggwa, designated as the new crown prince. Although he wanted the crown principedom for himself, he could not ask for it. He could not go against his own justification for killing his half-brothers. He had no justification for becoming a crown prince because his older brothers were alive. And he had reason to acquiesce in Panggwa's designation as the crown prince. He knew that Panggwa had no real ambition for the crown. Furthermore, Panggwa had no issue born of his first wife. With this fact in mind, Pangwŏn knew that he could wait a little longer.



Disgusted with the bloody family quarrel and saddened by the untimely deaths of his favorite sons, T'aejo abruptly abdicated the throne. And the new crown prince became Chǒngjong, the second monarch of the dynasty. As soon as Chǒngjong ascended the throne, again the question of designating the successor was raised. And again a bloody family quarrel broke out among the royal princes. While the new king had fifteen sons and eight daughters from various wives, his first wife gave him no son. Therefore, Pangwǒn did not have to worry too much about his nephews. But he had to do something about his two older brothers. The third brother quickly made it known that he did not want the crown. But the fourth brother, Panggan, was more ambitious and stubborn. A fight broke out. Panggan was defeated. He died of sickness in exile. With the permission of T'aejo, the king abdicated, Pangwǒn was finally designated as the crown prince. Ten months later, less than two years on the throne, Chǒngjong abdicated in favor of his younger brother, the crown prince. The ruthlessly enterprising prince finally realized his age-old ambition and became the third monarch of the dynasty, T'aejong.

Although in fact there was no justification for his ascension but his burning ambition, T'aejong felt constrained to find a justification for displacing his nephews, Chǒngjong's sons. His justification was simple enough. Chǒngjong had no legitimate son. Now he became a champion of legitimate wives and children. Furthermore, that archtraitor Chǒng Tojǒn was alleged to have been a son of a concubine.<sup>7</sup> Thus, T'aejong had every reason to revile the descendants of concubines.

Then there was another factor that reinforced T'aejong's discriminatory tendency against the offspring of concubinage. His own grandfather had three wives. A son had been born of each of the three wives, his father, T'aejo, being of the second wife. T'aejong decided to put the family tree in order. In revising the family

7 Most historians consider this allegation to be entirely false.

register, he designated his grandmother, though she was the second wife, as the legitimate wife of his grandfather. Consequently, his two uncles became illegitimate brothers of his father. His reason for thus revising the family history was to deprive the descendants of his uncles of any claim to the throne. But his uncles and cousins did not like it. Moreover, it was very difficult to find a correct way of treating the royal uncles and cousins. Particularly, the older uncle and his children expected a treatment commensurate with their position as the family of the first-born.<sup>8</sup> This caused the royal family a great deal of embarrassment. The unhappy royal relatives came to show their displeasure and this was interpreted by the court as insolence. Some courtiers even advocated the punishment of the recalcitrant royal relatives as treasonous rebels. T'aejong himself was very much angered. Nevertheless, he refused to take punitive action against them. Instead, he ordered them to return to the northeastern border region from which the royal family had come originally. Thus banished from the capital, the disaffected relatives caused no further embarrassment to the crown. But the necessity of emphasizing the difference and the separateness between the legitimate and the illegitimate was once again strongly felt by the king and his court.

### III

Underlying the foregoing factors and working in favor of discrimination was the moralistic tendency in Confucian ethics disfavoring concupiscence. Confucian ethics strongly disapprove of promiscuous sexual relationships, albeit the disapproval runs more against the female sex than against the male. The founders of the new dynasty considered it expedient to condemn the corruption of

8 This situation is somewhat like what we find between the Israelites and the Arabs as to their respective claims to be the rightful heirs of Abraham. In any event, the court historians finally degraded the first and third wives of T'aejong's grandfather to the status of slaves, justifying the royal family's claim to legitimacy. On the simple basis of chronological order of marriages, one could argue the opposite with perhaps more justification.

Buddhism, which had been the national religion of the preceding dynasty, and substituted Confucianism in its stead. During the preceding Koryŏ dynasty, especially toward its end, the sexual morality of the people had been very loose. When T'aejong accepted the recommendation for a discriminatory decree as a measure to alleviate the suffering of the people due to a severe drought that was plaguing the nation at the time, he was tightening the loosened morality of the people, appeasing at the same time the angry Nature that was chastening the nation for its depravity. Implied in this effort was a strong endorsement of monogamy, at least, among the *yangban* class. T'aejong was, thus, uplifting the moral standard of the nation when he issued the decree barring the descendants of concubines from the nation's high offices.

One could, of course, easily find a better and more effective way of rectifying the moral laxity of the people than to discriminate against the offspring of concubinage. It would be more logical to outlaw concubinage itself rather than to penalize the offspring who were in no way to blame for their being born of concubinage. In other words, monogamy could be enforced strictly, punishing adultery and fornication severely. As in the Hindu law, any *yangban* having sexual intercourse and thereby giving birth to a son by a woman of lower class could be deprived of his membership in the privileged class and degraded to the lower class status of his partner in the forbidden liaison. But then, concubinage existed from time immemorial. No *yangban* wanted to lose this important privilege. The fact that one could afford a few concubines was an effective demonstration of his affluence and prestige. Every male *yangban* wanted to be able to enjoy all the privileges of *yangban*, not the least of which was concubinage.

Behind the moralistic façade of the discriminatory legislation, there existed a far more important yet hidden reason for the edict. The social force at work that produced the enactment must be found in the internal logic of the class system itself. As was mentioned at the outset,



every privileged class endeavors to curtail its membership as much as possible. It wishes to limit the scope of distribution of its privileges and immunities, increasing thereby the share of privileges each member enjoys. It does its utmost to preserve its monopoly on privilege and power. The last thing it allows is to let the distinction among classes become indistinct. It struggles to keep class demarcation intact and permanent. As a rule, every discriminatory practice has an inherent tendency to become more and more discriminatory.

The discriminatory practice against the descendants of concubines was no exception. Initially the decree merely barred men of illegitimate birth from occupying the high offices of the land. But when the first codified law of the dynasty, *Kyōngguk Taejōn*, was formally promulgated in the fifth year of Sōngjong (1474 A.D.), the ninth monarch of the dynasty, in it there was a provision barring the descendants of concubines from taking *kwagō*, the civil service examination. Now the discrimination became more rigorous. Men of illegitimate birth were to be excluded from the government service entirely. As to those of illegitimate birth already in the bureaucracy, the code specified various ranks beyond which they could not progress, the maximum rank being determined by their immediate ancestors' rank in the government service and their mother's original class status.<sup>9</sup>

9. For example, if his father or grandfather had progressed beyond the rank of second grade, the highest being the first grade, and if his mother was born of a freeman, he could be promoted up to the third grade, but if his mother was born of a slave, he could not be promoted beyond the fifth grade. And if his father or grandfather had not progressed beyond even the seventh grade rank, he had to stop at the fifth grade or the seventh, depending on his mother's former class status. There were nine grades each in regular and secondary bureaucratic rankings. There were other technical and minor positions, quite large in number, outside the regular bureaucracy. Those whose forebears had progressed beyond the second grade had no restrictions placed upon them in such technical fields of government service as translation-interpretation, medicine, law, astronomy meteorology and geomancy.



Thus effectively deprived of membership in the *yangban* class to which his father and his legitimate half-brothers still belonged, a son of a concubine found himself a total outcast in the society in which he was born. He was spurned by his father's class and scorned by lower classes. He found his name completely omitted from the family tree. He could not call his father, "father." He had to employ the form of language used by servants when they addressed their master. He could not call his half-brother, "brother." Even his younger half-brother was his superior. If he went to a place of study, such as *sōwōn* or *Sōnggyun'gwan*, he would find his name not listed in the roll and had to find the lowest seat. Though the seating arrangement was determined by seniority in terms of age, a son of a concubine who was forty years of age would still find himself seated below a young scholar of fourteen. In some families, he was not allowed to participate in ancestor worship rites. And, as the time went by, the discrimination became more cruel and harsh.

Originally, it was provided in *Kyōngguk Taejōn* that a family may adopt a male child from another family within the same clan as an heir, whose primary duty it was to continue the family name and to keep up the ancestor worship rites. But not every family was allowed to adopt an heir. If there was a male child born of either the wife or a concubine, that male issue had to be designated as heir and no adoption was allowed. Moreover, the most important reason for getting a concubine was to get a male child in the first place. But it soon became a firmly established custom to adopt a legitimate offspring from another family rather than to let an illegitimate child become an heir. Even though it would be more human to let one's own flesh and blood become an heir than to let a total stranger be put in charge of ancestor worship, no *yangban* wanted his family to be deprived of *yangban* status. It was the choice between honoring one's blood relationship, on the one hand, and honoring one's duty toward ancestors to keep the family within the class and assure a *yangban* heir, on the other. Many a *yangban*

was torn between his natural affection for his own flesh and blood and his filial duty to his ancestors to keep the family *yangban*. From the point of view of illegitimate sons, this filial duty to keep the family *yangban* was simply a subterfuge for perverting natural affection in favor of avarice for power and prestige. But in almost all cases cupidity for power and privilege triumphed over natural affection.

No legal rule can ever expect to be observed absolutely. Nevertheless, the provision in the *KyōnggukTaejōn* that adoption was to be allowed only when there was no male issue, either legitimate or illegitimate, was most flagrantly violated. Before we condemn the *yangban* class for lack of respect for the law, however, it must be remembered that unless the several provisions of a code harmonize with one another, all the code provisions may be rendered ineffective due to poor drafting. The draftsmen of the code failed to realize that, with the provision barring the descendants of concubines from taking the civil service examination, the provision sanctioning the designation of an illegitimate offspring as a lawful heir could never be enforced effectively. The fact that a *yangban* family had an illegitimate heir meant that it would eventually be excluded from the class. Understandably, no *yangban* family wanted this fate to befall it. Had there been a provision allowing legitimation of an heir, though originally born illegitimate, the provision relating to adoption would have been better observed.

It may have been true that the drafters simply did not foresee the turn of events that followed its promulgation. And had they been able to foresee it, they would have done something about it. But it was in the nature of any discriminatory law to become more and more discriminatory and intolerant. Had it taken a milder form, as had originally been decreed by T'aejong, it would inevitably have become as discriminatory as it actually became. The same exclusionary forces and pressures would have operated. And the privileged class would not have

rested until it had totally excluded those elements that might perchance demoralize or corrupt its integrity and purity.

Having been in reality superseded by contrary customs, the code provision concerning adoption had to be finally amended to harmonize with the mores of the *yangban* class. So, in the twenty-first year of Yǒngjǒ (1745 A.D.), the twenty-first monarch of the dynasty, when an amended version of *Kyōngguk Taejōn* known as *Soktaejōn* was promulgated, the provision was amended to allow adoption in cases where there was no legitimate male issue. It became legal, thenceforward, to adopt a male from another family within the same clan as an heir, albeit there was an illegitimate male issue. Thus, the exclusionary legislation again became more rigid and harsh.

#### IV

Made an outcast and deprived of what he considered to be his birthright, a person of illegitimate birth found the world cruel and unjust. More often than not, he could not resign himself to accepting the status of a common man without any privilege or respectable livelihood. His burning obsession was to break down the discriminatory barrier and be admitted into the social class of his father. Some of his half-breed peers did accept the status of a common man and became minor officials or learned to live by a trade or a profession. But he, like most of his peers, wanted to be able to share the privileges and powers of his father. Especially, if his father was a courtier of high rank and of great power and he saw how much his half-brothers enjoyed these things, he just could not give up that easily.

Hot-blooded and adventurous types wanted to remake society in their own images. They wanted to turn the existing social order upside-down. They wanted to do something daring and audacious. They did not want to accept the inhumanity of the existing social order passively



without a fight. Few succeeded in overthrowing the unjust social order, however. Most of them were hunted down and summarily killed as treasonous rebels. Some became Robin Hood-type robbers. But they too eventually were caught and executed.

Spiritless ones became hangers-on of their half-brothers or other rich and powerful relatives. These had obsequious smiles on their faces. Every muscle in their bodies and every movement and gesture exuded servility. But not all these spiritless nonentities were genuine lackeys. Under the veneer of bootlicking servility, there smoldered the fire of resentment and hatred against supercilious wretches who always harped on the legitimacy of their own birth. It seemed that the stupider the fellow was the more unbearable his self-righteousness became. For some, it became an obsession to find a way to give vent to his hatred and resentment. Many a man of illegitimate birth harbored the desire for vengeance in his heart against the heartless ones who did not hesitate to rub salt into their wounded pride. The history of the Yi dynasty is replete with instances where one man's personal grudge against another exploded into full-scale criminal prosecutions for alleged treason, which brought untold suffering and bloodshed not only to those who were directly charged with the crime but to their families. These charges were not always proven adequately, however, some of them being outright fabrications.

Many men of illegitimate birth tried to gain forbidden membership in the *yangban* class by joining conspiracies to literally "make a king" out of a number of royal princes of both legitimate and illegitimate birth as well as other royal family members. If he was successful, he became a *kongsin*, a courtier who had rendered a highly meritorious service to the king; if he bungled it, he lost everything, including his life and family. Since he could not attain membership in the privileged class through regular channels, he had to resort to extraordinary means. When he did not actively participate in a king-making



conspiracy, he could sniff around for a conspiracy, instead. If he could successfully uncover a treason conspiracy and inform it to the proper authorities in good time, he could not only become a *kongsin* but also expropriate to himself the property and slaves of those whom he exposed. In order to inform against treasonous rebels, he did not have to take *kwagō*, nor did he have to be a person of legitimate birth. Furthermore, he could become a high-ranking courtier overnight and after that no one dared to belittle him because of his illegitimacy.

The bloody factional power struggles during the Yi dynasty are famous for their long duration as well as for the tenacity with which they were carried on. It may safely be said that whenever one faction won, causing sanguinary destruction of the opposing faction, there were several men of illegitimate birth masterminding the whole fight. Inasmuch as this was the only avenue of success left open for them, they were most enthusiastic in their work for or against a faction. Also, during this period, the transfer of political power from one faction to another took the form of liquidating the faction in power by implicating its members in a treason conspiracy. On the other hand, the faction in power quashed the opposition by charging it with complicity in a treason conspiracy. In participating in, or exposing a conspiracy, men of illegitimate birth seemed to have been very active. Sometimes, they simply fabricated a treason conspiracy.

In addition to those already described, there were other ways of living, or dying, opted by men of illegitimate birth. Some chose suicide. Rather than go on living a humiliating life, they chose death by their own hands. Others strove for academic excellence as a way to gain self-respect. Still others chose a life of seclusion, hoping to find peace of mind in peaceful surroundings. A soaring rock, a beautiful flower, or a thundering waterfall never discriminated against them. Quite a few intelligent and able scholars found meaning in life by obtaining livelihood

and self-respect as teachers of the young. But the majority spent their lives trying to win concessions from the *yangban* class. They pressured the king and those in power to have discriminatory laws abrogated. Their efforts to have discrimination abolished bear close resemblance to the American Negroes' efforts to win desegregation in the United States today.<sup>10</sup>

## V

Not every man of legitimate birth was happy with the discriminatory law. Especially those who were willing and able to compete on an equal footing with descendants of concubines urged the abrogation of the law on the ground that it unjustly deprived the nation of able and intelligent human resources. They strenuously pointed out that the law had no precedent in history. They were wont to cite the example of China where, with much greater human resources, there was no such restrictive legislation. They strongly advocated that the country could certainly use every human timber existing in it. Since it was very difficult, if not impossible, to break down the discriminatory barrier all at once, they proposed that men of illegitimate birth be allowed to literally earn their right to become *yangban*.

The man who is credited with the initiation of the proposal is Yi Yulgok. When he was the War Minister in the sixteenth year of Sŏnjo (1583 A.D.), the fourteenth monarch of the dynasty, the Manchu tribes in the north waged a sudden large scale offensive. They invaded the northern border region, causing a great deal

10 For a student of economic history, it is of interest to note here that the offspring of concubinage as a marginal social group could have become an entrepreneurial, or at least a commercial, class of the nation. For some reason, they did not become such a group and, as a result, the transition of the Korean economy into a commercial capitalism was that much delayed. Had they, like younger sons of the English or Japanese ruling classes, sought their meaning of life in commercial or overseas adventures, the modernization and industrialization of the country could have been that much expedited.

of consternation and worry in the capital. Faced with the task of raising an army for reinforcement, the minister found himself woefully short of both commanders and soldiers. Thereupon, he made a recommendation to the king to the effect that any man of illegitimate birth volunteering for military service with the expeditionary force for the period of three years be permitted to take the civil service examination. He also recommended that any slave who similarly volunteered for the service be made a freeman. The minister's recommendation was not accepted. Nevertheless, this proposal sparked a heated debate whether to mitigate the rigorousness of discrimination or not. And, within a decade, a catastrophe was to befall the nation, compelling the monarch to allow and to carry into effect the minister's recommendation he and the court had originally rejected. That catastrophe was the Hideyoshi Invasion of 1592 A.D.

When the Japanese forces invaded the country, the nation was totally unprepared for war, having enjoyed peace for the preceding two centuries. In order to stem the tide of onrushing Japanese forces, the government decreed any man, even a slave, who brought back the severed head of an enemy general would be allowed to take *kwagō*.<sup>11</sup> In this national emergency, a large number of descendants of concubines took their lives into their own hands and fought valiantly for their country. Many were successful in attaining the coveted social status. Those of better means were allowed to purchase the right to take *kwagō* with money, by supplying the military forces with military stores, especially foodstuff. The destruction caused by seven years' war was beyond description. The famine and plague that followed the war added to the misery and suffering of the people, already made unbearable by the ravages of war. Food was so scarce and difficult to obtain that the government finally decided to sell the

11 This reminds us of a similar incident in the history of Rome. In 100 B.C., the Roman Senate rewarded a slave with citizenship "on proof that he had given the death blow" to Demagogue Saturninus. Frank, T., *A History of Rome* (New York: Holt, 1950), p. 225.



right to take *kwagŏ* as well as government offices in return for rice. If a man could scrape up a quarter of a *sŏk*<sup>12</sup> of rice, he could not only take the examination but pass it. Anyone who could offer one hundred *sŏk* of rice was made a *yangban* with the rank of third-grade. Thirty *sŏk* was enough to purchase a fifth-grade rank. Even at such an attractive price, however, there were few takers. Few had that much rice. The actual number of those who attained *yangban* status in return for rice was not too large. Descendants of concubines were not that well off. Most of them simply could not afford it.

Moreover, this temporary breach in the discriminatory barrier was not solely for the benefit of the descendants of concubines. Even slaves were allowed to buy their way into the class. Therefore, as soon as the war ended and the semblance of order was finally restored, it was inevitable that a violent reaction should set in. The *yangban* class felt its purity defiled and its integrity grievously offended. It wanted to purge impurity. Upstart *yangban* were carefully isolated and they eventually came to find themselves no better off, if not worse off, than before. In a closed society such as Korea of the seventeenth century, it was a simple matter to find out whose father was what, when. And some of the old-line *yangban* delighted in pointing out that a certain parvenu cheated his way into the class by falsely presenting a severed head of a common beggar as that of an enemy general. New *yangban* were never allowed to forget their former status.

Through the years, the descendants of concubines continued to press for the abrogation of discriminatory laws. A steady stream of petitions for its abolition continued to flow into the royal court. But only a few ever reached the hands of monarchs, the overwhelming majority being thrown away by annoyed officials. In this fight against discrimination, the descendants of concubines were not alone. As pointed out above, many scholars and high ranking officials, themselves of legitimate birth, strongly

12 A *sŏk* is approximately 180 liters.



argued for the abrogation of the law. Exasperated by obstructive tactics of uncooperative courtiers, they decided to take some direct action. In the twenty-first year of Sukchong(1695 A.D.), the nineteenth monarch of the dynasty, a group petition signed by 988 men was submitted to the king. Some thirty years later, in 1724 A.D., when the new king, Yǒngjo, the twenty-first monarch, who had just ascended the throne, was on his way back from a worship rite at the tomb of the preceding monarch, a group of descendants of concubines interrupted the royal procession and presented a group petition signed by five thousand men directly to the king.<sup>13</sup> This type of group action by the descendants of concubines sporadically continued to 1894 A.D. when slavery was finally abolished along with discrimination against men of illegitimate birth. The last mass demonstration occurred in the fourteenth year of Hǒnjong(1848 A.D.), the twenty-fourth monarch, when nine thousand men assembled in front of the palace gate and staged what amounted to a sit-down demonstration. They sprawled themselves for seven days and finally their petition was received by the king.

Yǒngjo, the twenty-first monarch, is said to have been born of a former slave. He was most emphatic in his support of the abrogation of discriminatory laws. Especially, toward the end of his fifty-two-year reign, he literally staked his power and prestige behind his effort to abolish discrimination. But even he, a king, could not easily change the 300-year-old custom. He was hindered and delayed on all sides in his efforts to better the lot of the descendants of concubines. When he insisted that the scholars in the *Sǒnggyun'gwan* should be seated in the order of age irrespective of legitimacy of birth, he encountered violent reaction from the students. The students *en masse* interrupted a royal procession and insisted that the king's order must be retracted. This opposition by the students so enraged the king that he ordered the leader

<sup>13</sup> This was, of course, a dangerous thing to do. If such an interruption was found wanton and capricious, the penalty was death.

of the opposing students executed as a treasonous rebel. His home town was ordered to be degraded and anyone coming from the same town was to be barred from the *kwagō* from then on. Met with such resoluteness of the king, the students had to give in. But not for too long.

As soon as the king died three years later in 1776 A.D., the students at the *Sōnggyun'gwan* found a way to circumvent the royal order. Instead of letting the students of illegitimate birth sit among them in the order of age, they decided to let them sit separately, forming their own separate order of seating. Another favorite tactic employed by *Sōnggyun'gwan* scholars in their support of discrimination was to pack up everything and go home, a form of strike. A group action by the descendants of concubines was bound to be met by an opposing group action. The privileged class did not sit idly by, watching their monopoly on privileges attacked by the sons of slaves. Thus, Korea had its own civil rights demonstrations centuries ago, and the student demonstrations we see today have ample precedents in the past history of the nation.

## VI

In the latter half of the dynasty, the discrimination was slowly made less rigorous by allowing capable men of illegitimate birth to occupy certain low-grade positions in the bureaucracy. But this only whetted their appetites for total abrogation of the discriminatory rule. Discrimination could not be abolished, however, until the class system itself was abolished and a new social order substituted in its place. When slavery was done away with and the class distinctions were made ineffective in the years following the Kabo Reforms of 1894, the problem of discrimination against the descendants of concubines solved itself. The discriminatory rule of law had to be formally abrogated, and a fundamental change in the social order caused by the Japanese colonization had to intervene, before the discriminatory practices in daily

life and marriage customs of the people could be made less corrosive. Nevertheless, the discrimination against men of illegitimate birth was only one of many symptomatic manifestations of the internal logic, or illogicality, of the class system itself, and therefore, could only be solved by the dissolution of the class system.<sup>14</sup>

14 This paper owes a great deal to the pioneering research done in this area by the late Professor Yi Sang-back of Seoul National University.

## KOREAN MASKS AND MASK DANCE PLAYS

by Yi Tu-hyon

The date of man's invention of masks is not known but since they are found in wide use in such primitive cultures as those of the Alaskan snowfields, aboriginal Africa, and the islands of the South Seas, their use is certainly several thousand years old. The very fact that masks in one form or another have made their appearance in every culture shows how important a role they have played in human life.

What, then, was the original purpose of masks? They appeared when man first thought of gods and feared devils. Festivals were organized for praying to the gods and pacifying the devils. In such festivals it was necessary for humans to act the roles of the gods and devils and distinguishing marks were needed for the purpose. It was out of this need that masks evolved.

Religious masks can be classified according to purpose. They include devil masks, medicine masks, spiritual masks, memorial masks, totem masks, rainmaking masks, etc. These religious masks developed into dance and play masks. With the development of dance and true drama, masks became less primitive and more artistic.

Even after the techniques of make-up came into use, masks still served their purpose of creating stronger and more fantastic effects than could ever be achieved with make-up. The very immobility of a mask has a certain air of the supernatural and fantastic. This fact accounts for the continued use of masks down to the present day.

Korean masks that have been preserved until today can be classified into two major groups: first, religious



masks, which can be further divided into shaman masks, Pangsangssi masks (imported from China) and Buddhist ceremonial masks (imported from India via Central Asia); second, theatrical masks, which include Ch'öyong (originally the name of a shaman deity) dance mask, the lion dance mask and four major folk play masks.

The first historical record of the mask dance in Korea appears in the Japanese history, *Nihon Shoki*, which mentions that Mimasi, a native of Paekche who learned *Gigaku* (Japanese pronunciation) in South China, went to Japan and taught *Gigaku* to the Japanese in 612 A. D. *Gigaku* (in Korean pronunciation *Kiak*) is a Buddhist ceremonial mask mime dance and is accompanied by Buddhist music. The Japanese preserve hundreds of *Gigaku* masks today but in Korea we have no *Gigaku* masks now. This *Gigaku* was imported to China with Buddhism via Central Asia and introduced through Korea to Japan.

The next historical record of the mask dance in Korea appears in the poems entitled *Ogi* (Five Plays), written during the ninth century A.D. by the famous Silla dynasty scholar, Ch'oe Chi-wön. Three of these five plays were mask-dance plays. Besides these *Ogi* plays there were several other mask-dance plays in Silla, Paekche and Koguryö. Old Japanese music books list the names of ten more mask-dance plays which were imported from Korea to early Japan. It is therefore obvious that mask-dance plays were popular during the Three Kingdoms period.

The several mask-dance plays continued to be played during the Koryö dynasty and until the end of the Yi dynasty. It is believed that during the Yi dynasty the mask-dance play called the *Sandae* was supported and protected by the king until the 12th year of the reign of King Injo (middle of the 17th century) when he withdrew his support. Afterwards actors performed for the common people in their own way,

The Korean mask-dance plays can be classified into

four major groups: first, the Sandae peculiar to the Seoul area; second, the Söbuk or Haesö of Hwanghae Province; third, the Ogwangdae and Yaryu of South Kyöngsang Province; and fourth, the Hahoe peculiar to Hahoe village in North Kyöngsang Province. This play, according to villagers in the area, is more than five hundred years old.

The Sandae consists of 10 acts and 4 scenes and uses about 22 masks; the Haeso consists of 7 acts, using 23 masks; the Ogwangdae and Yaryu consists of 5 acts with from 12 to 24 masks, depending on the locality. The Hahoe consists of 12 acts using 11 wooden masks.

Until recent years, the Hahoe and the Ogwangdae and Yaryu mask-dance plays were traditionally performed at the beginning of the first lunar month. The Sandae was also performed at lunar new year as well as at several other festivals during the year. The Haeso mask-dance play was performed at the Tano festival, the fifth day of the fifth lunar month. They are all now less religious and more theatrical mask plays.

The main themes of these mask-dance plays are disgust with the ruling *yangban* (noble) class, who are insulted openly by commoner actors, and antipathy for depraved Buddhist monks, who are satirized severely. Often the tragic triangle—husband, wife, and concubine—love affair and the miserable daily life of the common people are portrayed.

The masks are generally made of wood, gourds, paper or furs. Most masks are made so as to cover the head completely, the same as the old Greek masks.

The techniques in early times were naturalistic and realistic but steadily moved to conventionalized styles late in the Yi dynasty.

The characteristic features of these mask-dance plays are jesting and dancing accompanied by music. It is traditional Oriental theatrical practice, having no set time limit and often continuing well into the night. At dawn in the finale the masks were often burned in order to keep their purity and sacredness. Consequently, we have very few old masks. For every festival season new masks were made. Korean mask-dance plays have an all-male cast as is common in such plays throughout the world.



The First Monk's Dance  
(Bongsan Mask-dance Drama)

Photo by D.H. Lee





The Nobleman(wood)  
(Hahoi Mask-dance Drama)  
National Treasure No. 121  
Date: c. 14 th century)

Photo by D.H. Lee



Shaman Masks(wood)  
(L. Demon Spirit; R. Diety of Actors)  
(Date. c. 19 th century)



The Nobleman(wood)  
(Byungsan Mask-dance Drama)  
National Treasure No. 121  
(Date: c. 14 th century)

Photo by D.H. Lee





The Butcher(wood)  
(Hahoi Mask-dance Drama)  
National Treasure No. 121  
(Date: c. 14 th century)





Virgin(wood)  
(Hahoi Mask-dance Drama)  
National Treasure No. 121  
(Date: c. 14 th century  
Photo by D.H. Lee



Concubine of the Nobleman(wood)  
(Hanoi Mask-dance Drama)  
National Treasure No. 121  
Date: c. 14 th century)

Photo by D.H. Lee



Third Buddhist Monk(wood)  
(Sandae Mask-dance Drama)  
(Date: 19 th century)

Photo by D.H. Lee





The prodigal(wood)  
(Sandae Mask-dance Drama)  
(Date: 19 th century)

Photo by D.H. Lee





Concubine of the Nobleman(gourd)  
(Sandae Mask-dance Drama)  
(Date: the begining of the 20 th c.)  
Photo by D.H. Lee



The Noblemen and Servant  
(Okwandae Mask-dance Drama)  
Photo by D.H. Lee



Servant of the Nobleman  
(bamboo basket and paper)  
(Okwangdae Mask-dance Drama)  
(Date: 20 th century)

Photo by D.H. Lee





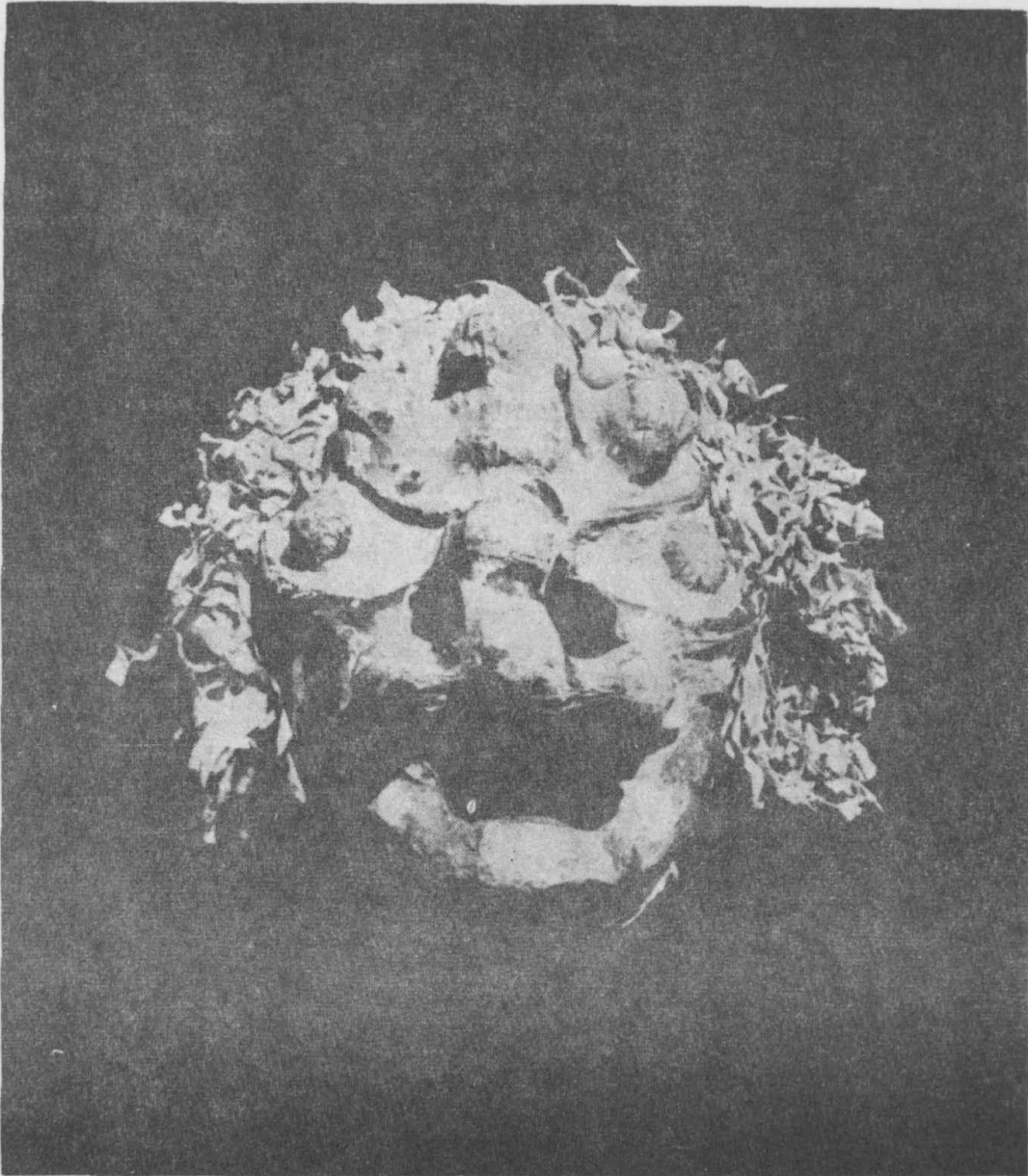
Monks' Dance  
(Sandae Mask-dance Drama)  
Photoby J.C. An





The Prodigal(paper)  
(Bongsan Mask-dance Drama)  
(Date: 20 th century)

Photo by D.H. Lee



The Buddhist Monk(paper)  
(Bongsan Mask-dance Drama)  
(Date: the late 16th century)

Photo by D.H. Lee



## NOTES ON MODERN KOREAN FICTION

by Peter Hyun

Modern Korean fiction really began with the marriage of the Korean language and the democratic ideas introduced at the turn of the century. The Korean language, which belongs to the Ural-Altaic family (i.e. Mongolian, Turkish, Hungarian and Finnish), has neither strong accent nor deep nasal tone; the sounds are mild and musical; and it is alphabetical and phonetic in spelling, whereas Chinese is ideographic.

In 1910, however, the Japanese occupied the country and converted it into a colony. Many writers were sent to prison for advocating the freedom and independence of Korea; and, especially during World War II, the use of the Korean language was prohibited. Thus our modern fiction has developed under foreign domination.

The father of modern Korean literature is Yi Kwang-su. (李光洙) A fiery man of letters, Yi Kwang-su attacked the Confucian tendency of the past and introduced instead free love, individual liberty and other revolutionary ideas. In his early story *New Dreams*, published in 1915, for instance, the hero admits:

'I am a Korean. I've heard of the word love, but I've never experienced it. There are millions of men and women in Korea, but alas, they do not know what love is. A young man marries a girl, whose name and face and character are completely alien to him; their parents sign a marriage contract; thus they are chained to each other for life! When it comes to the question of choosing one's lifetime mate, how can one be at the mercy of a piece of paper signed by others?'

In the next two novels, however, the influence of



Tolstoyan humanism and of Christo-Buddhism is evident. The hero of *The Earth* (흙) leaves his wealthy home and sinful city in search of a true humanity in the country. With his description of the heroine's moral dilemmas and emotional conflicts, with his metaphysical observations of the hero's ideas and ideals, in *The Miserable* (無情) the author justifies his reputation as the foremost critic of our culture and civilization. Besides, Yi Kwang-su invented a colloquial style of writing in fiction and in verse.

The first of March, 1919 was a black day in our history. On this day the people throughout the country held a series of passive demonstrations against Japanese rule, asking the Japanese to grant them independence.

The Japanese soldiers, however, fired on the demonstrators, and in the city of Seoul alone several thousand Koreans were killed. Soon dark clouds of doubt and pessimism loomed over our literary horizon; and, influenced by Flaubert and Zola, a school of Naturalist writers emerged. Yöm Sang-söp (廉想涉) and Hyön Chin-gön (玄鎭健) attempted to describe our unhappy national state and its impact upon the intelligentsia in a most scientific manner. Theirs was a mixture of photographic realism and pessimistic romanticism. Yöm Sang-söp's *The Green Frog in a Laboratory* (標本室의 靑개구리) is typical of the naturalist novels of the 1920s. The hero, an intelligent young man, recalls a frog-dissecting scene at school, where his professor cuts up the frog and examines it piece by piece, after which he puts all the pieces into a bottle of alcohol. The professor then turns to the students and exclaims as though he had made a great scientific discovery:

'Now, look, all of you! The frog is still alive!'

Later the author brings a madman into the story, and after several symbolic incidents asks: 'is there any difference between the madman and the intelligent young hero? Let us analyse this reality, this mystery!'

If in temperament Yöm Sang-söp is Nordic, Hyön Chin-gön is definitely Latin. Known as the Maupassant of Korea, Hyön Chin-gön is a brilliant master of short stories, which are noted for their frank, vivid evocation of sexual desires and their consequences. He uses such descriptive titles for his tales as *The Flowers of Sacrifice*, *Tower Without a Shadow* and *Fire* (불).

Born into a rich aristocratic family, Kim Tong-in (金東仁) employed the Naturalist technique in his early novels. Particularly in *The Sorrows of a Weak Soul*, delving into the mental illness of the heroine, the author takes a sharp clinical approach. In his later works, however, Kim Tong-in shows his aristocratic individualism and his love of the purely aesthetic. Before his untimely death in 1951 he made a characteristic statement:

'The element of art is egoism.'

As the aftermath of the March First Movement, a new genre of literature was born. The proletarian literature advocated protest, agitation and action. In opposition to the bourgeois tendencies of the past, Chae Su-hae, Yi Ki-yong and Han Söl-ya exposed the tragic lives of the peasants and the workers. Having known destitution and hunger in his youth, Chae Su-hae produced a number of bitter novels of protest. *Hunger and Massacre* is the tale of an impoverished young worker who sells himself as a slave to a doctor in order to secure medicine for his ailing wife, and who in the end turns into a reluctant but mad murderer. In contrast with the fanaticism of Chae Su-hae, however, Yi Ki-yong and Han Söl-ya staged a cool, systematic struggle against social injustices, offering Marxism as the sole solution. Theirs was a highly persuasive attempt to lure the masses into their Communist camp; but towards the middle 1930s, when most of the leaders of the movement had been jailed, proletarian literature lost its identity. It was not until the liberation of the country by the Allies in the summer of 1945 that the proletarian writers emerged again, particularly in the North.

Disillusioned with socio-political activities of the proletarian movement, Yu Chin-o (俞鎮午) and Yi Hyo-sök (李孝石) found themselves in an emotional and intellectual state of despair and of ennui. Yu Chin-o's *Lecturer Kim and Professor T.* describes how in the face of their gloomy reality even responsible and conscientious scholars lose interest in their academic pursuits and feel nothing but the void. Yi Hyo-sök in his masterpiece *The Sick Rose* deals with an idealistic leader of the Young Communist League who turns into a dissipated actress. One night on the stage she ad-libs hysterically:

'This life is killing me! This horrid fearful air chokes me! I cannot bear it. I am going mad...'

Another disillusioned novelist of the period was Chu Yo-söp (朱耀燮), whose *The Rickshaw Man* and *The Murderer* bitterly question the ethics of religion and of society. The pastoral novelist Yi Mu-yöng (李無影) gives a breathing space by turning to nature for solace and inspiration in his brilliant work *Longing for the Earth* whereas the historical writer Pak Chong-hwa (朴鍾和) re-creates the relics of the past in an attempt to arouse our national conscience.

In 1935 Yi Sang (李箱) experimented with the psychological novel. His was an attempt to delve freely into man's character. The hero in *The Wings* has a prostitute-wife who supports him and all he does every day is to play with his wife's toilet articles and to daydream. The man hasn't any zest for life, and in one of his many idle moments he soliloquises thus:

'I feel terribly dizzy on this fast revolving earth. The sooner I get off it, the better I will be...'

Here the man is a typical victim of the period when the Korean intelligentsia had no freedom whatsoever. His later novel *The End of Life*, as the title suggests, evokes



a sense of the hopelessness and meaninglessness of life under the present circumstances. Like Nathaniel West, Yi Sang died young, an embittered man, before he perfected his highly individual craft.

Yi Sang was followed by that master of lyric romanticism Hwang Sun-wŏn (黃順元), winner of the 1959 International PEN-Encounter Asian Short Story Contest; by Chŏng Pi-sŏk (鄭飛石), whose best known novel *The Logic of Youth* deals with the amoral and the amorous in a subtle Moravian manner; and by Kim Tong-ni, (金東里) whose world is a mixture of the real and the unreal, of the natural and the supernatural, of the ordinary and the mysterious. Kim Tong-ni takes a myth or a legend and creates a new reality based on it by working backwards, as it were, from the present to the past. In his *Muddle*, for instance, the principal character drags his exhausted body along dark path of life towards the predestined goal of Goodness. Thus myth and legend are re-created in modern times.

But alas, World War II plunged Korean literature into darkness. The use of our language was absolutely forbidden and writers were forced to write in Japanese. Many reluctant writers were tortured, whereas some were put to death.

The tragic division of the country by the Allies in 1945 and the eventual cataclysm were not conducive to the birth of a new literature. It was only several years after the truce that a young generation of avant garde writers appeared and initiated the present age of war literature. Sŏnu Hui (鮮于輝) came out with a powerful autobiographical novel, *The Flowers of Fire*. Han Mal-suk, (韓末淑), one of the most gifted young women writers, created a tragic heroine in *The Flood*, a symbolic tale of undying love among the ruins. Comparable to Celine, Son Chang-sŏp (孫昌涉) mercilessly exposes in his fast-moving tales the lust, vice and corruption in the world he knows so well—that of the downtrodden cave-dwelling beggars and thieves in Seoul.



The talented O Sang-wŏn, (吳尙源) at 30, has created a polished prose style of his own. Like Camus, O Sang-wŏn is concerned with the absurdity of the human condition; but he goes on to the question of what ought to be done about it. In *The Wordless Diary* the hero loses one arm in the war and returns home to find his sweetheart locked up in a mental hospital and pregnant. An insane war victim herself, she does not know who the father of the unborn child is. Her doctor claims that no medicine can cure her. The hero comes to believe that his love alone can make her well again. In one of his moving soliloquies the hero states:

'Only one who has suffered knows the meaning of suffering. Therefore, he alone can save himself...'

## AN OBJECTIVE VIEW OF JAPANESE ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORKS IN KOREA

by Dr. Kyoichi Arimitsu

The first scholars to investigate the ancient cultures of the Korean peninsula through the medium of archaeological research methods were Japanese, starting about 1900. During the subsequent half century, many Japanese devoted themselves to a variety of research subjects. Among these, the contributions of Sekino Tadashi were of particular importance, for they established a firm foundation for archaeological studies in Korea, and had a great influence on other Japanese archaeologists. Sekino approached archeological research from the standpoint of architectural history, his specialty, which he taught at Tokyo Imperial University. In addition to careful research and recording on topics in his own field, Dr. Sekino also investigated a broad range of related subjects such as city walls, tombs, sculpture, painting, metal work and ceramics. As for archaeological research works, it is worth mentioning that Dr. Sekino's way of recording has been followed by later archaeologists, not only in Korea but also in Japan. His technique of excavation is still held in high regard by the present archaeologists. It was, to a large degree, through his studies, which were published in systematically organized, well documented, accurate reports that the importance of the ancient cultural heritage of the Korean peninsula was first realized in scholarly circles in other parts of the world. Dr. Sekino, as the pioneer of Korean archaeology, published many books on arts and monuments of Korea. One of his achievements was the compilation of the Chosen Koseki Zufu(朝鮮古蹟圖譜). It took 15 years and consists of 15 volumes. It is an honor that the French government conferred a decoration, Stanilas Julian, upon him in 1917.

Archaeological activities gained momentum after the Japanese annexation of Korea in 1910. In 1916, the Government General of Chosen set up regulations for the protection of art and monuments in Korea, and defined the policies and

procedures which were to be followed in excavating burial mounds, sites of Buddhist temples, palaces, and other archaeological sites. Important art works and monuments were registered by the government, and only duly qualified scholars with government approval were allowed to investigate them. In addition, changes or modifications of any of the registered art works and monuments was prohibited.

In the next five years a program for the investigation of ancient arts and monuments, including burial mounds and temple sites, was formulated and reports dealing with various periods, regions and sites throughout the peninsula were published, ranging from prehistory to the Yi dynasty.

Historians and archaeologists from Japanese universities, mainly Tokyo and Kyoto, were particularly active in this research. In addition to Dr. Sekino, the names of Torii Ryuzo (鳥居龍藏), Kuroita Katsumi (黑板勝美), Harata Yoshito (原田淑人), Hamada Kosaku (濱田耕作), Umehara Sueji (梅源末治) are of great importance, because of their outstanding contributions.

Dr. Torii (鳥居) from the Department of Anthropology of Tokyo Imperial University visited Korea annually from 1916-1921 exploring and locating prehistoric sites throughout the peninsula. He was the first scholar who divided the neolithic cultures of the Korean peninsula into two groups on the basis of characteristic pottery types. This division, claimed in 1923, has now come to be generally accepted among students of Korean prehistory.

However, after Dr. Torii's exploration, scientific research upon prehistoric sites was suspended until the excavation at Unggi, in Hamgyong Pukto at intermittent periods between 1929 and 1931. This work, conducted by Professor Fujita from Keijo Imperial University, revealed shell-mounds and layers of stone-age relics.

As for the shell-mounds, the Kimhae shell-mound located near Pusan is the most important because of the



finding of a coin minted in China in the 1st century AD. Together with this, knives of iron (hafted in deer-horn) and carbonized rice grains as well as stone implements and a number of potsherds were unearthed. Dr. Hamata (濱田) and Umehara (梅源), who conducted this excavation in 1920 promptly published their technical report, which is still a valuable document in studying the dawn of metal culture and rice cultivation among the Korean people.

Not a few articles and books on the study of early metal culture in Korea by Dr. Umehara and Professor Fujita were published. Among them "Han Dynasty Remains in Southern Korea" and "Proto-Lo-lang" are basic studies on this topic. Umehara and Fujita were co-editors of these books and for the first time they described trappings and vehicle fittings which are mostly made of bronze. These categories of relics undoubtedly belong to the advanced invaders as compared with native neolithic farmers.

Dr. Sekino and his cohorts were busy in the excavation of tombs of the Lo-lang district near Pyongyang during the five-year project.

Dr. Sekino's party was successful in careful digging and in accurate documentation of characteristic Chinese relics of the Han dynasty. Such items as ritual bronzes, lacquer wares, weapons and other furnishings came to light in the process of their excavation. Through their excavations, Japanese archaeologists promoted and advanced the techniques of digging. Delicate patterns on the lacquered bowls and wine cups and inscriptions on perishable wooden seals were unearthed intact. These were often useful in dating these tombs as well as in identifying the inhumed bodies.

Besides Dr. Sekino, Dr. Harada, Dr. Umehara, Professor Fujita and others were also active in excavating the Lo-lang tombs. Dr. Harada excavated the tomb of Wang Hsu (王盱) in 1925 and published a gorgeous book titled "Lo-lang." Mr. Kozumi excavated another tomb in 1931 which unexpectedly revealed the most wonderful remains, with a



painted basket, etc., in its perfectly preserved wooden chambers. You may appreciate these findings in Kozumi's fine book, "The Painted Basket Tomb at Lo-lang." Mr. Oba's excavation in 1932 was also interesting as the wooden chamber of the tomb was in a very good state of preservation and because of the wooden seals found, according to which the tomb is that of one Wang Kuang and his wife. There were many other important funeral objects besides these seals. Mr. Oba's report on this excavation was published in 1935, entitled "Tomb of Wang Kuang" and his accurate documentation is still praised by present-day scholars.

In 1929 rich treasures were accidentally unearthed from a mound of one of the gigantic tombs grouped in the vicinity of Kyongju City. Drs. Hamada and Umehara devoted themselves to classifying and reconstructing the original situation of these disordered findings. They were finally successful in publication of their research works.

Handsome personal ornaments, including a crown, bracelets, rings, sashes, all made of gold, and thousands of delicate beads were beautifully illustrated. At the same time reasonable interpretations of these findings were given in their publication. In the succeeding two years the 2nd and 3rd golden crowns were unearthed by archaeologists, one from the Lucky Phoenix Tomb excavated by Kozumi and one from the Golden Bell Tomb excavated by Umehara.

About 1930, however, government funds for the investigation of ancient sites in Korea were curtailed, a melancholy sign of the political conditions of the times, and research efforts were greatly hindered. In due time, however, funds were gathered from various public and private groups and the Chōsen Koseki Kenkyu Kai (Society for Study of Korean Antiquities) was formed, and the excavation and study of archaeological sites was continued. Research Institutes were established at P'yōngyang, the center of the Lo-lang colony and the Koguryō Kingdom, and at

Kyōngju, the Silla capital, in 1931, and later at Puyō, the last of the three Paekche capitals. Graves, palace sites and temple remains, and other monuments were systematically investigated and the results were published in a yearly journal, or in the case of excavations of exceptional importance, such as Rakuro Saikyosuka (The Tomb of the Painted Basket at Lo-lang) or Rakuro Okobo (The Tomb of Wang Kuang at Lo-lang), special volumes were prepared.

All archaeological work in Korea was discontinued with Japan's entry into World War II in 1941 and the mobilization effort. None of the projected excavations took place, and worse yet, the reports giving the details and results of the numerous excavations which had either been completed or were currently going on at the time were never published since printing conditions were in such a bad state. Archaeological research on the peninsula passed into the hands of Korean scholars after the Japanese withdrawal following the end of the war. Their activities have gradually gained momentum and interest in archaeological studies is now widespread. The quality of their work is consistently high, and has gradually surpassed that of the prewar Japanese scholars in a number of areas.





ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY, KOREA BRANCH  
GENERAL REPORT OF THE COUNCIL FOR 1964

REGULAR ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY

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GENERAL REPORT OF THE COUNCIL

1964

The dates of the meetings, the speakers, and their subjects were as follows:

- January 15 : Mr. Robert A. Kinney gave "A Pictorial Journey Through Korea Prior to the Korean War." His lecture was illustrated with slides taken during this period.
- February 16 : Mr. Michael Page, British Embassy, read a paper entitled "Policy on Chinese Characters in Korea," prepared by Professor Lee Pung-back of the College of Education, Seoul National University.
- March 14 : Mr. John N. Somerville, Presbyterian minister, spoke on "The Hansong Sutra: The First Chapter in the Development of Korean Pictorial Art."
- April 15 : Professor Rajim Pyang-choon of Yonsei University spoke on "The Legal Status of Concubines and Their Descendants during the Yi Dynasty."
- May 27 : Mr. Yi Ku, son of the former Crown Prince of Korea, Yi Eun, spoke on "Korean Architecture."



ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY, KOREA BRANCH  
GENERAL REPORT OF THE COUNCIL FOR 1964

REGULAR MONTHLY MEETINGS

There were eleven regular monthly meetings during 1964. All of them, with the exception of the September meeting, were held in the auditorium of the National Medical Center. We are most appreciative to the Administrative Office of the Medical Center for making available to the Society its auditorium.

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- May 27 : Mr. Yi Ku, son of the former Crown Prince of Korea, Yi Eun, spoke on "Korean Architecture."

- June 10 : Dr. Paul Ryu, Dean of the Law School of Seoul National University, spoke on "Legal Education in Korea."
- July 8 : Dr. Felix Moos, in Korea with the Department of Defense of the United States, spoke on "Acculturation in Korea Since 1945."

In August no regular monthly meeting was held.

- September 16 : Professor Han Pae-ho of Chungang University spoke on "A Study of Political Decision Making in Korea, with Special Reference to the Case of the Kyonghyang Shinmun."
- October 21 : Mr. G.St. G. M. Gompertz, compiler of the Society's Transactions, Volume 40, and noted author of several books on Korean ceramics, spoke on "Ceramic History of the Yi Period."
- November 18 : Dr. Felix Moos again spoke to the Society, this time on "Elder Pak's Church in Korea."
- December 16 : For the final monthly meeting of 1964, Mr. Yun Tae-rim, Professor at Seoul National University, spoke on "Korean Character." At this meeting, the election of officers for the coming year was held and the report of the treasurer was given.

### **SPECIAL MEETINGS**

In 1964, the Society instituted a new type of lecture, by which we could take advantage of the presence in our midst of persons with wide knowledge in other areas and countries of Asia. These lectures were held in the Seoul Club.

- February 25 : Dr. Chester Bain, Cultural Affairs Officer of the United States Information Service, spoke on "Korea and Vietnam, A Cultural Comparison."



- March 10 : Reverend Ladislaus Ladanyi, S.J., Editor of the China News Analysis in Hong Kong, spoke on "Chinese Cultural Life."
- April 22 : The Honorable Waldemar Gallman, former American Ambassador to Iraq, Poland, and South Africa, spoke on "Iraq."
- June 16 : Mr. Lionel Landry, Deputy Director of the Asia Society in New York, spoke on "Roots of the Current Political Unrest in Burma."
- June 24. Mr. Holbrook Bradley of the United States Information Service spoke on "Indonesia—A Non-Political Review."
- August 5 : Dr. David M. Earl, Assistant Director of the University of Maryland, spoke on "Political Thinking in Tokugawa Japan."

In addition to these six special lectures on Asia, there were three slide showings:

- August 12 : Dr. and Mrs. John Lewis, United States Operations Mission, showed slides taken in Nepal, on the roof of the Naeja Hotel.
- September 9 : Miss Marion Steele, librarian at the Eighth Army Main Library, showed slides taken during a recent trip along the east coast of India. This showing was also on the roof of the Naeja Hotel.
- November 24 : Mr. Gleason Rohlf, United States Operations Mission, showed slides taken in the Soviet Union during a recent trip to that country. This meeting was held at the Seoul Club.

### **SOCIAL EVENTS**

The Society's annual garden party for members and

their families was held on Saturday, May 23, in the garden of the residence of the American Ambassador and Mrs. Samuel D. Berger. At the party, we had a special performance by a male mudang (sorcerer), who had been brought, at the expense of the Society, from the village of Shinhyo-ri, in Cheju-do.

In November Mr. Carl Miller again invited members of the Society to visit his home and watch the preparation of winter kimch'i. In addition to the kimch'i making, there was an exhibition of Oriental paintings by Min Kyong-kap.

Pulgogi on the Han River on the evening of Tuesday, May 26, brought out about 120 persons. A full moon and a program of Korean music added to the pleasant atmosphere.

Members of the Society were invited to Chogye-sa, in Seoul, on Buddha's Birthday on May 19 (April 8 by the Lunar Calendar), to watch the colorful lantern procession.

## RAS TOURS

The Society, during 1964, sponsored tours ranging from one-day to five-day trips. The dates, number of participants and places visited, follow:

Feb 21-23 :	Week-end trip to Taegwallyong Ski Slope. This trip was the first trip during 1964 and took advantage of Washington's Birthday.	30
March 26-29 :	First tour to Cheju-do.	30
April 4-5 :	Annual Cherry Blossom tour to Chinhae and Chinju.	60
April 9-11 :	Second tour to Cheju-do	25
April 24 :	Moon-watching tour to Pogwang-sa, located on a heavily wooded mountainside in Yangju County, near Seoul.	50
April 26 :	Tour to Sudok-sa, Yesan County, Chungchong Namdo	80
May 1-3 :	Three-day trip to Sorak-san.	25

- May 16-17 : Weekend tour to Popchu-sa, in Songni Mountain, Chungchong Pukto. 50
- May 24 : Train trip to Yongwol and the tomb of King Tanjong. 45
- June 14 : One-day trip to Tokchok Island, in the Yellow Sea, South of Inch'on. 80
- June 18-21 : Third trip to Cheju-do 25
- July 2-5 : First tour to Malli-po, a beach resort on the Yellow Sea 25
- August 8 : One-day trip to Chongpyong Lake, north-east of Seoul. 90
- August 29 : Boat trip to Tokchok Island in the Yellow Sea. 80
- August 30 : Bus tour to Chaein Waterfall, in Yonchon County, near the Demilitarized Zone. 70
- September 5-7 : Second tour to Malli-po 35
- September 12-14 : Tour to Mudung-san, near Kwangju, and Songgwang-sa in Cholla Namdo. 25
- September 20 : One-day tour to Tanyang, famous for its Eight Views, on the Han River. 80
- October 4 : Sunday bus tour to Mangwol-sa, on Tobongsan, north of Seoul. 35
- October 9-11 : Tour to Sorak-san, at the height of the season for autumn foliage. 27
- October 17-18 : Tour to Kyongju and Pulguk-sa 20
- October 23-25 : Repeat tour to Sorak-san, for foliage viewing. 25
- November 1 : One-day tour to Yongmun-sa 60
- November 7-11 : Fourth trip to Cheju-do 24
- November 27-29 : Excursion to Cheju-do, sponsored jointly with the Korean Tourist Bureau. 40
- November 14 : One-day trip to Puram-sa, the Korean Military Academy, and Handok Pharmaceutical Company, all near Seoul. 50
- December 13 : Sunday tour to Hanyang Country Club, recently opened north of Seoul near the Three Tombs area. 40
- December 23—
- January 6 : Tour to India and Nepal 40

**MISCELLANEOUS**

During 1964, the Society published two volumes of Transactions, Volumes 40 and 41.

The Society granted David Allison Douglas Memorial Fund Scholarships to eight students of Seoul National University. The names of the grantees are as follows:

Mr. Kim Chong-sok, Veterinary course, College of Agriculture.

Mr. Ryoo Pang-chang, Economics course, College of Commerce

Mr. Kang Nak-won, Economics course, College of Commerce

Mr. Lee Kap-hyun, Economics course, College of Commerce

Mr. Kim Jung-bae, Economics course, College of Commerce

Mr. Yun Yong-han, Commerce course, College of Commerce

Mr. Yim Ho-bin. College of Engineering

Mr. Oh Sai-whan, Medical College



