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Contents

Poems by Korean Children

translated by Helen Rose Tieszen page 1

A Study on the Childbearing Behavior of Rural Korean Women and Their Families

by Dorothea Sich and Kim Young-key page 27

The Adoption Dilemma in Traditional Korea

by Mark Peterson page 59

The Founding of the Royal Dragon Monastery

translated and annotated by David H. McClung page 69

Annual Report of the Korea Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society for 1978 page 81

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[page 1]

**Poems by Korean Children**

translated by Helen Rose Tieszen

In the International Year of the Child, it is especially appropriate to listen to Korean youngsters expressing their thoughts in poetry. The poems presented here have been translated from two anthologies of poetry written by elementary school children. The first anthology is that of Dr. Yi Chae-ch’ol, who has been long associated with children’s literature as a writer and critic. Over a period of twenty years, Dr. Yi collected children’s poetry from creative writing contests sponsored by Korean newspapers. He has written a commentary on the poems expressly for the Transactions.

The second anthology was collected by Yi O-dok, an elementary school principal of North Kyongsang Province. His collection of rural children’s poems was published in 1978 by Chinmyong Sorim under the title Ilhanun Aidul (Working Children).

As in all translations, lack of congruence in syntax and idiom produced special problems. An effort was made to keep the material in each line as it is in the original, but the differing structure of the two languages sometimes made this impossible. It was also difficult to keep the syllable count of the original. Several of the poems do have the same count in translation as in the original, but most of them vary to some extent. The poems in each collection are in chronological order.

The translator is especially grateful to her friend Chang Suk-in who assisted with the deciphering of the Korean material.

COMMENTARY

by Dr. Yi Chae-ch’ol

Chairman, Korean Children’s Literature Society

Poems written by children both influence and are influenced by education in the written language arts. Poems written by Korean children are no exception to this rule. With this in mind, we will first give a brief introduction to the educational history of poems written by Korean children and then discuss the main features of this poetry.

[page 2]

During the dark days of the 36-year Japanese occupation, our national literature suffered from a total lack of education in the written language arts. The liberation of August 15, 1945 brought to Korean children the opportunity for education in creative writing. This opportunity was made possible by the Chosun Language Research Association (Han’gul Research Association) which published materials for the teaching of Korean language and composition. A small number of specialists in children’s literature and a children’s literature organization also published children’s magazines.

But the many children’s magazines published just after the liberation were almost an exact copy of the writing style of the Japanese occupation. The Korean War (1950-53) in any case interrupted these beginnings. Thus, they made little contribution to children’s literary education. The many children’s magazines published after the Korean war were mainly commercial ventures in the conventional, popular style; again making little contribution to children’s creative writing.

By the end of the 1950s, thoughtful teachers were groping for new ways of teaching practical composition. This led to discussions starting in the early 1960s concerning normalization of the Korean language and education in the writing arts. As a result of this full-scale encouragement, it was as if the bamboo were flourishing after the rain; individually and in groups, the creative writing movement gained momentum. This writing education boom resulted in a second reorganization of the education curriculum, which in turn gave impetus to professional research through such activities as the designation of schools specializing in the study of writing and seminars for teachers of composition. At the same time, education in the writing arts based on contests of various kinds became a stimulus to writing. But the intrinsic goal of a well-rounded education through writing went awry due to personal ambitions fanned by industrialization and non-professional conduct. The artificial cultivation of “tiny writers” led to a setback in literary expression. There followed a long period in which creativity and individuality in the expression of concrete life experience were impeded by a mistaken emphasis on making beautiful sentences without regard to content.

One of the greatest impediments to creative writing was the middle school entrance examination. Some relief was provided by an improved entrance examination system in the late 1960s. Further improvement was brought about by the third education curriculum revision of 1973 in which eighteen of the forty-one items regarding the teaching of Korean language concerned composition and writing. This represented a considerably improved condition for education in the writing arts. There followed increased[page 3] activity in criticism of methods of teaching children’s poetry, resulting in a lively writing arts education in which literature was distinguished from edu-cation.

From the time of the Korean War into the late 1950s, the teaching of the composition of poetry was heavily dependent on the rhythmic patterns of verse meant to be sung. In the late 1950s, some interested teachers and scholars of children’s literature began to try to effect a change from the set forms in the direction of free verse, but it wasn’t an easy task to depart from the rule of the song.

The poem, “Clock,” was composed in the modified traditional 7/5 syllable count: “Watering the Flower Bed” is a modification of the traditional Korean 4/4 syllable count. These poems are bound by rhythm, consequently lacking a feeling of fresh subject matter and content.

By the end of the 1950s, this trend had brought about a regrettable lack of expressiveness of child-like feelings or reflection of their daily life. At the beginning of the 1960s, this trend gradually disappeared, to be replaced with a free though naive portrayal of their life experiences and feelings by the children themselves. “Cho-hoe Sigan” and “Foggy Morning,” written by rural children, and “Harmonica,” written by a Seoul child, exhibit honest feelings and speech, dependent on their differing life, environment, and thought. These poems provide a peep at remarkably well-developed children’s poems, distinctly different from those of the 1950s. It was also encouraging in the last half of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s to see the flowering of a warm feeling toward nature, “beautiful eyes”(eyes that see beauty), and an intuitive sense. But this artistry with its reliance on native talent sometimes gave the feeling of being choked with a kind of decorative writing, lacking in empathy.

As seen in the poems “Fishing” and “A Voice,” the trend in today’s poetry written by Korean children has changed in the direction of the development of a healthy feeling toward life and a lively expression of honest emotions. This development has been entirely dependent on a stable family life and firm national security. An increasingly bright and energetic future for Korean children’s poetry is indicated.

[page 4] POEMS COLLECTED BY DR. YI CHAE-CH’OL

THE CLOCK

The tall guy and the short guy,

The fast one and the slow one.

The tall guy’s the fast one,

Ten plus two footsteps.

The short guy’s the pokey one,

Only one footstep.

1, 2, 3...

Going ‘round the stepping stone.

Yi Ok-hui, 5th grade, 1957, Sangju

A PATH IN THE SNOW

The gathered footprints make a path.

The footprints tell a story.

Crinking, crunching,

Every time I tread the path

A story is told.

A story of the Land of Winter,

A story of the Land of Snow.

Wherever I go

A story comes along with me.

Kim Chin-gu, 4th Grade, 1957, Sangju

[page 5] WATERING THE FLOWER BED

Watering the flower bed

Is lots of fun.

The sprinkler has holes

All over.

When I touch it with my hands

It’s real ticklish.

The flowers are tickled to death.

They laugh, “Heh, heh, heh.”

Im Sang-hui, 5th Grade, 1958, Sangju

MULBERRIES

Like mulberries, children

Hang from every branch,

“That one’s mine,

This one’s mine.”

Chattering like sparrows,

Between green leaves

Children’s faces look like mulberries,

Red chins,

Purple mustaches.

Ch’a Sun-i, 6th Grade, 1959, Sangju

[page 6] CHO-HOE SIGAN

Phew!

This long winded stuff,

I can’t stand it; this cho-hoe.

The sun is streaming,

My back is burning,

The stiff and straight lines,

Have all gone crooked.

Chong Kak-su, 4th Grade, 1960, Sangju

(Cho-hoe sigan: outdoor student-body

assembly for moral instruction and

physical exercise.)

FOGGY MORNING

Houses

And mountains

Playing hide and seek,

I play hide and seek

On the way to school.

Chin Pyong-ch’ae, 4th Grade, 1961, Sangju

[page 7] TAKING BABY’S PICTURE

Her head’s flopped to the side?

Straighten it up.

Her hat’s not straight?

Fix it up.

“Baby,

Hey! La, la, la!”

Bang!

“Wah,” Baby cries.

Kang Pyong-hon, 6th Grade, 1962, Sangju

(Flash powder is sometimes used in rural areas.)

BALLOONS

Red, yellow, blue

Balloons

Above the peddler’s head

Dancing, swaying, dancing.

A blue balloon

Over Ch’oli’s head

Dancing, swaying, dancing.

A yellow balloon

Above Puni’s head

Dancing, swaying, dancing.

Whenever the peddler comes

The whole alley turns into a many-colored

Balloon flower garden.

Shin Ki-ho, 6th Grade, 1963, Seoul

[page 8] HARMONICA

Harmonica

Harmonica

Second floor apartments.

Bright, sparkling

Splendid apartments.

Whenever the wind blows

The apartments, each in turn

Whistling its tune,

Splendid harmonica

Apartments.

Kim Yong-hye, 4th Grade, 1964, Seoul

DADDY’S SHOES

Daddy’s black shoes

Atop the doorstep

Sitting side by side.

Polished to a shiny gloss

Sitting side by side.

Friendly brothers,

Loving brothers,

Every day they go together

Wherever they may go.

Even when they take a rest,

They rest together.

Song Yong-nae, 5th Grade, 1965, Pusan

[page 9] SUNSET

Evening colors,

Pretty patterns in the sky.

Evening colors,

Leftovers of the fire in the sky.

Bright and shiny

Sunset.

In the evening, the sun

Goes away.

At night,

The sunset

Can’t be seen by people;

It must be hiding in the moon.

Yi In-ho, 2nd Grade, 1965, Seoul

GOURDS

Gourds

Intertwined

Atop yellow

Thatched roofs.

Big, round mother gourds,

Tiny, sweet baby gourds.

Split apart, this one’ll be a clipping gourd,

Split in half, that one’ll be a measuring gourd.

Gourds ripening bit by bit

Together in the autumn.

Pak Un-ju, 3rd Grade, 1967, Taegu

[page 10] ROASTED CHESTNUTS

“Roasted chestnuts!”

My ears hear

The call;

Mouth watering,

Roasty-toasty fragrance.

I turn my pockets inside out.

Finding not a cent,

I hold my nose, clamp tight my mouth,

And pass the chestnut peddler

Safely by.

Yi Sang-bong, 3rd Grade, 1970, Seoul

ALLEY

Kids used to play here.

Now it’s a deserted alley.

At night

Instead of kids

Moonlight plays under the street lamp.

Clouds floating in the sky

At times pass under the street lamp

And play with the moonlight.

The alley should have kids on it!

Kids should be playing here!

The lonely alley

Is kept by the moon

And guarded by the clouds.

Ch’a Yong-jin, 6th Grade, 1973, Seoul

[page 11] THE RED PEPPER DRAGONFLY

Many-colored

Newly clothed

Flower buds crowned by

The red pepper dragonfly

Sitting so quietly.

To catch it

I come up quietly,

Tip-toe, tip-toe,

Its big eyes already

Look’ round about.

Two wings whizz, whirr, and

Away she flies.

Sad to say,

Though I wait and wait

The pepper dragonfly

Comes near no more.

I’m so mad

I go ‘round back,

And there it is, alone on the washline,

Keeping watch.

Once more I try to catch it,

Tip-toe, tip-toe.

Like the wings of a jet plane

Up she goes

Over to

The laundry pole;

Playing hide and seek.

Chong T’ae-hyop, 3rd Grade, 1974, Kyonggi-do

[page 12] SUNFLOWERS

Wheel-like faces

Always smiling.

Even when insulted, still smiling.

Sunflowers: World’s Smile Champions.

Long-stemmed body

Always strutting,

Boasting of their height,

Always proud.

Sunflowers,

Long-legged kings among shapes.

Wheel-like smiling faces,

Long skinny bodies; proud

Sunflowers, always smiling.

Chong Yong-jin, 5th Grade, 1974, Seoul

[page 13] BIRTHDAY

Birthday,

Birthday.

I cried,

“Wah, wah,”

The day I was born.

When it’s my birthday

It’s an open feast day.

There’s fruit till I’m full, and

Cookies till I’m full, and

Soft drinks till I’m full, and

Rice cakes till I’m full.

There’s chicken till I’m full.

My birthday’s a wonderful day.

When it’s my birthday

I’m lord of the whole house.

Chong Yu-na, 2nd Grade, 1975, Seoul

[page 14] FISHING

Catching fish

Is really

Loads of fun.

The fish

Nibbles on the bait, and

Then the float bobbles.

It bobs and bobs,

and Then goes down.

Down it goes again

And comes up once more.

When the fish

Nibbles on the bait,

If you jerk the fishing pole

The fish jumps in the water.

Daddy’s catch came to fourteen,

Mine was all of ten.

Catching fish

Is really

Loads of fun.

Pak Hui-nam, 4th Grade, 1976, Seoul

[page 15] A VOICE

Crossing the railroad tracks, or

Going up and down the stairs

The sound of our mother’s voice

Seems to go’ round with me.

“Cross over carefully!”

“Be careful as you come and go.”

The words she said,

The sound of our mother’s voice.

My ears hear her voice.

Her fear that I might get hurt,

Mother’s voice,

That sound,

No matter where I go

It speaks to me.

So Song-min, 6th Grade, 1977, Inch’on

[page 16] THE EVEREST TEAM

On the white snow

All sunk, deeply sunken

Manly footprints from Korea.

On towards the world’s roof,

Our team’s

Forceful progress.

“Yahoo, yahoo!”

They’ll have called in a loud voice,

Touching the sky

From the mountain top.

“Hurrah for the Republic of Korea!”

They’ll have called in a high pitch.

Mount Everest

Is now no dream;

Our national flag

Waves from its highest peak.

Yu Hye-son, 6th Grade, 1977, Seoul

[page 17] POEMS COLLECTED BY YI O-DOK

OUR MOTHER

Our mother

Goes to the market every day.

Today, she went again at daybreak.

Our mother’s a lump of steel.

Kim Sun-nam, 4th Grade, 1952, Pusan

SNOW

Snow, snow, don’t snow!

My nose is tingling, my lips are blue,

My feet are itchy’ cause they’re frozen through.

My hands are ho-ho cold.

I need mittens!

Snow, snow, don’t snow!

Kim Song-nim, 2nd Grade, 1958, Sangju

(Ho-ho: the sound of blowing on cold fingers.)

GARLIC

Garlic hates winter.

In the spring, it laughs merrily and

Puts out its shoots,

But in winter it wants to cry.

Spring is a warm, happy time;

The garlic puts out its shoots.

Kim Sog-im, 2nd Grade, 1959, Sangju

[page 18] LUNCHTIME

At lunchtime

I remembered mother.

I’d begged her

For white rice,

But now I’m sorry.

My friend Chong-sang

Doesn’t even have barley rice.

She suffers the whole long day.

Yi Chong-hui, 5th Grade, 1963, Sangju

CLOUDS AND GRADUATION

There’s not much time before we

Leave this school.

When we graduate

We’ll go to a higher place,

Far away,

Like the clouds.

Kim A-yong, 6th Grade, 1963, Sangju

[page 19] MOUNTAINS

Under the far sky

Grandfather mountains stick out.

Under the grandfather mountains

Are the father and mother mountains.

They follow after the grandfather mountains.

Under all of them

Sister and brother mountains

Run along as fast as they can.

Pak Son-yong, 3rd Grade, 1963,Sangju

ELDER SISTER

Elder sister followed elder brother

To Seoul where she lives a housemaid’s life.

My heart is always

Wanting to cry.

Looking at the mountains from our classroom

They seem like Seoul,

And then tears start to fall.

Kim Chin-bok, 4th Grade, 1964, Sangju

[page 20] WHEN ITS SPRING

Won’t it be nice

When the sparrows twitter, “Winter’s gone”?

When it’s spring, I’ll

Go to weed the barley field.

When I go on to the buckwheat field

The sparrows will sit in the barley,

Pecking the ground and catching bugs.

Pak Hui-bok, 3rd Grade, 1964,Sangju

PERSIMMONS

I was found picking persimmons!

“Hey you,

Stop there!”

I ran like mad.

With two persimmons in my pocket

I ran as fast as I could.

I ran faster and faster,

Then I pulled out the persimmons.

Bright, yellow, sun-ripened,

They sure looked good.

Pak Un-t’aek, 3rd Grade, 1964, Sangju

RICE

There’s lots of rice. Rice spooned into a big bowl,

and rice dipped into a small bowl; looks like lots of rice.

I’d like to eat lots of rice. Even when it looks like lots,

when you’ve eaten it, it’s not very much.

Yi Chae-hum, 2nd Grade, 1968, Andong

[page 21] LAUNDRY

If you rub soap, it foams.

The foam comes up and a rainbow appears.

Yellow, red, blue. Such pretty colors.

When I scoop some out of the water, it’s so lovely

I scoop some up again.

Kim Yong-hwa, 3rd Grade, 1968,Andong

BLACK BIRD

The black bird

In the daytime

Stays in the stone wall.

At night,

Unknown to anyone,

He steals and eats

Food from someone else’s house.

When he’s full

He goes up the far mountain

To see the sky,

And then

He flies into the heavens, and

Dances with the moon and stars.

Chong Pu-gyo, 3rd Grade, 1968, Andong

(Black bird: a bat.)

[page 22] SNOW

How does the snow fall?

It falls, no doubt, from the stretched-out heavens.

When the blue sky comes down it’s snow, isn’t it?

On the ground the snow is white. If all the sky came down,

Why, we’d be living in heaven.

Yi Suk-ja, 3rd Grade, 1968,Andong

BUCKWHEAT

It’s a bad year for buckwheat, and

Mother and father had a fight.

Mother scolded, and

Father scolded.

Then mother said, “Even so, it must be cut.”

Father answered not a word.

My heart was pounding.

Kim Il-gyom, 2nd Grade, 1969, Andong

COUNTRY VILLAGE

Why live in a country village?

Why not live in the city?

It’s sad, listening to music on the radio.

I bet those people went to the city

And are making lots of money.

Why live in a place like this?

Kim Chong-ch’ol, 2nd Grade, 1969, Andong

[page 23] MY FACE

My face

Always looks like that.

It’s not different even for a day.

My face is ugly,

I’m even losing my teeth.

Even if I’m not good-looking

I’ll study hard and it’ll be o.k.

Kim Son-mo, 2nd Grade, 1969, Andong

THE SWALLOW

At grandma’s house

I saw a swallow.

It was the swallow’s first visit.

I called it “mundi.”

The swallow liked that, and

Showing off its wings,

It flew’ round and’ round grandma’s persimmon tree.

Yi Chae-hup, 3rd Grade, 1969, Andong

(Mundi: short for mundungi, leper, an affectionate

slang-term used between chums in Kyongsang-do.)

SUNSHINE

Sunshine always

Carries bright golden arrows

And guards the heavens.

Sunshine is good and

Laughs, “Ha, ha, ha.”

In its face is always

A happy heart.

Yi Chae-hup, 3rd Grade, 1969, Andong

[page 24] DEW

The dew on

The corn leaves

Is round

As a snail

Sitting there.

Kim Yong-ja, 3rd Grade, 1970, Andong

LITTLE CLOUD

Little cloud,

Why are you in such a rush?

All your life, you’ll never have a home.

Even if you’re famished, you’ll not be given

a spoonful of rice.

Yi Song-yun, 3rd Grade, 1970, Andong

ROCK

On the way to school, I tried to avoid a big rock

but stepped on another one.

“Today, I’ll have no good luck at school.”

But I decided to come anyway.

And then I missed two (on the exam).

Kim Son-mo, 3rd Grade, 1970,

[page 25] SLIDE

On the blue slide

Children

Dressed in red and black.

Fly like a bird

To my home town.

Chong Ch’ang-gyo, 3rd Grade, 1970, Andong

WILLOW TREE

Willow tree!

Start your sap flowing

I’m aching to play a flute

After school

On the way home.

When I’m bored

I’d like

To play a willow flute.

Kim T’ae-bok, 3rd Grade, 1970, Andong

FEEDING THE OX

Hey ox!

Over here there’s lots of grass.

Come over here to eat.

But that ox doesn’t come.

She does just as she pleases.

She isn’t even frightened

Of the owl’s hoot,

But she won’t go where there are people.

Kim Uk-tong, 3rd Grade, 1970, Andong

[page 26] PENCIL CASE

The pencil did its work

And now

It’s resting quietly

On mother’s warm lap.

Kim Sun-gyo, 4th Grade, 1972, Andong

MY MOTHER

Coming surely every summer

The cicadas cry unthinkingly.

Mother left me and went far away,

I grew up without her.

In each dream, “Mother,

Come back like the cicadas.

Mother!”

Im Yi-bun, 6th Grade, 1972, Mungyong

VACATION

After eating breakfast, I go outside, but

Grandfather’s coming back from the fields.

“You can’t go to school today, you have to work to eat, you know.

What’s all this playing around?”

I got really mad.

“In just three days it’ll be vacation

It won’t do not to go.”

Grandfather goes back into the house.

As I’m going to school with my friends, we’re talking:

“If we didn’t have vacation we wouldn’t have to work so much.

I just hate the word, ‘vacation.’

How’ll we do all that work?”

Kim Chom-sun, 6th Grade, 1972, Mungyong

[page 27] **A Study on the Childbearing Behavior of Rural Korean Women and Their Families**

by Dorothea Sich and Kim Young-key

INTRODUCTION

Pregnancy and birth as human experiences are central events of family life, of culture formation and the source of continuing existence of any society. During the latter half of this century the health care institutions of modernized nations increasingly monopolized medicine and thereby assumed major responsibility for childbearing as well. As a result the childbearing process, originally imbedded in the family with all primary responsibility resting with the family, became almost exclusively an issue of institutionalized health care. From the moment she realizes she is pregnant, a woman is oriented toward the hospital and the doctor. She becomes a “patient,” faithfully visits the prenatal care clinic, follows the advice of the doctor meticulously, and gives birth in the hospital. In other words, she assumes a sick role in which the responsibility for her own affairs is delegated to others.1

In most modernized societies the mother gives birth at the hospital and returns home with the newborn three to seven days later. Because modern medicine has taken the responsibility for childbearing from the family, it is not until after the birth that the modern family experiences the full impact of the birth on its structure and function. By being deprived of responsibility during pregnancy and birth, the family loses its chance to adapt and it loses an important center of family life. Just as the dying in Western societies are isolated from their social environment, so are mothers in labor isolated from their social environment in childbirth.

Modern medicine, where it effectively covers all childbearing processes, has reduced physical hazards to a minimum. It can be debated,

This study was made possible through a grant from the Asia Foundation/Seoul. Research assistants Miss Jee Jeoung Ock and Mrs. Kang Duk Hee conducted the interviews and field observations. Among the people whose suggestions and advice contributed to the study, the authors are most indebted to Dr. Soon Young Yoon and Ms. Laurel Kendall. For any mistakes or misinterpretations, however, the authors alone are responsible.

[page 28] however, whether the textbook aims of obstetrics2 and the aims of Mother Child Health formulated by the World Health Organization3—which include emotional and social wellbeing—are indeed realized. It appears that “modern” mothers look forward to birth as if it were surgery rather than the most dignifying experience of womanhood. Modern women’s movements claim that we now have a generation of highly neuroticized childbearers,4 and that the alienation of childbirth from the family has led to a worldwide inability to breast-feed.5 Modern perinatal psychologists point out that this in turn has serious repercussions on mother-child relationships and the mental health of children in modern society.6

Korea, as a rapidly industrializing country, is exposed to strong mo-dernizing influences. In health care these include an emphasis on hospital delivery. Improved maternity care would indeed eliminate a major gap in health care, since the majority of Korean women still deliver at home without a trained attendant and are exposed to all the hazards of unattended childbirth.7 But not all modern approaches are good, and not all traditional attitudes are bad. Before Korea moves further in the direction taken by contemporary modernized societies, it is worthwhile to look for alternatives in maternity care based on a more sophisticated understanding of the meaning of childbearing in the cultural context, on a careful re-evaluation of the Western services model where it is now defunct, and on an appreciation of the healthy attitudes toward childbearing that are inherent to the Korean people.

The Korean family is still a major power against some negative de-velopments in Western maternity care. It is noteworthy that in the United States and Europe strong public movements are under way to reverse the trend of misapplied medicine in childbearing8 and that the medical profession is also increasingly concerned with the issue of technology versus natural childbearing.9 In Korea as well as in other modernizing countries there is still a chance to avoid the basic mistake that makes maternity care approaches in the West an issue of increasing concern.

In rural Korea the traditional family controls childbearing and effectively prevents the medical experts from including childbirth in their medical domain. Korean obstetricians care for only a fraction of the births that occur in this country. While it is important to overcome the conflicts that deprive mothers and newborn children of the benefits of modern care, it is equally important to develop alternative approaches to modern maternity care that are more suited to Korean cultural and family life. Such alternative approaches must be based upon research, especially from ethnomedical data.

[page 29]

This study inventoried childbearing-related behavior in a rural Korean area, in its traditional aspects and in its relation to modern health services. It was the aim of the study to identify customs, beliefs, family interactions and decision-making strategies in normal and pathological reproductive processes in order to find behavioral factors which can help to differentiate sound as well as problematic attitudes toward modern childcare services and determine the barriers that inhibit Korean women from using the desirable aspects of modern health care during the procreative period.

An ethnographic approach was used to obtain the desired data. Thirty families, each with a pregnant woman, were chosen in fifteen different villages on Kanghwa Island within the area of the Yonsei University Kanghwa Community Health Project.10 Despite four years of project efforts in maternity care, 88% of the women still delivered at home and approximately 50% had no trained attendant.11 Nevertheless this compares favorably with nation-wide rural conditions where qualified delivery attendance is around 20%. Generally speaking, there is rarely a midwife or a doctor in reach of a rural Korean mother at delivery. The project’s maternity care program, however, has two government-employed midwives available at the two health subcenters of the target area. Further, the project identifies all pregnant women and does this relatively early, which was an advantage for sampling that no other rural area yet provides. The project made interaction observations more profitable than they would have been without such an organization. The regular contacts that the project maintained with all pregnant women through village workers and health subcenter staff made it possible to obtain medical data on the process of pregnancy, childbirth, and the postpartum period in addition to the ethnographically obtained material.

Twenty cases were selected from among all pregnant women who registered with the maternity care program within their first trimester of pregnancy in late 1977, and ten cases were selected from among those who had registered within the third trimester of their pregnancy in early 1978. These women were expected to give birth between April and August 1978. The differentiation in respect to registration was made to search for factors that determine the time of registration. These factors are important for the success or failure of the maternity care approach in the Kanghwa services model. The study presented here was conducted from March through August 1978. It followed each of the thirty families throughout the pregnancy, the childbirth, and the postpartum period.

[page 30]

Ethnographic data and data on interaction with health services were collected by one specifically trained interviewer with a bachelor’s degree in sociology and an assistant. The medical data and supplementary ethnographic and family health services interaction data were collected by two specifically trained public health nurses who were employed by the Yonsei Community Health Project and who cooperated with the midwife in charge of the maternity care program in the project area. From the client’s point of view, however, the two teams could not necessarily be recognized as connected since the medical contacts by the public health nurses were part of the ongoing maternity care activities directed from the health sub-center in the township. The sociologist, on the other hand, was a new sight in the community and introduced herself as a researcher from Yonsei University in Seoul who was documenting traditional customs and beliefs in childbearing. Such a medically unbiased interviewer in the study team effectively balanced the data obtained by the public health nurses, who do have a medical bias and could obtain only medically biased information from the respondents.

This two-pronged approach assured worthwhile complementation of ethnographic and medical data. The public health nurses also interviewed all the medical personnel with which each family had medical contacts. The sociologist interviewed clients, their families, and all other relevant people in the community. In this way she could obtain an independent picture of the behavior of the clients toward the health services, including the public health nurses. She invested considerable effort into establishing a friendly relationship with the client and her family. This was achieved in almost all cases and helped to insure a good yield of data.

Wherever possible the interviews were recorded on tape and immediately transcribed. Further, the interviewers made field notes about aspects of the study that could not be taped. These were often made after participation in activities in the client’s home. The medical staff, in addition, kept the maternity care records. Nearly 200 interviews were obtained in this manner.

Investigators and research team met at least once a week. The transcribed interviews and observations were presented and discussed and further investigation and approaches were outlined for each case. The field staff worked with great interest and helped reflect the results on the background of their own understanding of the local culture. This was an invaluable aid for analysis and interpretation.

The materials from this study are abundant and require further detailed analysis and evaluation. However, an overview of the most out- [page 31] standing findings can be classified into two areas of observation: 1. Traditional concepts and behavior of clients and families concerning pregnancy, childbirth, postpartum period, and the newborn; 2. Interactions of clients and families with modern health services concerning pregnancy, childbirth, postpartum period, and the newborn.

This classification needs some comment. Any informant who showed traditional behavior could at another time express very modern attitudes. On the other hand, anyone with generally modern attitudes could on occasion harbor deep-rooted shamanist beliefs and traditional behavior. If the attitude of each informant were rated on a scale with the two end- points “modern” and “traditional,” it would fall at different times—and occasionally at the same time—on different locations on the scale. Also, it was not always clear whether an informant actually held a traditional belief or just provided information about it.

Because of the superimposed modernization effects, the findings were at times confusing. After decades of modern medical influences there are hardly any pure, uncontaminated traditional concepts in existence. Also the modern health services in the rural environment are influenced in their performance by their clients, behavior. Nevertheless, if this distinction can be made to some reasonable degree, the traditional concepts found in the first category can serve eventually as an independent variable to interpret the findings under the second category concerning interaction with modern health service.

TRADITIONAL CONCEPTS AND BEHAVIOR

People in general were not easily persuaded to talk about traditional beliefs and practices for fear of being ridiculed. But in areas where traditional attitudes are strong it was not difficult to obtain information. Also, when people were not aware of holding a traditional belief, information was easily obtained. They would,however,hold back information on concepts in which they still tended to believe even though the modernization process had proven them to be wrong. On occasion there was difficulty in soliciting information on a subject in which the informat was not particularly interested.

*Traditional physiology of pregnancy and childbirth.* There was surprisingly little interest by anyone, including the pregnant women them-[page 32]selves, in how the baby grows in the womb. Lack of information in this area was obvious. Old people, who knew about traditional concepts, were not easily persuaded to talk for fear of being mocked by the young ones. And while the young ones expressed outright disbelief in the old stories, they could not present modern alternatives either. The traditional understanding of the physiology of pregnancy and childbirth in Kanghwa was eventually documented as follows.

The baby inherits bones from the father and flesh from the mother. It is sitting in the baby-palace in an upright position on the cushion of the placenta. The placenta collects all the bad blood during the pregnancy that otherwise would have been evacuated by menstruation and it prevents the baby from being contaminated with it. The placenta actually is a big clot of bad blood, but the baby receives only good clean blood. The baby holds onto the milk rope that reaches into its mouth and sucks on it until it grows mature enough for birth. If the rope breaks before delivery, the baby dies in the womb.

When the baby is ready to be born, it begins to turn slowly in the mother’s womb until its head points downward. This causes the mother pain and is comparable to the first stage of labor. When the waters break they flow out, indicating to the baby the direction to move. The baby moves slowly in that direction and the mother helps it by using her strength. This is comparable to the second stage of labor.

Then comes the moment when the baby’s head can be seen—the “crowning” as it is called in English. The Korean folk expression for this is munul chabnunda, to grab the door. But if it is cold or otherwise frightening outside, the baby may move up again and cling there. This is a most dangerous development. But usually the baby is born after all. No baby ever remained inside. Finally the placenta comes out and with it all not be discharged by menstruation. It is best that this blood comes out completely. During childbirth all the mother’s bones become loose and the joints open up so that the baby can come out. One can help this process by opening the doors of cabinets and closets, and even by removing rings that might inhibit the loosening of finger joints.

After birth great care must be taken to restore the mother’s normal condition by seeing that she has rest, warmth, no drafts, and proper food. This process takes three months and during that time there should be no sexual intercourse. If one adheres strictly to such a practice recovery will be complete and even old illnesses that predated pregnancy will disappear. The milk flow starts around the third day. It takes that long for the milk- [page 33] rope to re-establish its position and get attached to the nipples so that the baby can suck successfully.

*Samsin.* From the literature it is apparent that the Samsin spirit governs fertility in traditional Korea. Legends concerning this spirit probably date back to prehistoric times and numerous rituals and rites are performed to this day to insure fertility for humans, animals, and crops and to safeguard the lives of children.12 Most frequently, the spirit is referred to as Samsin Grandmother, but on occasion informants of this study referred to Samsin Grandfather as well. In one instance the Samsin was considered to be a trinity of three monks that governed the room of the woman in labor, the kitchen, and the main entrance, and assigned to the child to be born a fortune in keeping with the performance of the family and the cleanliness of the house at the time of birth.

No reference was made to the Samsin during pregnancy. Any ques- tion that related pregnancy to the Samsin was not comprehended by the clients. This was surprising since it is apparent from the literature that the Samsin is considered to guard pregnancy as well. For the studied group, however, the Samsin was inconsequential during pregnancy. This was true even for the one client who had a previous stillbirth and was well indoctrinated by relatives and neighbors regarding the spirit’s role.

The inconsequential role of the Samsin during pregnancy was more than balanced by beliefs and practices at the time of birth and after. Frequently the attending grandmothers would gently strike the abdomen or lower back of the laboring woman and pray to the Samsin: “Please let our child be born fast and easy.” In one case, since the placenta was not expelled after thirty minutes, a sacrificial table was prepared for the spirit. In other cases ritual offerings and worship were dedicated to the Samsin on the. third day after birth. Many more such stories were documented from the neighborhood or from past experiences of informants. The Samsin coaxes the reluctant child out into this world with a hearty slap on the behind, and the dark birthmark that children of the Mongolian race carry for a while on their lower back is said to be, therefore, the mark of the Samsin.

The belief that the Samsin spirit is responsible and takes over, and that no interference whatsoever is justified, was powerfully expressed on several occasions by mothers-in-law. One client, when she gladly reported that finally she had sufficient breast milk for her child, was hushed into silence because such talk is offensive to the Samsin. The belief was [page 34] frequently expressed that because the spirit takes all in its hands, one does not need doctors or hospitals.

In many houses the child is considered an offspring of the Samsin, at least to the 100th day if not to the tenth year, so the responsibility for raising the child is not entirely with the parents, and failure cannot be blamed on them alone. Sacrifices to the Samsin are continued once the child is born, and especially if the infant becomes sick. One of the clients had lost a previous child within seven days of birth. Although she and her husband wanted to take him to the hospital, they obeyed the mother-in-law who considered that inappropriate for an offspring of the Samsin and prepared a sacrificial offering table instead.

Among the births in this study the death of one newborn occurred on the seventh day. Here, too, when the parents wanted to leave the house with the sick child to get care, an old villager advised them not to do so for then it would surely die, and so they stayed at home.

The Samsin, in summary, is a still powerful spirit that watches over everything connected with birth and the newborn. It prompts people to keep the house clean at the time of birth and to handle mother and baby in a hygienic and respectful manner. But its apparently jealous character still prevents people from seeking help for a laboring mother or for a sick infant.

*Traditional dangers for the newborn*. From bitter experience rural people are very conscious of the fragile life of a newborn baby. The old beliefs and customs designed to protect the child and to guard the family from grief now frequently militate against successful newborn care by modern health services. The beliefs made sense in the traditional context, and they still remain powerful determiners of behavior.

To traditional people, the greatest danger for the baby is pujong, a condition that can be transmitted by any non-family member that enters the house, or even by family members who have been in contact with persons that have a pujong condition. Most dangerous are women during the mourning period. Pujong means unclean, and a concept of clean-unclean is here at work. The newborn child is in a way the essence of purity while mourning women in this context carry the stigma of impurity. A prostitute would be referred to as a woman with pujong, too. Such people transmit the condition to the baby and this endangers its life. This belief is so strong that the natural hospitality of the rural home to stranger and friend alike stops completely for at least three days after the birth of a child. The custom is frequently kept after the birth of a calf or piglets.

[page 35]

The greatest danger from pujong is that there will not be sufficient milk for the child. The rationale behind this belief is indeed convincing. To isolate the family during the first days after birth gives it a chance to adapt to the new situation without outside interference and fosters a relaxed atmosphere that is supportive of the mother-child relationship and the “let-down” reflex that initiates milk flow. For the Korean baby, until recently, lack of breast milk was a death sentence. The traditional belief was protective and useful indeed, and it may have saved the life of many a child.

Pujong is believed to hold other dangers for the baby as well. Most important is the condition of kyonggi or fright disease. Yoon has reported about this traditional illness concept from another area of Korea13 and Topley described its equivalent in Hong Kong.14 Kyonggi is not a condition that modern medicine understands, but rural people know its etiology, signs, and symptoms as well as the prognosis, and since the disease is dangerous they are frustrated by modern medicine’s “insincerity” about it. There is a prodromal stage to kyonggi called nollaeda, to be startled. The Moro reflex, the newborn baby’s sudden extension of arms and legs when handled abruptly, is also referred to as nollaeda. One has to bathe the child very carefully, be very quiet in the house, and discard water without a gushing sound to avoid causing this dangerous condition.

Many households, even before birth, secure a supply of Kiunghwan, a herbal medicine, to calm the baby if it cries excessively or shows other signs of nollaeda, and prevent the condition from deteriorating further. If nollaeda develops into kyonggi, the situation is desperate. Two clients in this study had had experience with kyonggi and both had lost the child on the seventh day after birth. The signs were similar. The child started crying on the fifth day, cried incessantly, and finally died on the seventh day. Modern services were not consulted since it was kyonggi and the child was an offspring of the Samsin.

From descriptions of the symptoms, it is possible that kyonggi is similar to neonatal tetanus. The stereotyped pattern of crying, and the characteristic body posture and facial expression must have been recognized as a deadly condition that cannot be remedied and that is best left in the hands of the Samsin. Kyonggi can occur in older children as well. There is a quiet form where the child loses consciousness, and another form that goes along with crying. In any case this is the most dangerous condition a child can acquire and everything must be done to prevent it. Yet modern medicine is not trusted.

[page 36]

*Sons and daughters and sex prediction.* Boy preference in Korea is often mentioned in family planning literature. With few exceptions all the families in this study hoped for a son. On occasion, if there were already sons, a daughter was acceptable. One son, however, was often felt not to be enough. As one grandfather in a family with only one son in three generations put it: “It is very lonely, and that is the greatest danger.” This view was expressed frequently by the clients, too. The life of an only son is considered sad and very lonely although he may have sisters aplenty. There is little appreciation for girls. In one family the mother-in-law definitely wanted the client to have a girl because her first daughter-in-law “could bear only sons” and she now desired a granddaughter. Nevertheless, she said that the client would have to bear sons eventually.

The study communicated the impression that there is still great pressure on women to bear sons and they feel a responsibility not to disappoint the family. Little can equal the misery and disgrace of a woman who has disappointed her family with a fourth daughter. On the other hand, a woman’s feeling of accomplishment after having borne a son and the elevation of her status in family and community is still equalled by nothing else in a rural woman’s life. Both could be observed among the studied clients.

None of the clients expressed the belief that sex prediction is possible, and none had gone to fortune-tellers during pregnancy. But many family members did, especially mothers-in-law. In one case where there were only three daughters, the mother-in-law went with the client before pregnancy to a temple where they made a generous offering of rice and money. During her pregnancy the offering was repeated by the father-in- law. The woman wanted an abortion but was persuaded to carry on. She finally bore a son and there was great approval of the method.

It is a favored sport among grandmothers and older village women to prognosticate the sex of a child. The shape of the abdomen is often considered an infallible sign of the sex of the unborn. If it protrudes the child is female. If it overhangs at the flanks the child is surely a male. The pregnant woman’s navel is equally significant. If it bulges out the child is female. If it is drawn in the child is male. The village women make their predictions with great confidence and with references to the many births about which they were right.

[page 37]

*Attitudes in Pregnancy.* This study was begun with the stereotyped assumption, derived from Western clientele, that a pregnant woman is “of good hope,” looking forward to a “happy event,” and that she is entitled to much attention by her husband and family and the general public during this period.

This is not so in Korea. The lack of interest in the physiology of pregnancy and the inconsequential role of the Samsin during pregnancy make this apparent, and it becomes abundantly clear when attitudes during pregnancy are observed. The existence of pregnancy is practically ignored. A woman is expected to work in the field as always, up to the last moment. There is a saying that if a woman does not work hard during pregnancy she will have a big baby and a hard time at birth. Her eyes may be so swollen that she cannot see, yet she is not entitled to any special consideration. The only exception appears to be when she is expecting for the first time and the family is delighted to see her fertility proven. Then the husband may bring her special things to eat from the market to express his appreciation. But in subsequent pregnancies such extravagances fade out of fashion.

A woman may crave something special to eat but the husband may decide they cannot afford it. Fruit, bread, and cider were mentioned by some clients as things they craved and could not obtain. A woman’s diet generally is bland—rice, soup, and kimchi three times a day. Pregnant or not, she serves the better things to husband and children. One woman said: “Oh, yes, I would like to eat those things too, and if I just knew I carried a son, I would. But since I don’t, I’d rather give the meat and eggs to my first son.”

Pregnancy is not only de-emphasized, it is experienced as an embarrassing condition.15 All respondents interviewed on this subject agreed that this was so. Because of this embarrassment some women stayed entirely at home during late pregnancy, some would not go to certain places where the feeling of embarrassment would become overwhelming, and others tried to avoid being seen by men. The unanimous reason given for such behavior was that the abdomen protruded so disgustingly and that this was disfiguring. This reason in itself did not make much sense, considering the deep shame expressed in the women’s comments and behavior. Therefore they were asked if the embarrassment was not rather due to the fact that the protruding abdomen is a visible sign of sexual activity, which in traditional Korean culture has a dirty and shameful connotation detrimental to the idealized image of woman. Clients as well as research assistants [page 38] emphatically denied the possibility of such a connotation at first. But with further probing it became evident that practically everyone, women and men alike, had, in their puberty, indulged in dirty talk at the sight of a pregnant woman, a custom that apparently is widespread and continues among men into adulthood—until they have a wife themselves and yearn for a son. It is apparent that the cultural environment is powerful enough to embarrass the pregnant woman, to elicit a sense of shame, and to determine her shy behavior although she is not consciously aware of the reasons. In this context the style of the traditional dress of Korean women is noteworthy. It makes it impossible to tell if a woman is pregnant or not.

When the peripheral environment assumes a hostile character and especially when she is pregnant for the first time, a woman finds comfort in the concern of other womenfolk who have had children themselves. Her mother-in-law and her own mother are of special importance. These envelop her with a sense of understanding in which she finds emotional refuge. Most of the observed clients lived in an extended family which included the mother-in-law. But even where the family was nuclear, the mother-in-law was never distant and usually asserted her influence. In a first pregnancy, the relation between mother-in-law and expecting woman deepens. The pregnancy brings these women together and makes the young mother appreciate a flood of advice on how to proceed through pregnancy.

The advice that has most bearing on behavior in pregnancy concerns food. There are numerous foods to be avoided. Every client had heard of at least some of them and many adhered to one or the other taboo. Chicken, duck, eggs, and octopus are among the foods to be avoided. Many other foods are enumerated as dangerous for various reasons. Most frequently they are believed to cause fetal malformation or danger of some spiritual kind. Two women in this study were subject to rigid control of their intake by the mother-in-law so that they would not take dangerous foods. Two other women felt very guilty because of their inability to control their appetites. One had eaten rice cake while preparing it for a birthday party in a relative’s house. Another had secretly eaten eggs although she knew she would not have sufficient milk later. On the other hand there was practically no awareness of the need for good nutrition in pregnancy.

The fact that the young woman is indeed fertile and fulfills her duty in this respect makes her more important to her new family and she does her best to live up to their expectations and follow their advice. This emotional interaction between client and family is an important aspect of [page 39] Korean rural family life. Despite the general de-emphasis on pregnancy, the interaction is enormously intense and the traditional character of its content makes it difficult for health services modelled after Western behavior patterns to reach these clients with an equally intense message.

In summary, pregnancy, as far as the health and activity of the woman are concerned, is considered to be a normal state. Although she may be seriously ill with toxemia, have a painful pregnancy neuritis, or be otherwise exhausted, she is not entitled to special attention and she does not expect nor want it. There is no concept of dangers to the health of mother and child, dangers that arise during pregnancy and which modern prenatal care can prevent. There is great confidence and an unassuming awareness by the mother-to-be that she can fulfill her role without any help other than that provided by traditional family resources.

*Delivery.* An interesting observation was that no woman or family prepared anything for delivery except baby clothing. In three cases not even this was done. Two of these women had had a previous stillbirth, were afraid of reoccurrence, and did not want to have to face the sight of useless baby clothing again. The third one said: “This is not my first baby, so what should I prepare?” None of the clients or their family members perceived the need to prepare the household in any other way, although some mentioned the convenience of having available the government provided kit for cutting the cord. Childbirth itself was taken rather matter of factly. Although the entire family seemed to be involved, little of the excitement radiated to the outside world.

The approximate day of confinement was known to all the women in the study, but many of them were surprised by the birth itself. Several women, although they had given birth before, did not recognize the signs of early labor. One woman, for instance, was sent by her husband from rice planting in the field to see a doctor because she complained of an aching back. When she heard from the obstetrician that she was in labor she went straight home instead of remaining in the hospital. Since so many people worked in her rice field it was inconceivable for her to indulge in the luxury of staying in the hospital to give birh. Another woman blamed her strong backache on the fact that she slept on the cold floor, and still another let her husband go to the field in early morning without bothering to mention she was having contractions. She found herself then in strong labor later in the day with no one around to help.

On occasion one had the impression that birth was an unwelcome interruption of activities considered more important, and that the woman [page 40] tried to hide the fact that she was in labor from the people around her and kept busy and active as long as she could. This could be understood as an attempt on the woman’s part to postpone as long as humanly possible that embarrassing stage of birth when she is utterly dependent upon other people. A mother-in-law, for instance, reported that the young woman withdrew after breakfast because she felt a little sick, and when she looked in on her a little later she was already in the crowning stage. Another young woman was surprised by contractions while she worked in the field in the morning, but she continued working until late afternoon and then could barely make it home.

There are many reports in the public health literature of Korea on women who deliver alone. In a national survey conducted in 1978 the frequency of deliveries with no one present at the woman’s side was 3%.16 In this study one woman delivered alone and even cut the cord herself. This accomplishment gave her great pride and the admiration of others. The practice of delivering alone seems to have been more frequent in earlier days. The motive seems to have been to avoid depending on others, even one’s husband or mother-in-law. Many older women reported that they had delivered alone, and they all took great pride in having done so.

Nowadays the presence of one female attendant is desired by most women, usually the mother-in-law or the woman’s own mother. In a few cases another female, a relative or neighbor, attended. In one case the husband attended. Occasionally there were as many as three women around to support the parturient, hold her, let her grab them for consolation, and for final attendance during the birth. The client feels dependent upon such a person, and the attendant is honored and challenged by the request. The lay attendant may be uncertain about whether she can attend properly. But in at least one case she was severely reprimanded by the woman in labor when she wanted to call in the midwife.

In about half of the cases in the Kanghwa Project the midwife was called, but this was done rather late in the course of childbirth. The young woman in labor may plead for the midwife to come but is often denied such comfort almost to the very end. The mother-in-law does not want the midwife to be bothered too early, and this is indeed a very serious consideration on the client’s part, too, as long as she has her senses together. To call the midwife is to call an outsider and impose upon her. In many homes no medical attendant is desired by the family for this reason. In addition, the suggestion of the presence of an outsider, medically trained or not, seems to be a threat of invasion of privacy. The two midwives in [page 41] the target area seem to have established their reputations by their strong mental disposition to guide client and household smoothly through the disturbing and somewhat chaotic period of childbirth rather than by their medical skills. In the pretest to this study two mothers-in-law responded to the question why the midwife was called in for birth with the answer that “the midwife is strong.” How is she strong? “Her mind is strong.” Not all mothers-in-law are ready to let such a rival step in and take over.

Delivery in the rural home proceeds in the same unassuming way as pregnancy does. The woman in labor is not expected to make much noise and if she does this is disapproved of and she later feels ashamed. The mother-in-law, a relative, a friend, or in rare cases a hired woman, takes care of the household while the woman is in labor. The kitchen has to be taken care of, water has to be boiled, the resulting mess has to be cleaned up, and then the traditional first meal has to be prepared for the new mother.

On Kanghwa Island, there are no rules for the actual delivery. The woman does whatever is most comfortable for herself. Women who were not attended by a midwife most frequently reported that they either knelt or squatted during the second stage of labor and during actual birth. They then leaned forward on their hands or over folded quilts, or held on to furniture or shelves. Some mentioned that they padded the floor with some clothing or a blanket so that the baby would “fall down softly” and not hurt itself.

These reports are remarkable because for modern women the customary position at birth is supine, strapped to the delivery table in lithotomy position. In discussing this subject many Kanghwa women considered such a position impossible for themselves. It would hurt more and they could not imagine how to endure it. Indeed, the modern position at birth is in comparison an inconvenience and physical discomfort to the laboring woman. Modern obstetrics has lost sight of the natural position for at least 100 years.

After the birth there is no celebration. Small yellow earth molds are put up in front of the main door so that no one will enter, and the family isolates itself from the outside world. Gladness, appreciation, or joy was never expressed about the safe birth and the newborn baby, as is customary in the West. Asked what they felt when they saw the newborn, the mother and attendant or husband most frequently expressed weariness and the burden of having to raise another child. On occasion a father was overcome by a sense of overwhelming wonder about new life when he saw [page 42] his son “fall on the ground and look around with wide-open eyes, every-where.”

*Postpartum concerns*. In all families the placenta was handled with a kind of care and attention that is unfamiliar to modern health workers. It was either burned, buried, or disposed of in the sea. But the procedures of discarding were always elaborate. The courtyard was especially cleaned for the purpose of burning it. In every case where it was burned, rice husks were used. Since this was the only source of fuel, the burning took twenty-four hours and three rice sacks of husks. The ashes, in most cases, were discarded on the road in a long black line, and in one case on a three road junction. If it was discarded in the sea, it was tied to a stone and submerged. In some houses the umbilical cord, or the whole placenta, was dried for medicine. After a local hospital delivery, in two cases, the placenta was handed to the family for appropriate disposal.

The main reason given for such elaborate handling was that beasts or even humans would eat the placenta otherwise. Of course, like the embar-rassment caused by pregnancy which was explained only by the protruding abdomen, this explanation is not satisfying either. It is worthwhile mentioning, therefore, that traditionally the placenta in Korea received much reverence. This is still apparent in the elaborate placenta graves of some kings and in the old porcelain jars which were used to contain buried placentas. An anthropologist with whom the findings were discussed commented that the burning of the placenta with rice husks may well have metaphoric implications since rice husks enshrine the grain until it is ripe, and rice grains play an important role in fertility rituals in Korea. One young father carefully scanned the husks so that no rice grains would be burned with the placenta. He could not give a reason for his act, but in such a context it seemed to make sense.

Another custom was observed as faithfully as the disposal of the placenta. Little molds of yellow earth were set up in front of practically every house after birth, a practice called hwangt’o p’iuda. It indicates the birth of a child and its sex—usually three molds for a girl and five for a boy.

The more frequent custom in other rural areas of Korea is to hang a straw rope across the main entrance of the house where a birth has taken place. This rope suspends pine branches and red peppers if the child is a boy, and pine branches and charcoal for a girl. The custom is understood by the community as a request not to enter the house, and it is connected with the powerful belief that an outsider will bring serious danger to the child and prevent the mother’s milk from flowing.

[page 43]

Although some families, especially Christians, do not adhere to such a belief, they still use yellow earth molds to keep strangers out. In such a case, as long as the health services are permitted access for care of mother and child, this practice cannot be faulted. The story, however, is different where the traditional beliefs dominate. Even the midwife is here regarded as a carrier of gloom. Mourners are a special threat and since they cannot be differentiated from ordinary people, no one is allowed in. The mid-wives in the target area respect the request not to enter the house in order not to upset their otherwise good relations with the clients, and to keep friendly relations with the family for the benefit of later postpartum consultations or emergency calls- Health workers, generally, are little aware of such customs and beliefs and may unknowingly provoke resentment. In Kanghwa, a young MCH worker was wearing a little white ribbon in her hair indicating the death of a family member. She found out the hard way that she was not considered an appropriate person to care for mothers and newborn in her target community.

After birth the mother is expected to be kept warm, to be protected from “the wind,” param, and to rest for a prolonged time after birth. The postpartum period is especially important for the maintenance and restoration of health. The elaborate considerations and practices during this period make the lack of concern for the mother during pregnancy all the more apparent. Two women in this series had become pregnant simply to remedy their poor physical condition. By going through a complete procreative cycle and then strictly adhering to postpartum prescriptions, they expected to restore their health. Many other women and their families in the series were extremely concerned with their postpartum health. The following beliefs are related to this: during childbirth all the bones and joints become loose, and rest and warmth are required to restore them to their normal condition. If one “meets the wind” at this time, one can expect to become seriously ill; if not immediately so, then in old age. Strokes and rheumatism are the dreaded later results. One of the women who gave birth in a hospital was seriously upset because the doctor and nurse were concerned only with the baby “while the wind was blowing right on my lower parts.”

The nursery in the rural home is usually hot and sticky because no window or door is opened for several days to prevent exposure to the wind. The mother is covered with thick blankets even in the middle of summer. She is often inconvenienced by this and sweats profusely, but she either keeps with it because she believes it to be truly for her own good, or she upsets her mother-in-law and husband by prematurely “meeting the [page 44] wind” and exposing herself to danger by getting up too soon. The appropriate period for complete rest after delivery was considered to be seven days, one month, or even three months by different respondents. In fact, however, few women stayed down longer than seven days. Those who had no servant and had already borne one or more children were up and around before the seventh day to do their chores. One woman was in the field again on the third day after confinement.

All the women ate seaweed soup and rice after delivery, to the exclusion of practically anything else, for at least three to seven days and sometimes longer even though on occasion they were not able to stand the sight of it. This custom of eating seaweed soup after birth in Korea is so old and ubiquitous among all classes and walks of society that nobody appears to be able to give a satisfactory reason for it any more. It is sometimes said that to do otherwise would cause the teeth to fall out, and since seaweed is soft it is the only food one can chew. Mothers-in-law consider seaweed important for the generation of new blood and for cleaning out the old blood. It is also a good food for the milk flow.

One client stopped eating seaweed soup when she did not want to feed her child at the breast, and it had to be bottle fed. A Korean nutritionist assigned no particular nutritional value to the seaweed for mother or child but offered the explanation that it was bulky and might be considered as filling the “emptiness” left in the abdomen after birth. It is also noteworthy that seaweed or seaweed soup is always an ingredient on the Samsin offering table. Further probing of this issue may well shed more light on the traditional meaning of birth in relation to family and the Samsin in Korea.

In summary, pregnancy and birth, in the traditional context, are de- emphasized. Although pregnancy and the pregnant woman are of no particular concern, the fact that a woman is pregnant, in other words fertile, is of immense importance and interest to the traditional family, and the course of pregnancy and actions taken are therefore determined by the family. The young woman may contribute very little. Her duty is to give birth to the child, and that is all. The family takes over care, responsibility, and decision making. And the family with its traditional behavior here often stands in opposition to what modern health services seek to achieve.

[page 45] INTERACTIONS BETWEEN CLIENTS AND MODERN HEALTH SERVICES

The modern health services available to the clients of this study consist of the drugstores in the vicinity, the local health subcenter, the local obstetrical clinics in Kanghwa City, and the hospitals on the adjacent mainland. In the target area two government-employed midwives are available, and maternity care in the periphery is organized by the project so that midwives and village health workers provide repeated contacts for all clients and their families for education, risk screening, and care.

These services are not yet mature and lack the technical supervision of obstetricians and a structured relation to a referral institution. But they reach every client and are, in terms of frequency and quality of contact, somewhat better than can be expected in other rural areas. This made interaction observation between clients and health services more fruitful. It permitted differentiation among positive and negative aspects of interactions, and allowed definition of some underlying problems that inhibit more effective maternity care.

*Barriers of understanding between clients and services.* Before all other problems, there are barriers of understanding and communication between modern health services and clients. These concern the meaning of childbearing, the benefits that can be obtained from modern health services, and a confrontation of authority about decision-making between family and health care providers.

First of all, there are conceptual misunderstandings about the meaning of childbearing. For the clients and their families it is basically a family affair, a normal and healthy process of family life that is of no concern to outsiders. For modern medicine it is a domain of health care. This conflict is aggravated by the approach that modern health services take to these clients. Pregnant women and parturients are indiscriminately labeled “patients” and are expected to assume a sick role—in other words, a dependency attitude toward health services—before they can obtain the whole extent of modern benefits. We have seen that this is in contradiction to the women’s desires to remain independent; the important role of the family in decision-making is ignored altogether. Here, modern health services and traditional clients are at odds with each other.

As an example, take the case of a woman who had five previous deliveries which were all very hard and three of which ended in stillbirths or neonatal death. The reason was a contracted pelvis. She did not go for prenatal care even once since she was “perfectly healthy” in pregnancy[page 46] and going was therefore not necessary. She added: “If one goes to the hospital, they could not correct the bones, could they? Even if one would break them, one could not correct them.”

Modern medical services have, of course, already reached into the traditional realm of childbearing. They are a factor for change. In general terms, there is great appreciation among the clients of their availability in emergencies. This is a significant improvement as compared to the old days. The above-mentioned client was appreciative of doctors and mid- wives in general since they had helped her in her home deliveries.

But there is little appreciation for the health services’ capacity to prevent such emergencies. The above-mentioned client delivered this time in a hospital. Since she had never been there before and arrived in an advanced stage of labor, neither she nor the doctor had had a chance to consider a caesarian section on the basis of her previous obstetrical history. The child was born alive but was limp, did not cry, later could not suck, had convulsions, and developed a torticollis.

As a further example another case may serve. In her previous pregnancy this client noticed that the fetal movements stopped during the seventh month. She then went to a private clinic four times and was delivered of a stillborn baby. In the recent pregnancy, since she was “healthy,” she did not go for prenatal care. She came down at term with a footling, partial abrupture of the placenta, and considerable blood loss. During the protracted birth and in the face of much bleeding, the mother- in-law lost confidence in her ability to attend and called the mid wife. This saved the baby from probable death and the mother had merely to recover from her anemia.

Although the family considers childbearing normal, it is becoming increasingly customary among mothers in the project area to go to the midwife for prenatal care. This does not mean that the interactions at this service level correspond in their content with prenatal care in a modernized environment. The client goes only if she can think of a problem that bothers her. She almost never goes merely for a routine examination. She often seems to have the feeling that she is asking a favor of the health worker rather than demanding a service from a health agency.

Here it should be re-emphasized that the midwife as delivery attendant is usually called not because of her obstetrical skills but because of her ability to guide the household through the unsettling period of childbirth. In only 50% of the births in the target area is such service desired. Delivery attendance by the midwife, too, is requested with the feeling of asking a favor rather than demanding a medical service. Decisions, such [page 47] as to give or not to give an injection, to call or not to call a doctor, or to transfer to a hospital, are without question considered a family prerogative. The midwife can suggest, but she cannot decide. If she does, she clearly oversteps her limits and the consequences bear on her reputation.

Encounters between families and health services over a pregnancy or childbirth problem are fraught with emotional strain for both. As a result, either one may react irrationally and thus contribute to a negative outcome. Such emotional behavior is caused by the confrontation between the authority of the family and the authority of the health service. Both feel responsible for the sole right to make decisions. Both feel threatened by the other’s demands. Either one may take over, without consideration of the other’s authority; but the family is more likely to do so than the representative of the health service, who depends on the income and reputation which the clients provide.

This situation is exemplified by an event in this study. The client, whose previous three births had been attended by the midwife, went into labor and her husband called the midwife. When she arrived, the child had already been born. The mother-in-law had taken over and forbade the midwife to enter. The midwife left, but she was called back a little later because the placenta had not come out and the client was hemorrhaging. While the midwife tried to master the situation with placenta delivery, infusion, and shock preventive measures, the mother-in-law in self-defense talked about how good it was for the bad blood to run out- The client had a hemoglobin count of 6.5gm% the next day.

*Decision-making in delivery attendance.* The study showed that the client herself usually has little influence on who will attend the delivery, where it will take place, and whether there will be any medical attendant. Where she presented her own views on the subject, they became merely one further point of view in the family discussions. The home visits of health workers, however, seem to have considerable influence. Also, in general, the woman is comparatively free to go to the health subcenter for prenatal care, and she usually desires to do so. The women who took advantage of the midwife’s counsel brought home information about their condition and about birth that was taken up by the family council and seemed to sway the opinion of its members. In at least one case it resulted in a definite change of opinion, from medically unattended to medically attended birth.

But there are still a number of women whom the family does not allow to go for prenatal care. The mother-in-law of one client with a pre-[page 48] vious stillbirth said that since the client had gone there the last time and the result had been bad, this time she had forbidden the client to go. Frequently it was argued, even by clients themselves, that prenatal care consultations are useless and a waste of time and energy.

The final decision on delivery attendance is most often made by the mother-in-law, and more often than not it is left open until actual delivery begins. The most frequent answer given by clients and other family members as to who would attend the delivery was that it would depend upon the conditions encountered at the time. If the birth appeared to be difficult one would, of course, call a qualified attendant or go to a hospital; otherwise birth would have to occur at home. If the woman had already experienced an uncomplicated, medically unattended birth at home, she confidently faced the ordeal with little desire for having someone outside the family attend. If the woman was inexperienced and expecting for the first time, she might occasionally appear to be insecure, but she still trusted the family judgement and arrangements for her more than the warnings and advice from the health care institutions. For her mental stability, this is the best thing she can do under the circumstances. Sometimes the pain was dreaded, but a woman never appeared to have a sense of danger for herself, though dangers for the child were perceived on occasion. This was especially true for the five women who had had stillbirths. They appeared to be comparatively confident, and even among them there was little awareness that such sad experiences can generally be prevented by properly applied modern medical service.

*Breast feeding and formula feeding.* Many women knew that the milk starts flowing from the third or fourth day post partum. But others did not know that. They became uneasy if the baby did not receive a full supply of mother’s milk right after birth, and they started to bottle feed immediately. It would appear that such anxiety, the availability of commercial formula, and the great “health improving value” assigned to formula by the media have already led to a reduction of breast feeding in rural Korea. At least two babies in this series were fully on the bottle soon after birth and many more mothers supplemented the breast with formula from the beginning. One of the bottle fed babies was found to be severely malnourished six weeks after birth.

Formula feeding was observed in most cases neither to meet hygienic requirements nor nutritional standards. Almost every mother who used the bottle put in a little less milk powder than the instructions required because it seemed “too much” and “it is so expensive.” There is usually [page 49] only one bottle and one nipple available in the house. These are boiled once in the morning and then must last through at least twenty-four hours and six feedings. At summer temperatures above 30 °c with no refrigeration available, the hazard to the newborn from contaminated bottles is obvious.

*Doctors and hospitals.* If it is found during prenatal care that the baby is in a breech position or that the pelvis is too narrow for uncomplicated delivery the client is usually advised to deliver in a hospital. This information may strike unbelieving ears. It contradicts the assumption, especially among the older members of the family, that childbearing is normal and goes the better the less it is interfered with. The hospital is simply not considered a place in which to give birth. This is so evident to everyone that the respondents find it difficult to think of reasons for not wanting to go to a hospital. Only people who know or can imagine what hospital delivery implies can give such reasons. Among the reasons are: “It is a great inconvenience to go there and then come back at the time of childbirth”; “One does not know the people in the hospital”; “There are male doctors in the hospital, and childbirth is so embarrassing even with only women around.” Other reasons are that people in the hospital are indifferent or even unkind, that food and care are bad, and that postpartum care of the mother, which in the traditional context is so important for her recovery, is incomparably better at home. One major factor seems to be that in some hospitals there is no warm ondol floor, which is deemed essential for postpartum recovery.

When a complication is diagnosed which makes hospital delivery desirable, a decision has to be made by the family whether the client should go to a hospital or not. The immediate hope is that there is a remedy, manipulation, or medicine that may change the condition, or that the diagnosis was wrong. In such case there is much bargaining with the local health workers which too often leads the midwives into manipulating a breech baby into vertex pesentation and fixing it by tight bandaging. One respondent, the sister-in-law of a client in this study, had had a stillbirth after such a manipulation and bandaging six months earlier. The bandage was so tight that she could neither sit, stand, nor lie down. She did not sleep for four days and finally took the bandage off. She delivered a white-stillborn baby the day after.

If there is clearly no way out of a complicated problem, and the logical step would be to decide upon hospital delivery, there is the temptation to ignore the threat and to trust the old ways. There seem to be sufficient [page 50] success stories around that justify doing so. And there is an abundance of information about how things go wrong if one trusts the health services indiscriminately. The grandmother in one of the study families shared her terror with whoever would listen of how her niece was taken to a hospital, treated with an icebag instead of heat, and died as a consequence. Another client had experienced with her own body how in the hospital after birth they had “let that wind blow right on the lower parts.” The staff was unkind and inconsiderate enough not to listen to her complaints so that she later developed severe edema.

If the family decides to delegate authority for care in childbirth to a hospital, it often does so with misgivings and suspiction, ready to revise the decision any time, and possibly to look for a better alternative. The family appraises an alternative helper on moral qualities as much or more than on medical qualifications. It is of great importance how well this helper measures up to traditional standards, whether he is willing to let family members share medical decisions, and how much he respects the family’s authority. This is in contradiction to patient care in Western societies, and it is in contradiction to modern health personnel training, which is based on the assumption that decision-making must be done on the basis of the client’s condition alone. The student does not learn to take into consideration the family’s viewpoints, which are concerned primarily with the wholeness of the body of the client who needs a caesarean section, with the inability to pay for such services, and other more mystifying reasons. Doctors often feel severely restricted by family interference, but they can expect overwhelming gratitude or bitter resentment and disdain to be based on their ability to cope with a traditional family’s expectations, rather than on their medically correct treatment of the client’s condition.

Some of the clients in this study who decided on hospital delivery apparently did so with the intent of giving themselves a treat rather than getting qualified medical attention during the delivery. The expectation seemed to be that one can demand service for one’s money, as one can in a hotel, in addition to the medical care.

One client demanded a caesarean section when she could no longer control her expression of pain in the unfamiliar environment. She felt bitterly humiliated that she was not granted this request. She resented the hospital, had difficulty adjusting to her child, and was emotionally unable to recover from the experience for months. This may have been aggravated by a basically unstable personality, but it exemplifies the kind of expectation prevailing among clients about the hospital.

[page 51]

Another client was quite surprised not to find the tender attention and care in the hospital she was used to in her other childbirths at home. She had gone to the hospital for medical reasons, but apparently she expected that she would be taken care of much better emotionally, too, than at home. She experienced the place as cold, the people as inconsiderate, and the service as bad. She was not given an infusion when she requested one, and the doctor and nurse did not stay with her when she wanted them to. It was incomprehensible to her that she was not the permanent center of attention for the hospital staff as she used to be for her family during childbirth at home. She summarized her experience by saying: “If someone wants to die, then one should send him to the hospital.”

*Field workers and peripheral services*. The midwife is stationed at the health subcenter, conducts prenatal care consultations there, and attends the deliveries to which she is called. Within the Kanghwa Project she is kept in permanent contact with each client in her target area through nurses’ aides and village health workers who were, for the purpose of this study, re-enforced by trained public health nurses. If a client is discovered to have a medical or obstetrical problem, the field staff follows her up at home with particular attention to the family. This is usually appreciated, but not always. From this study it appears that such home visits were an important factor in influencing the family’s positive attitude toward the health services. The workers had sufficient knowledge and stamina to insist on the necessity for medically qualified attention at birth against the family’s economic or traditional reservations, and they had sufficient experience in communicating with rural people not to override family decision-making, but rather to let them come to their own conclusions.

But these workers and the midwife do not have an obstetrical referral institution available to which they can introduce clients with complications, and where they can help clients and staff to communicate more effectively. An ability to communicate between people from the village culture and the second-level health service workers would make the workers more effective intermediaries for overcoming conflict.

Also, in the absence of adequate and sensible obstetrical supervision and guidance, the health workers are tempted to yield to those demands and expectations of their clientele which are not in the best interests of health and which may be very dangerous. An example is the indiscriminate use of oxytocin and related drugs in childbirth. Rural people know these medicines as “labor promoting” drugs. Most drugstores will sell them to anyone who asks for them. On a [page 52] test inquiry in a local drugstore to find out what they sell to speed up delivery, the interviewer was shown ampules of Oxytocin 10 units and Sparein. The nurses and midwives in the project reported that in practically every delivery they are requested by family or client to give a “labor promoting” injection. Among villagers the opinion prevails that the least a health worker can be expected to do is to give an injection. Not to do so indicates the worker’s incapacity, and if the worker argues that an injection involves dangers for mother and child, this is considered to be evasive talk by means of which she tries to hide her inability. One midwife in the target area has made it a custom to inject saline solution in order to protect her reputation.

In addition, the midwives may have gotten somewhat lax in observing the proper indications for using oxytocin. An example is a woman who had a previous stillbirth and this time experienced somewhat weak contractions during the first stage. She was given 0.5ml Orasthine by the midwife at home, who then, when she realized there was no progress, was conscientious enough to take the woman to a local clinic. There the fetal heart sounds became weak and after transportation to an obstetrical department on the mainland the heart sounds disappeared and her second stillborn baby was delivered by vacuum extraction. She had a contracted pelvis and was in need of a caesarean section to begin with.

But the midwives are not the main promoters of the oxytocin hazard. They are, on the contrary, very much concerned about its use by laymen and the pressure on themselves to inject it. The main hazard of oxytocin injecting comes from lay people. In each village the study team could confirm at least three and up to ten lay people who know how to give injections and who can be called upon to do so. One midwife guessed that in six out of ten deliveries which are not attended by her but by lay people, and which she contacts for postpartum care afterwards, someone has given an injection of oxytocin during labor. Even in cases where the midwife attends, someone may already have injected the drug before her arrival.

DISCUSSION

These findings are based on a first general analysis of the materials. A more detailed analysis later is expected to give a more sophisticated understanding of the sources and characteristics of traditional behavior, and of the area of interaction with modern health services and the problems involved. But it will require several months of work to do so. The dis-[page 53] cussion at this time will therefore be brief and relate to the more obvious findings.

*Advantages and problems inherent in traditional behavior.* The findings have demonstrated how childbearing in Kanghwa Island is still imbedded in the traditional life style and world view. The procreational period is an integral part of family life with intense interactions in which the family gives emotional support and security to the pregnant woman and is itself strengthened in structure and function. For the woman and her family, childbearing and childbirth are an expression of health. Conceptually, they have nothing to do with the doctor, the hospital, and those who care for the sick. There is little perception of danger, and where there is some awareness of problems, there is little knowledge of the benefits that modern medicine can provide and how to go about soliciting them. The authority for decision-making and care lies with the family, especially with the mother-in-law―not with the pregnant woman herself. The procreational period is a mutual, almost sacred experience in family life, which centers around the expecting mother and culminates in childbirth.

There is a strong tendency to conceal pregnancy from strangers. The woman with the protruding abdomen is likely to withdraw and hide herself. And finally, during childbirth and the early postpartum period, she is entirely separated from any contact with the outside world. The point has been made that this behavior is beneficial for the smooth establishment of mother-child relations, for uncomplicated breast feeding, and for re-consolidation of the family after the arrival of the new member. There was a time when such behavior was an essential contribution to the survival of newborn infants. Within this context the young mother in her humble, self-denying attitude has retained a role of dignity and self-understanding that is lost in modernized society. This behavior compares favorably with the often insecure, dependent, even neurotic attitudes of modernized mothers and their families. It is in essence sound and healthy behavior, but it does not correspond to the style of modern services as they are offered. Neither of these aspects are recognized by modern medicine or by health planners.

Of course, there are manifest dangers for the health of mother and child in such behavior, and these are recognized by modern medicine and by health planners. But they nevertheless find it difficult to implement adequate strategies for avoiding these dangers. The underlying problem is that the causes of such behavior are ignored. From the findings of this study, among the causes are that in pregnancy there is little awareness of[page 54] the nutritional needs of an expecting mother, of the need to prepare the household for hygienic delivery, of the need regularly to screen a woman’s health for impending hazards, and of the need for a trained attendant at birth who can differentiate a normal from an abnormal labor, prevent catastrophic conditions through timely referral, control excessive postpartum hemorrhage, and save the newborn from a multiplicity of hazards to health and life. There remains much to be done by modern health services.

The conceptual divergence about childbearing between the family and the health services and the ignorance of underlying causes of client behavior has in the view of the authors delayed improvements in maternity care in Korea during the last decade in the face of otherwise great progress in obstetrical care. This delay in the improvement of maternity care with methods patterned after those of Western cultures is a demonstration of the strength of traditional family authority in childbearing. It is a worthwhile question whether efforts to break this authority so that health services can function more effectively need to be changed. This question is especially important since family sociologists in Korea are of the opinion that the changes in family life accompanying modernization will not result in a Western-type nuclear family.17 It is therefore pertinent to ask if a more fruitful compromise could not be worked out that would protect the beneficial aspects of traditional childbearing behavior and eliminate the blatant health hazards as well.

Yet this would require more astute recognition of the crucial importance of the cultural environment.

Pregnancy and childbirth are aspects of life that are deeply value laden in any culture. These values can be expected to differ from culture to culture. For the young woman, pregnancy and childbirth are an initiation experience which involves a change of her status in the family and society, which is also determined by culture. Marriage, childbirth, the first job, and a number of profound changes in an individual’s life are among such initiation experiences. They have been termed by the French sociologist Van Gennep “Rites of Passage.”18 They are integral life experiences, and related behavior follows culturally preformed patterns.

The nine months of human pregnancy culminate in the dramatic act of childbirth. A new human being comes into existence and this is accompanied by a profound change of function and responsibility for the mother and all other family members. The anticipatory period of pregnancy is experienced by women and families of different cultures in different ways. In Spanish-Mexican culture, for instance, pregnancy is a [page 55] condition that makes a man publicly proud of his woman, and a protruding abdomen is something to show off. We have seen that in contrast the pregnant woman in Kanghwa behaves very shyly and becomes withdrawn, and that the family assumes an emotionally protective and sustaining role. For a pregnant Western woman the role of the family is negligible in influencing her behavior, but she is strongly influenced by modern medicine. This came about as a result of modernization in the West and occurred together with the great scientific discoveries in medicine, which as a consequence eventually brought childbearing under medical control. This was, in a way, a counterproductive development since it initiated in the pregnant woman a sick role behavior, a tendency toward dependency upon medical institutions, and made her a “patient.”

How modernizing changes will ultimately affect the behavior of Korean women and families in relation to pregnancy and childbirth cannot presently be predicted. But it would be prudent, where services are being designed, that the plans be sensitive to existing behavior and the direction of its changes. Otherwise, long-term results of health services for mothers and newborn children will probably be disappointing.

CONCLUSION

In context of the observed traditional village culture, even in its process of change toward modernization, childbearing is an integral part of family life, family formation, and family evolvement. Modern health services remain in almost total ignorance of these aspects of childbearing in the cultural context. The demands of the modern services on the family to give up control over childbearing for the benefit of the physical health of mother and infant are experienced as disruptive of family life. Modern medicine and modern health services may indeed introduce here a factor of potential social pathology if present approaches persist.

We find ourselves confronted with the need for reconceptualizing childbearing in modern medicine and health services in order to free them from potentially pathogenetic trends that are inherent in the practice of treating childbearing as a pathological condition, and a pregnant woman as a patient. It would appear worthwhile to protect the independence and dignity of the Korean mother, but to instill in her at the same time knowledge of the benefits that the modern services can provide and a sense of responsibility to utilize these services for the benefit of her own and her child’s health. It appears that the family has a legitimate right for res-[page 56] ponsibility and care, too. If the family can be taught and induced to make intelligent demands on modern health services, and if Korean maternity care services can be designed to support the healthy traditional responsibility by appropriate public education, and to supplement it with appropriate, acceptable services, then an outstanding, culturally adapted modern maternity care services model could be evolved.

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[page 59]

**The Adoption Dilemma in Traditional Korea**

by Mark Peterson

In the Confucian classic Mencius, it states:

There are three ways that a man can be unfilial to his parents and ancestors. The most serious of these is not having an heir.

In Korea it is axiomatic that a man must have a son. The origin of the concept is assumed to be ancient, and the validity of it is not even challenged. But when did Koreans come to believe it? In this paper, the development of the ideology of son preference will be traced through an examination of the practice of adoption, the alternative that came to be the most common way of dealing with the problem of not having a son.

The idea that a man must have a son is a concept that is inextricably linked with Confucianism. It is Confucianism that states that a person must carry out ceremonies in honor of the ancestors. It is Confucianism that insists that those who perform the ceremonies must be males.

Confucianism, however, developed in China. When did Confucian concepts enter Korea, and when did they come to permeate the Korean social order? It is said that the Koreans “out-Chinese the Chinese” If Confucius himself were to come back to earth at any time in the history of the world and at any place, he probably would have been most pleased with the society of the late Yi dynasty. No other society at any other time was more thoroughly Confucian than the Korea of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. By examining the dilemma of those who did not have sons born into the family, and by examining the history of the practice of adoption, one can observe the assimilation of Confucianism in Yi dynasty Korea (1392-1910).

The term “adoption” must first be defined. In its connotation, the Korean term differs from the English term in two ways- In English the word implies a child-centered phenomenon. The primary consideration is the child, not the parents. If childless Westerners wish to adopt, they will often adopt more than one child. The need they feel is not necessarily fulfilled by adopting only one child. Also, the adopted child is usually an [page 60] orphan. Whether it has been abandoned or given up for adoption at birth, the child can be said not to have parents.

In Korea the connotation of the term is exactly the opposite. The motivation is parent-centered. It is for the sake of the parents, and the ancestors, that a child is adopted. The child must be male, and only one need be adopted. One male child fulfills the need of a sonless man. In fact, historically it was illegal for one foster father to adopt more than a single child. In Korea, the child is usually not only not an orphan, but his biological father is related to the adoptive father. In ideal circumstances, the adoptive father and the biological father are brothers or close cousins. With this explanation of the Korean definition of the term “adoption” in mind, let us examine the alternatives that were open to a sonless man during the Yi dynasty.

A man without a son had four alternatives. He could do nothing about it, he could divorce his wife and remarry a (hopefully) fertile woman, he could take a concubine or secondary wife to bear a son for him, or he could adopt. The first alternative was most common at the beginning of the Yi dynasty, and the fourth alternative was most common during the latter part of the dynasty.

Although a few cases of adoption were recorded early in the Yi dynasty, the most common reaction to the situation of being without a son was to do nothing. Even prominent men did not adopt or take an extra wife to produce a son. Evidence for this can be seen in lineage genealogies and inheritance documents. In the early Yi dynasty portions of most published genealogies many lines of descent suddenly end. Where a descendant son’s name should be entered, there is simply the comment, “there was no heir.” In the later portions of the genealogy, however, there are numerous entries that indicate adoption. Inheritance documents of the early dynasty reveal an interesting custom: property was divided equally between sons and daughters. Where there were only daughters, they received the property and were charged with the responsibility of carrying out ancestor ceremonies. If a man had a daughter, apparently he felt no need to adopt a son.

The second option for the sonless man, divorcing his barren wife, was a legal alternative, but it was seldom practiced In Confucian dogma there are seven bases for divorce: at the top of the list is the “offense” of not bearing a son. The other offenses are disobeying the father-in-law or mother-in-law, jealousy, chronic illness, adultery, thievery, and talkativeness. These were more than mere aphorisms. There are cases of divorce listed in the Yi Dynasty Annals based on each of these offenses. [page 61] On the other hand, there were three saving provisions, any one of which would guarantee the wife’s position in the home. If she had gone through the three years of mourning for one of her parents-in-law, or if she had married her husband when he was poor and he had since become wealthy, or if she had borne him a son, he could not divorce her.

Cases of divorce, however, were not common for whatever reason. Marriage and divorce were serious matters in traditional Korea and the problem of not having a son was not easily solved by the alternative of divorce and remarriage. Improperly sending a wife away was a crime. There are cases in the Annals where men were given as many as eighty lashes, and the wife reinstated in the home, when a divorce was attempted on improper grounds.

The third alternative was to take an additional wife. During the Koryo period (918-1392) a man could have several wives, but in the Yi dynasty the marriage law was changed so that a man could have only one legitimate wife. It was possible, however, for a man to have a secondary wife (or, as some say, a concubine). The Chinese character for secondary wife, 妾 , has an interesting etymology. In ancient China it originally meant a female prisoner of war. Later it came to mean a female slave or servant. Then it came to mean a serving girl who bore the master a child. During Koryo, when a man could have several wives, a woman designated as a secondary wife was dennitely a lower-class woman living in an upper-class home. When Yi law decreed that a man could have only one wife, the new ruling also discriminated against the sons of secondary wives. These sons, called soja, occasionally petitioned for repeal of the restrictions placed on them. There were liberalizations from time to time, but the prejudice against them lingered beyond the end of the dynasty.

It took time for the example set by the early Yi dynasty Confucians to affect the rest of society. For example, in the first laws of the dynasty, under the heading “Adoption” it says, “If a man does not have a son by his wife or his concubine, then he can request permission from the government to adopt a nephew.” The implication is that if a man did have a son by a concubine then there were no grounds for adoption. That was in fact the practice up to the seventeenth century for most Koreans. The great Confucian sage Yi Yul-gok (whose likeness is on the 5,000 won note) did not have a son by his wife, but he did have two soja sons. He did not adopt, but rather the older of the two soja was promoted to the special category of heir for the sake of carrying on the ancestor ritual.

Although Yi Yul-gok opted to have a soja son carry on his line, his disciples chose to handle the problem in a different way. Kim Chang-[page 62] saeng, who studied under Yi Yul-gok, lost his eldest son in the Japanese invasions of the 1950s. Rather than adopt a son to replace the deceased boy, Kim formally petitioned the government to have his second son, Kim Chip, promoted to principle heir. Perhaps his decision can be interpreted as following the precepts of his master—do not adopt if there is any alternative. Kim Chip did not have a son by his legitimate wife, but he did have a soja. The soja son appears to have been a capable young man; he was one of the few soja to pass the civil service examination. (He did not pass the highest exam, but the prestigious saengwon exam.) And yet, in spite of that, Kim Chip adopted a nephew to carry on his line and perform the ancestor ceremonies.

From the time of Yi Yul-gok in the mid-sixteenth century to the time of his disciple’s son in the early seventeenth century, the social ideal seems to have changed. These three men were not only prominent scholars and officials of the Yi dynasty, but they are also among the eighteen Korean sages enshrined in the Songgyungwan, the National Academy of Confucianism. They were the moulders of the tradition.

Before the seventeenth century, as indicated by the case of Yi Yul- gok, a soja son was preferred over an adopted son. In the latter half of the Yi dynasty adoption was preferred. One reason that the preference swung away from soja offspring was the discrimination against them. Manuals of ritual specified that soja should perform the ceremonies outside the building in which the other children were performing. They were not allowed to take government examinations in some cases and there were limitations on their promotions in government offices. At times soja banded together and petitioned for more rights and a removal of discriminatory practices, but only occasionally was their situation improved. There are three surviving compilations of the petitions sent to kings at hundred-year intervals, and each one contains all the arguments included in the earlier one and then adds more.

Perhaps the most popular novel, indeed the first novel, to come out of the Yi dynasty, The Tale of Hong Kil-tong, is the story of a soja. The novel paints a sympathetic picture of the young man and can be interpreted as a tract urging reform and sympathy for these outcastes. In the beginning of the story the young boy, as the soja son of a high government official, is not allowed to call his father “father” or his brothers “brother”; a paradigmatic case of discrimination. In frustration over his treatment, the young Hong Kil-tong leaves home and becomes a sort of Robin Hood. Significantly, in the end, rather than change society, Hong leaves Korea and sets up a Utopian society on an island off the coast of [page 63] China. In a sense, the conclusion of the novel is pessimistic—there was no hope for fair treatment in Korea, so he had to leave.

Although it is doubtful that all or even a majority of parents treated their soja children badly, the stereotype has been set forth as a rule. The conception of the plight of soja offspring among most Koreans even today is similar to that portrayed in The 丁ale of Hong Kil-tong. In actuality, the situation for soja was not quite that bleak. It is generally believed that soja sons could not take the civil service examination. This examination was important in that about ninety percent of all high government officials gained access to their positions through the examination system. Soja could, in fact, take all of the examinations, including the prestigious munkwa, the highest level examination. During the Yi dynasty 14,602 men passed the examinations and of that number nearly two hundred have been positively identified as soja. It is likely that another fifty or one hundred were also of soja status.

Another mistake regarding soja appears in the Encyclopedia of Korean History. The article on soja gives the names of three soja who were prominent during the Yi dynasty. They were Yi Kung-ik, O Suk-kwon and Han Ch’i-yun. In tracing Yi Kung-ik’s genealogy, however, it is evident that he was not of soja descent. The reason he is listed as such is probably that he held a government office that came to be known as an office reserved for men of soja descent.

Although conditions for soja sons were not as bad as popular conceptions would have us believe, still the fact they were generally discriminated against is undeniable. The law that limited the level of officialdom to which they could be promoted was in effect throughout most of the dynasty. It has been said that the prejudice against soja sons and their descendants that was such an integral part of the traditional social system led many to become pioneers for modernization, reform, and Westernization at the end of the Yi dynasty. It is also reported that many of the activists in the proletarian movements of recent history were of soja descent. Throughout the dynasty they had problematic status, but generally their position was better at the beginning of the dynasty and gradually worsened as the dynasty progressed.

In the early dynasty, as seen in the case of Yi Yul-gok, the soja son could serve as a man’s ritual heir, but as time went by the preference for an adopted son grew. The law written at the beginning of the Yi dynasty states:

“If a legitimate first son has no heir, then a subsequent son (can be the ritual heir). If there is not a subsequent son, then a concubine’s [page 64] son can perform the rites for him who is without heir.

If by neither the legitimate wife nor by the concubine there is a son, then one may request (authorization from) the government to adopt a brother’s son or a cousin’s son from within the clan to be the heir.”

This was the ideal for adoption in the Yi dynasty. One adopted a nephew. The potential adoptee had to be in the proper generational level regardless of his age. The generational level was so important that at times a man adopted a “son” who was only five years younger than he. In other cases the “son” was more than sixty years younger. Regardless of the adopted son’s age, he had to be in the proper generational level of the genealogy. This is different from adoptions in Japan and China.

In Japan, the preferred method was the mukoyoshi system, the adopted son-in-law, where a man who had no sons adopted and gave his name to the young man who married his daughter. The Japanese also adopted younger brothers or grandsons as heirs, but that was not considered appropriate among the respectable families of the Yi dynasty.

In China there were some cases of son-in-law adoption, but generally intra-clan adoption was preferred. The adoption of a nephew who was of the proper generational level was considered important; but unlike the situation in Korea, one son could serve as the heir for several fathers. There are cases where one son so served five or six uncles as well as his own biological father. For a Korean, if close cousins did not have “extra” sons, then he would have to go to more and more remote cousins to find a son. Cases of adoption between cousins of extreme remoteness have been common in Korea. Each son could have only one father; the principle of having more than one father, as among the Chinese, was not accepted in Korea.

By examining adoption documents—and there are two different types: government adoption records and genealogical records—the growth in the acceptance of intra-lineage adoption can be traced. Once adoptions begin to appear in the middle of the dynasty, they occur in every possible situation. Seldom is a man indicated to be without heir. Furthermore, as time goes by there appears to have been a tendency for adoptions to be contracted between more and more distant kinsmen. The same tendency is evident in the civil examination rosters. In the early Yi dynasty, say the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, an adopted son is seldom listed as having passed an examination. In the seventeenth century the rate begins to rise, and finally in the nineteenth century close to fifteen percent of all who passed the examinations were adopted sons.

[page 65]

The Yi dynasty code states that any planned adoption had to be reported to the government. The Yejo (Board of Rites) was responsible for issuing an authorization certificate and keeping a register of all such authorizations. A few of the certificates have surfaced recently and several of the registers are extant. It is interesting that it was the Board of Rites and not the Board of Taxation, Board of Justice, or Board of Personnel that was charged with the responsibility of overseeing adoptions. The certificate authorizing an adoption was written on a large sheet of paper, usually over a square meter in size, with explicit details of the circumstances of the adoption and abstracts of affidavits from the several people who were party to the adoption. Those who had to submit affidavits in support of an adoption included both the biological father (or his wife if he were deceased), the adoptive father (or his wife), the son himself (adoptions usually took place when the son was already grown), and representatives of the lineages involved.

The certificate issued to the adoptive parent was filled with detail, but the government register merely recorded an abstract of the case. By examining the registers of adoptions several trends are revealed. The registers cover the time from 1618 to the end of the dynasty. The tendency observed in the genealogies of men going to more and more distant kinsmen to contract an adoption is also seen in the registers. In the early portion of a register, the majority of adoptions were contracted between brothers and close cousins. Further along in the document the adoptions were contracted between more and more distant cousins. In the final portion of the register it is not uncommon to see adoptions between men whose common ancestor lived fifteen or even twenty generations earlier.

Another tendency that is seen in the adoption registers is a diminua- tion of the woman’s role in the process. The Yi dynasty codes specify that if a man died without an heir, then his wife could petition the government for an adopted son to carry on the man’s ceremonies and family line. There are numerous cases in the registers where the wife is listed as the petitioner. In the early part of the record just over fifty percent of the applications were made by wives asking for posthumous adoptions for their husbands. At the end of the dynasty the percentage of women petitioners drops to just under fifty percent.

The law also states that representatives of “both sides of the family” should discuss the matter and submit affidavits if they concurred that the adoption should take place. It is interesting that in the early portion of the record, the representatives of the two sides of the family have different names. One shares the surname of the husband; the other has a [page 66] different surname. If the husband was deceased, the wife’s surname was recorded and her name usually matches the surname of the man representing one of the “sides of the family.” In other words, the phrase “both sides of the family” meant the husband’s side and the wife’s side. Gradually through the seventeenth century the wife’s side of the family was excluded from the process and the decision became a matter for the man’s lineage to decide. The phrase “both sides of the family” continued to be quoted from the codes, but the interpretation changed, coming to mean both sides of the lineage—the adopting side and the donor side. After the seventeenth century the names of the two lineages’ elders given in the documents have the same surname and represent the adopting father and the biological father. Finally, in the later portion of the record, it became common for only one lineage elder to be listed as party to the adoption. In records dated after the seventeenth century, the representatives of the wife’s side of the family are rarely involved in the procedures.

In addition to revealing the way the adoption system functioned and the trends that developed in the Yi dynasty, the government adoption registers and the lineage genealogies, used together, disclose other aspects of the adoption practice. Genealogies alone give the birth and death dates of an individual, but not the date of an adoption. The government registers give the date of the adoption, but not the date of birth or death (or the age) of the parties to the adoption. It is not easy to find the same person in both the lineage genealogy and the government adoption registers. In those cases that have been found in both types of documents, the average ages of fathers and sons is quite surprising. The fathers averaged over sixty years old. Some were in their fifties, some were in their seventies, and many were already dead. The sons were full-grown adults who were usually in their twenties or thirties. In some cases the son had already passed a government examination. In fact, one of the reasons for the tendency to transfer sons between more and more distant kinsmen seems to be related to the status of the two individuals. A man who had passed the examination and who had had an illustrious career seems to have preferred to adopt a son who was equally worthy, even if it meant skipping over the less suitable sons of closer relatives.

The system of adoption described here can be said to be the ideal system practiced by the Yi dynasty yangban, or upper class. Commoners also practiced adoption, but in the beginning the ideal was different for them. Since commoners and slaves did not have the extended family or lineage organization to work through, it was more difficult for them to adopt nephews. Government registers contain the records of commoners [page 67] who made adoptions. Often a son-in-law or an orphan was adopted, and in some cases a slave’s child was adopted. Gradually, however, there seems to have been a growing desire to emulate the ideals of the yangban. Commoners began to keep track of relatives and make adoptions in line with the intra-lineage form of adoption practiced by the upper class.

In conclusion, the dilemma of a man who did not have a son was handled differently at different stages of the dynasty. In the early years, if a man had daughters he did not need to adopt a son. In other cases a son by a secondary wife, a soja, was acceptable. But as time went on, and as the influence of Confucian dogma grew, it became a widespread perception that a man must have a son. Thus adoption became the preferred manner of solving the problem in the latter half of the Yi dynasty. The motivation for the growth of the practice seems to have been Confucianism, with its emphasis on the father-son relationship and ancestor ceremonies.

It is well known that neo-Confucianism became the state-sponsored philosophy of the Yi dynasty at its outset, but it is not generally recognized that it took many years for the principles of Confucianism to be assimilated by the people. There were debates concerning to what degree the Koreans should accept the Chinese-Confucian practices that were alien to their own. The debates continued through the first two centuries of the dynasty. It was the third century of the dynasty that saw drastic social change. In the final two centuries of the Yi dynasty the practice of adoption, one measure of the Confucianization of Korean society, became so firmly entrenched that it was no longer questioned. It was assumed that a man without a son would adopt a nephew.

[page 69]

**The Founding of the Royal Dragon Monastery**

translated, with annotations, from Iryon’s *SAMGUK YUSA* by David H. McClung

When Iryon took up his brush in the latter half of the 13th century to write the Samguk Yusa, his project had a special urgency; the preceding century had seen the widespread and savage destruction of Korea’s cultural heritage at the hands of wave after wave of barbaric Mongol invaders. The losses were inestimable, and Iryon, an eminent Buddhist religious leader who spent most of his life among the halls and pavilions of Korea’s fine old monasteries, constantly surrounded by rich libraries, graceful pagodas and exquisite sculpture, was in a position to be acutely aware of those losses. But, however much he must have been afflicted by the horrors that he saw, he turned his grief to action and, drawing upon the myths, legends, oral traditions and early historical and literary writings of which he seems to have had such an encyclopedic knowledge, began the compilation of a collection of stories and bits and pieces of information about his nation’s early history.

His collection, when finished, he titled the *Samguk Yusa*, and in it he has preserved for us more information on that glorious period of Korean culture that was so brutally ended by the Mongol invasions than is to be found in any other source still extant. Although the book purports to be a history of Koguryo, Paekche and Silla, the Three Kingdoms which shared the Korean peninsula from the 1st century B.C. until their unification under the latter in 668 A.D., fully half the work is devoted to the introduction, rise and flourishing of Buddhism in the Korea of the 4th through 13th centuries―an essentially Buddhist nation―and a substantial portion of the work also deals with clearly non-historical mythical and legendary material which Iryon is content to treat as just such, without any attempt at historical authentication.

Herein lies the major difference between the *Samguk Yusa* and Kim Pu-sik’s *Samguk Sagi*, another history of the Three Kingdoms compiled a century earlier than Iryon’s work. Although unquestionably more scholarly in form and content than Iryon’s volume, as well as a much richer source of information on the political and military history of the Three Kingdoms, the *Samguk Sagi* suffers from having been written by a Confucian scholar under the patronage of the royal court. Imitation of [page 70] Chinese historiographical forms was unfortunately allowed to influence the content; myths and legends were forced into the guise of sober historical fact, and religion, the arts, and the more intimate aspects of the life of the period were slighted.

Iryon, on the other hand, as a Buddhist monk who undertook his work as a purely personal project with neither official sanction nor rigid historiographical notions, was free to preserve much spiritually and psychologically revealing material which had had to suffer violence to be fitted into Kim’s work, or else be rejected altogether as fantastic nonsense. Thus the two works have rightly come to be considered complementary companion volumes, and together constitute the near totality of all the written sources we have of information on the Three Kingdoms period of Korea.

The *Samguk Yusa* met with varying fortunes through the centuries from its completion shortly before Iryon’s death in 1289 down to the present day. More than once nearly disappearing, only to be rediscovered at the last moment, it was most recently rediscovered in the early 20th century in a private library in Japan, and copies of that nearly intact text were published shortly thereafter in 1921 by Tokyo Imperial University. All of the several editions which have been made since then are based on that Tokyo Imperial University text, the particular one used in preparing the present translation being that of the *Chosen Shigaku Kai*, published in Tokyo in 1928. It has also recently come to my attention that the *Samguk Yusa* has had the good fortune to be translated in its entirety, and is now accessible to the English reader through the efforts of Ha Tae-hung, Grafton K. Mintz and the Yonsei University Press. I look forward to examining their work in the near future.

The passage here translated is taken from the fourth section of the work— “Pagodas and Images”―and deals in particular with the founding and early development of the Royal Dragon Monastery. When built, this temple was probably situated within the precincts of the capital, but its site is now to the southeast of the modern town of Kyongju, on the north side of the railway to Pusan.

Although the savage flames of the invading Mongol warriors have long since consumed the greatness of this lore-steeped monastery, still whatever may yet remain of it beneath the earth will soon be known, as its site is just now being excavated by the Office of Preservation of Cultural Properties under the Ministry of Culture and Information. We await the publication of their final report as we await the realization of Iryon’s greatest ideal―the flourishing of great cultures in a world at peace.

[page 71] THE MEDITATION STONE OF KASYAPA BUDDHA

*The Jade Dragon Collection, the Biography of Chajang, and the Comprehensive Biographies* all record that there existed in the Kingdom of Silla, to the east of Wolsong Castle and to the south of the Dragon Palace, a stone on which Kasyapa Buddha1 used to sit while meditating. The site of the stone bore traces of an ancient monastery dating back to pre-Buddhist times, and was in modern times the location of the Royal Dragon Monastery―one of the Seven Monasteries.2 It is written in the *Samguk Sagi* that in the spring of 553, when King Chinhung was to build a new royal palace on the east side of Wolsong Castle, a royal dragon appeared on the construction site. Wondering at this omen, the King changed his plans for a palace and founded the Royal Dragon Monastery instead.

The meditation stone was behind the Hall of Buddha; I once had the privilege of beholding it there. It was some five or six feet in height, and three armspans could scarcely have encircled it. Flat-topped, it stood beneath its own separate pavilion.

Although after King Chinhung built the monastery there were two disastrous fires which caused the stone to crack and split in places, still the monks who dwelt there repaired and preserved the stone by fastening iron to it.

There is even a song in praise of this stone:

“Through countless years the light of Buddha waxed and waned

While only his meditation stone stayed ever the same.

How often have the mulberry groves turned to open sea?

While lofty and forlorn, the stone steadfastly still remains.”

In the end, though, after the great battle on the Western Hill, during which the halls and pagoda of the Royal Dragon Monastery were reduced to ashes,3 this stone, too, disappeared beneath the debris. But it is still there, the top of it just level with the surface of the soil.

THE SIXTEEN-FOOT BUDDHA OF THE ROYAL DRAGON MONASTERY

In the spring of 553 King Chinhung, the twenty-fourth monarch of the Kingdom of Silla, was about to build a new royal palace to the south of his Dragon Palace when a royal dragon4 appeared on the site. The King thereupon altered his plans and instead built a Buddhist temple which he [page 72] named the Royal Dragon Monastery. The galleries surrounding the courtyard were not finished until 569,5 the entire complex therefore requiring seventeen years to complete.

Not long afterward there appeared off the south coast a great ship which drifted ashore at Sap’o Harbor in Hagok county.6 On investigation the ship was seen to contain a tablet which bore the following inscription:

“King Asoka7 of India gathered 57,000 pounds of iron and 30,000 ounces of gold; with these metals he tried to cast a Sakyamuni Trinity.8 But, as he was unsuccessful, he has loaded the metals into a ship and is setting them adrift on the sea with this prayer: ‘May they reach the land favored by destiny where they may become a sixteen-foot Buddha image!’9 He has also placed models inside the ship—one figure of the Buddha, and two of bodhisattvas.”

The officials of the county wrote a report on the matter and sent the news to the King, who in turn issued a royal command that a sunny and well- drained site to the east of the county town be chosen by divination, that a temple to be called the Tongch’uk Temple be built on that site, and that the three models be placed inside the temple for safe-keeping. Meanwhile, the gold and iron were to be transported to the capital.10

In the summer of 574 the casting of the metals into a sixteen-foot image of the Buddha was successfully completed on the first attempt. It weighed 35,700 pounds and was covered with 10,198 ounces of gold. Each of the bodhisattvas contained 12,000 pounds of iron and was covered with 10,136 ounces of gold. All three images were placed in the Royal Dragon Monastery. The following year the statue shed tears which ran all the way down to its heels and soaked the ground for a foot all around,11 a marvel which portended the imminent death of the great King.

Elsewhere it is recorded that these images were completed in the time of King Chinp’yong (r. 579-632), but this is incorrect.

In another text it says that King Asoka was born in India’s Great Fragrant Flower State within one hundred years of the lifetime of the Buddha.12 In his great zeal to serve the True Buddha he had a certain amount of gold and iron melted down and tried three times to cast an image, but each time the result was unsatisfactory. During this time the King’s eldest son alone failed to show any enthusiasm for the project. When the King had him questioned on the matter, the Crown Prince sent this reply to the throne: “The efforts of a single nation cannot achieve [page 73] success; as I have known this from the beginning I have not joined in your endeavor.” The King, realizing that his son was right, loaded the metals into a ship and set them adrift on the sea. In India alone the ship reached sixteen large states, five hundred medium-sized states, and ten thousand small states. Altogether it drifted ashore eighty thousand times. There was no land to which it did not find its way; all tried to cast the image, but none succeeded. Finally the ship reached the Kingdom of Silla where King Chinhung cast the metals at Muning’s Grove.13 When unmoulded, his statue proved perfect in every detail, and from that point on King Asoka was referred to as the “King without Grief.”

Some time after the casting of the images, the great monk Chajang14 travelled westward to study at China’s Wutai Mountain.15 There he was visited by an incarnation of the bodhisattva Manjusri who instructed him in the mysteries of his religion, then explained to him: “Your nation’s Royal Dragon Monastery is built upon the very spot where Sakyamuni Buddha and Kasyapa Buddha used to teach. For this reason India’s King without Grief gathered together a certain amount of iron and set it adrift on the sea. And for this reason, after the passing of more than one thousand three hundred years, it finally reached your nation where it was cast into an image, then placed in that very monastery. All this has come about because awesome destiny has caused it to be so!”

After the completion of the statues, the three models in the Tong-ch’uk Temple were transferred and also placed in the Royal Dragon Monastery. The records of the monastery say that the Golden Hall was completed in 584, and that Prince T’anhui, a monk, was appointed the first superior of the monastery when Queen Sondok (r. 632-646) ascended the throne. The second superior was Chajang, the National Patriarch, who was succeeded by the National Patriarch Hyehun, who was in turn succeeded by Sangnyul, a monk, and so on.

But now the soldiers have come with their flames; the sixteen-foot Buddha and the two bodhisattvas have melted and disappeared. There is, however, a small image of Sakyamuni still remaining among the ruins. A song of praise says:

“Which is not his true home, of all the myriad places?

And yet immutable destiny has favored our land;

It was not because King Asoka was unequal to his plan

That Buddha came to Wolsong seeking his old traces.”

[page 74] THE NINE-STORY PAGODA OF THE ROYAL DRAGON MONASTERY

In 636, during the reign of Queen Sondok, the twenty-seventh monarch of the Kingdom of Silla, the great monk Chajang travelled westward to study in China. While at Wutai Mountain he received instruction in the law of the Buddha from the bodhisattva Manjusri. Afterward, Manjusri also spoke to him in these terms: “Your nation’s Queen is a monarch who derives from the Ksatriya caste16 of India; she long ago received the mark of the Buddha. Therefore a special fate awaits your nation, one which will not resemble that of the Gong-gongs17 and the other tribes of eastern barbarians. However, because your nation’s mountains are steep and its streams fraught with boiling rapids, your people tend to be coarse and perverse. Many of them believe in pagan spirits, and so at times the gods in heaven send down misfortune upon them. But if there were wise mendicant monks throughout the land, then the Queen and her officers could flourish in security, and peace would reign among the common people.” When he had spoken these words the bodhisattva disappeared, and Chajang, knowing that a transmutation had swept over the great saint, wept tears of blood and withdrew.

Later, in the course of his travels through China, Chajang was passing by the Pool of Great Peace. Suddenly, a divine being rose up out of the water and demanded of him, “Foreigner, why have you come to this place?”

“I have come seeking enlightenment,” Chajang replied.

Thereupon the divine being bowed ceremoniously and questioned him further, “What persisting difficulties hinder the fortunes of your nation?”

“In the north my country shares a border with the Malgal,18 and in the south it extends as far as the isles of the Japanese; Koguryo and Paekche are both repeatedly violating our frontiers. Our neighbors are invading on all sides! This is the thorn in the side of my people.”

The being spoke, “Recently your nation took a woman and made her King. Although she is filled with virtue, she is powerless to inspire fear in her enemies. This is why the neighboring countries are plotting against her. You should return quickly to your country.”

“And what good might I do by returning home?”

“The dragon who guards the sanctity of Buddha at the Royal Dragon Monastery is my eldest son; he received the command of Brahma19 to go [page 75] protect that monastery. When you have returned to your country, build a nine-story pagoda within the monastery compound; the neighboring countries will surrender and submit, the nine tribes of Korea will pay tribute to your Queen, and her royal dignity will be secure forever. After the pagoda has been built, proclaim the Rite of the Eight Gates20 and grant amnesty to offenders; then the foreign invaders will no longer be able to harm you. And finally, you must build a shrine for me on the south bank of the stream in the capital district. If you will all entrust yourselves to my protection, then I will certainly reward your piety.” With these words the divine being brought forth a jade in his hands, presented it to Chajang, then suddenly disappeared and was no longer to be seen.

Early in the spring of 643 Chajang gathered up the scriptures, images, priestly robes, and presents of silk that the Tang emperor had conferred upon him and returned to his country. There he made known to his Queen his mission to build a pagoda. Queen Sondok discussed the matter with an assembly of her officials; the officials declared that only if the master-builder were engaged in Paekche could they give their consent to the project. An architect was accordingly sought in that country, where a builder named Abiji, richly paid in treasures and silks, accepted the appointment and came to Silla to undertake the preparation of the wood and stone. Igan21 Yongch’un oversaw the entire project, directing the efforts of some two hundred artisans.

However, on the day that the erection of the pagoda’s columns was to begin, Abiji saw Paekche, his native country, being destroyed in a dream. Suspicious, he halted construction. Suddenly a great quake began to shake the earth, and in the ensuing darkness and confusion an aged monk and a powerfully built young man came forth from the doorway of the Golden Hall, together erected the columns, then both disappeared and were no longer to be seen. On beholding this marvel the master-builder repented and brought the construction of the pagoda to its completion.

In the records regarding the temple’s columns it is written: “The pagoda measured forty-two feet in height above the iron plate,22 and one hundred and eighty-three feet in height below it.”

Chajang divided into three parts the one hundred ashes from the cremated body of the Buddha which he had received at Wutai Mountain. He placed some of them inside the columns of the pagoda, some of them inside the altar where the novices received their commandments at Tongdo Monastery, and some of them in the pagoda of the Temple of Great Peace, all in order to fulfill the requests of the dragon spirit he had seen by the pool.

[page 76]

After the pagoda was built, heaven and. earth poured forth their riches upon the people of Silla, and the Three Kingdoms of Korea were united under the rule of its sovereign. How could this not have been the result of the pagoda’s magical protection?

Later, when the generals of the King of Koryo were plotting to attack Silla, their King chided them, “Silla possesses three treasures; it cannot be attacked.”

“And what are these three treasures?’

“The Royal Dragon Monastery’s sixteen-foot Buddha and nine-story pagoda, and the jade belt which heaven bestowed on King Chinp’yong.”23 And so the King put an end to their plotting. This case is similar to the one in China where the men of Chu dared not look greedily northward at the lands of Zhou as long as the latter state was in possession of the nine sacred vessels.

A song of praise to the pagoda says:

“With spirits guarding and gods supporting

it suppresses the emperors in their capitals;

Shining, glittering, painted blue and gold,

its rafters seem to fly.

When the queen ascends its lofty heights

why would only the nine tribes bow?

And she will begin to sense the peace

of this special place in the universe.”

We find the same story in the History of the Founding of the Eastern Capital which was compiled by the famous Korean worthy. An Hong: “At the twenty-seventh succession to the throne of Silla a queen was made ruler of the nation. Although she trod the path of virtue she was unable to inspire fear in the neighboring princes, and so the nine tribes of Korea encroached on her territory and troubled her people. If, however, she were to build a nine-story pagoda at the Royal Dragon Monastery which was to the south of her Dragon Palace, then the scourges of the neighboring countries might be warded off. The first story represented Japan, the second China, the third Wu and Yue,24 the fourth the Taknas,25 the fifth the Ungyus,26 the sixth the Malgals, the seventh the Ji-dan Tartars, the eighth the Nu-zhen Tartars, and the ninth the Yemaeks.27

It is written as well in the Samguk Sagi and in old records that were [page 77] in the monastery’s library that King Chinhung founded the monastery in 553, and that the pagoda was later completed in 645 during the reign of Queen Sondok. In the summer of 698 the seventh year of the reign of King Hyoso, the pagoda was damaged by lightning,28 but was restored to its original condition in 720 under King Songdok. It was again struck by lightning in the summer of 868 during the reign of King Kyongmun, and was restored a second time in the same reign. Under the present dynasty,29 it was damaged by lightning in the autumn of 953, the fifth30 year of the reign of King Kwangjong, and was repaired a third time in 1021 under King Hyonjong. Again it was struck in 103531 in the time of King Chong-jong, and again it was restored in 1064 under King Munjong. Struck once more in 109532 under King Honjong, it was restored for the fifth time in 1096 under King Sukchong before invading soldiers in the winter of 1238, the twenty-sixth year of King Kojong, set fires on the Western Hill; the pagoda, the sixteen-foot Buddha, the halls and the galleries all being totally destroyed.

THE BELL OF THE ROYAL DRAGON MONASTERY

In 754, during the reign of the great King Kyongdok, the thirty-fifth monarch of the Kingdom of Silla, a bell was cast for the Royal Dragon Monastery. It was ten feet three inches high, nine inches thick, and weighed 497,581 pounds. It was donated by the King’s consort, Lady Sammo,33 and was the work of a slave of the Isang family. In 756, the year that Su-zong ascended the throne of the Tang empire in China, a new bell—six feet eight inches high—was cast.

NOTES

1. A Buddha of the past. According to the doctrine of some sects of Buddhism, there has been a succession of seven Buddhas who lived at different times. The seventh and most recent of these was Sakyamuni, the historical founder of Buddhism; Kasyapa was the sixth Buddha in the succession.

2. Iryon records that the monk Ado, who introduced Buddhism to Silla, was told by his mother that there were seven places in and around the capital of that kingdom which had been monastery sites in times prior to historical Buddhism, and which would be again when a wise king once again caused Buddhism to flourish in the land.

3. The entire monastery complex was burnt to the ground by invading Mongols in the winter of 1238.

[page 78] 4. At this point the text uses the,expression “yellow dragon,” a term which in Chinese and Korean is identical in pronunciation to “royal dragon.” Although the two terms can be used interchangeably in referring to the monastery and to the dragon for which it was named, the second one predominates, and so I have chosen for the sake of clarity to use it consistently throughout the translation.

5. The Samguk Sagi gives 566 as the date of completion.

6. The modern name is Kokp’o in Ulsan County, on the southeastern coast of Korea.

7. Emperor of India c. 274-232 B.C., Asoka was the first powerful patron of Buddhism and did much to spread its influence beyond the borders of his own empire.

8. A group of three statues, the larger, central one being of Sakyamuni and the two smaller, flanking ones being usually of bodhisattvas. A bodhisattva is a person who has attained buddhahood, but who decides to forego the state of eternal bliss in order to remain on earth to help others―a sort of Buddhist saint.

9. A sixteen foot tall statue of the Buddha. Tradition has it that during the lifetime of Sakyamuni the average Indian was eight feet tall; out of respect, later generations made their images of the Buddha twice that tall. This size was also believed to have the most supernatural power.

10. Commonly called both Kimsong and the Eastern Capital, and dominated by Wolsong Castle, the capital of Silla occupied a site very near that of the present day city of Kyongju.

11. The same incident is related in the Samguk Sagi.

12. The traditional dates for the lifetime of the Buddha are 563-483 B.C. They are subject to dispute.

13. The exact location of this place is no longer known.

14. Clerical name of Kim Sonjong, a monk who went to China in 636 and returned to Korea in 643. He was eventually appointed National Patriarch, a title bestowed by Silla monarchs on the Kingdom’s foremost monk.

15. Located in northeastern Shanxi province, it is one of the four mountains of China which are sacred to Buddhism, and has more than one hundred and fifty monasteries. Manjusri, the bodhisattva of wisdom, is its patron saint.

16. The second, or warrior and ruling caste, of the four main castes of India. It is the caste to which Sakyamuni belonged.

17. A legendary race of barbarians who lived to the northwest of China. With human faces, hands and feet, they had the bodies of snakes and hair like that of pigs, and were considered to be corrupt and stupid.

18. A powerful race of Tungusic peoples who inhabited the area immediately north of Koguryo.

19. The first person of the Brahmanical Trinity, regarded as a minor saint by Buddhists.

20. Originally, and probably still at this time, a Buddhist rite intended to rid the people of the “eight sins” by closing the “eight gates through which temptation might enter them. A festival of the same name flourished under the Koryo dynasty as a winter festival honoring the spirits of nature.

[page 79] 21. A title given to members of the second highest of the eighteen ranks in the Silla aristocracy.

22. The iron plate marks the division between the lower, more substantial levels of a pagoda and its more ornate spire.

23. There exists a legend that when King Chinp’yong ascended the throne of Silla an angel descended into his throneroom and presented him with a jade belt which was the gift of the Heavenly Emperor.

24. Eastern seaboard states of China.

25. The inhabitants of Cheju island.

26. The identity of this tribe seems to have been lost.

27. A tribe which inhabited an area of east-central Korea between Koguryo in the north and Silla in the south.

28. This incident is not recorded in the Samguk Sagi.

29. A change of dynasty occurred in 936, the Silla dynasty being replaced by the Koryo dynasty. But none of the incidents given here as having occurred under the Koryo dynasty, save the pagoda’s final destruction in 1238, is recorded in the Koryo-sa, the official history of the period.

30. In fact it was the fourth year of his reign.

31. The Koryo-sa does mention strong earthquakes for the Kyongju area in this year.

32. The Koryo-sa records an order for the repair of the pagoda rather than a lightning strike for this year.

33. The text is not clear at this point. Four characters — 孝貞伊王 ―, the meaning of which has yet to be satisfactorily explained, appear before the name of Lady Sammo. There may be some corruption in the text.

***See the following page for a glossary of Chinese characters.***

[page 80] GLOSSARY OF CHINESE CHARACTERS

corresponding to proper nouns in the text

Abiji 阿非知 Rite of the Eight Gates

Ado 我 道 (P’algwan Hoe) 八關會

An Hong 安 弘 Royal Dragon Monastery 皇龍寺

Biography of Chajang 慈藏傳 Sakyamuni Buddha 釋迦佛

Chinhung, King 眞興王 Samguk Sagi 二國史記

Chinp’yong, King 眞平王 Samguk Yusa 二國遺事

Chongjong, King 靖宗王 Sammo, Lady 三毛夫人

Chosen Shigaku Kai 朝鮮史學會 Sangnyul 廂 律

Chu (Ch’u) 楚 Sap’o Harbor 絲 浦

Comprehensive Biographies 諸家傳紀 Shanxi (Shensi) 山 西

Gong-gongs 共 工 Silla 新 羅

Hagok County 可曲縣 Songdok, King 聖德王

History of the Founding of the Sondok, Queen 善德王

Eastern Capital 東都成立記 Su Zong (Su Tsung) 肅 宗

Honjong, King 獻宗(憲宗) Sukchong, King 肅 宗

Hyehun 惠 訓 Taknas 托 羅

Hyonjong, King 顯宗(現宗) Tang (T’ang) 唐

Hyoso, King 孝昭王 T’anhui, Prince 眞骨歡喜

Iryon 一 然 Tongch’uk Temple 東竺寺

Isang 里 上 Tongdo Monastery 通度寺

Jade Dragon Collection 玉龍集 Ulsan County 蔚山郡

Ji-dan (Khitan) Tartars (契) 丹 Ungyus 鷹 遊

Kasyapa Buddha 迦葉佛 Wolsong Castle 月 城

Kim Pu-sik 金富軾 Wu 吳

Kim Sonjong 金善宗 Wutai Mountain 五臺山

Kimsong 金 城 Yemaeks 穢 貊

Koguryo 高(句) 麗 Yongch’un, Igan 伊于龍春

Kojong, King 高 宗 Yue (Yueh) 越

Kokp’o 谷 浦 Zhou (Chou) 周

Koryo 高 麗

Koryo-sa 高麗史

Kwanjong, King 光宗

Kyongdok, King 景德王

Kyongmun, King 景文王

Malgal 靺 鞨

Manjusri 文 殊

Muning’s Grove 文仍林

Munjong, King 文 宗

National Patriarch 國 統

Nu-zhen (Nu-chen) Tartars 女狄(女眞)

Paekche 百 濟

“Pagodas and Images” 塔 像

[page 81] **Annual Report of the Korea Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society for 1978**

The Korea Branch of the RAS was founded in 1900 by a small group of foreigners who were concerned with the scholarly investigation of Korea and her neighbors. The Korea Branch of the RAS has grown tremendously into a large society of over 1100 members with meetings in Seoul, Taegu and, beginning this year, Taejon.

*Membership* — As of December 5, 1978, the total membership in the Korea Branch of the RAS reached an all time high of 1172 consisting of 52 life members, 375 overseas members, and 745 local members. During the year, we kept in touch with our overseas members by means of our Quarterly Newsletter and with our local members by our monthly activities notice.

*Meetings* — During 1978 we sponsored 31 meetings (20 in Seoul, 8 in Taegu, and 3 in Taejon). These included 13 slide lectures, five film evenings, four demonstration lectures and, in Taegu, two lecture-tour combinations. Demonstration lectures included a Kayagum performance, Korean Drum rhythms, an acupuncture demonstration, and a maverick Buddhist priest turned artist. Taegu’s lecture tours were to the Kyongbuk University museum and to an acupuncture hospital. A complete listing of meetings follows.

*Tours* ― During the year of the horse we took 1024 persons on 23 tours including six weekend tours and 17 day tours. They included trips to Taech’on beach, two to the ancient capital of Kyongju, Mr. Carl Miller’s Herbarium, and the ever fascinating Kyeryong-san. The annual Garden Party was held at the French Ambassador’s Residence. A detailed listing of our complete tour schedule follows.

*Publications* ― This year we published:

RAS Transaction Vol. 52 . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . $3 for members

I Married a Korean by Agnes Davis Kim . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .$6 for members

Korean Works and Days and Korean Patterns were each reprinted in yet another edition.

*Douglas Fund* — We continue to distribute the Douglas fund.

[page 82] Seoul Meetings

Date Event Attendance

January 4 Film Evening: “Religions of Korea” and 30

“Korean Dance”

January 18 Early Germans and Early Britons in Korea 75

(Dr. H.J. Zaborowski & Mr. W. Morris)

February 1 Korean Birds inDanger 65

(Dr. George Archibald)

February 15 The Buddhist Rag and His Art 200

(Mr. Zozayong & Chung Kwang, “The Rag”)

March 8 Chinoui-kut: Shaman Death Ceremonies 160

(Fr. Daniel Kister S. J.)

March 22 Korean Drum Rhythms 85

(Mr. Gary Rector)

April 12 The Sinan Treasure 110

(Dr. Kim Won Young)

April 26 The History and Practice of Acupuncture 100

(Dr. Kang Sung-keel)

May 10 An Introduction to the Yangju Mask Dance 120

(Dr. Lee Du-hyun)

May 24 The Land of the Rainbow: Color in Korea 130

(Mr. Thomas B. Kass)

June 7 Kayagum Demonstration 120

(Prof. Hwang Byung-ki)

June 21 Films by Humphrey Leynse: “The Legacy” 130

and “Out There: A Lone Island”

August 23 Film Evening: “5000 Years of Korean Art” 100

and “The Kayagum”

September 6 Jack London in Korea 70

(Mr. James Wade)

September 20 Pictorial Journey Through Old Korea 250

(Mr. Robert A. Kinney)

October 11 Neo-Confucianism: The Impulse for Social 90

Action in Early Yi Dynasty Korea

(Dr. Martina Deuchler)

October 25 Kinship System in Korea 70

(Dr. Lee Kwang-kyoo)

November 8 Women in Korean Literature 95

(Ms. Bonnie Crown)

[page 83] November 22 Korean Art Treasures Taken by 130

Hideyoshi to Japanese Soil

(Dr. Jon Covell)

December 13 Korea’s Troubled Alliance with the 85

Chinese During the Japanese Invasions

of the I590’s

(Dr. Gari Ledyard)

Taegu Meetings

January 18 Film Evening: “The Unexplored Orient:

Excavations in Kyongju”

February 15 Film Evening: “Religions of Korea” and

“Traditional Korean Dance”

March 15 The History of Taegu

(Prof. Choung Man-Deog)

April 19 Pictorial Journey Through Ola Korea

(Mr. Robert A. Kinney)

May 17 The Silla Legacy

(Mr. Edward B. Adams)

June 21 Lecture Tour to Jae Han (acupuncture)

Hospital

(Director Pyon, translated by Hwang Kee-sok)

September 27 Historical Slides

(Ms. Eileen Moffett)

November 29 Lecture Tour to Kyongbuk University Museum

(Dr. Kim Young Ha, Director)

Taejon Meetings

September 29 Historical Slides

(Dr. Samuel H. Moffett)

October 27 From Hong Kong to Bonn by Train

(Dr. Karl Leuteritz)

November 17 Pictorial Journey Through Old Korea

(Mr. Robert A. Kinney)

[page 84] 1978 Tours

Date Place Participants

January 27-29 Kyongju 14

April 1 University Museum 30

April 7-9 Haein-sa & Taegu Area 31

April 15 Yoju 39

April 22 North Han River Valley 98

May 6 Kanghwa-do 38

May 13 Kyeryong-san 31

May 20 Wolchong-sa & Odae-san 28

June 3 Yongwol 22

June 10-11 Ch’ollip’o Beach & Mr. Miller’s Arboretum 10

June l7 Annual Garden Party 220

June 24 Pulgogi on the Han 60

August 26-28 Taech’on Beach “Get away” Tour 27

September 2 Chong p’yong Boat Trip 38

September 9 Paju Miruk & Pogwang-sa 31

September 23 Puyo, Unjin Miruk & Kongju 76

October 7-9 Andong & Pusok-sa 22

October 14 Kyeryong- san 37

October 21 Pukhan-sansong Hiking Tour 23

October 28 Sudok-sa,Haemi & Hongsong 23

November 4-5 Kyongju & Tongdo-sa 21

November 11 Popchu-sa & Songni-san 41

November 18 Magok-sa 64

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