



TRANSACTIONS

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ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY

KOREA BRANCH

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A Modern Korean *Pilgrim's Progress*

by Brother Anthony
(An Sonjae)

The Buddhist Transformation of Silla Kingship:
Buddha as a King and King as a Buddha

by N.M. Pankaj

The Origins of the British Museum's Korean Collection

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Remembering the Forgotten War:
Anglo-American Scholarship on
the Korean Conflict

by Allan R. Millett

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Ko Un's *Hwaom-kyong*:
A Modern Korean *Pilgrim's Progress*

by Brother Anthony (An Sonjae)

What follows are the opening lines of *Hwaom-kyong*, a Korean novel I have translated but that has not yet been published:

The river was beginning to loom into view beyond a cluster of rose hibiscus trees that hung in a kind of drunken stupor; it flowed onwards hurriedly in the early morning light, the sound of its rippling subdued. For little Sudhana, that glimpse of the river was his first awareness of the world.

"He's coming back to life ... he's alive!" Majushri rejoiced. The child had been rescued the evening before, as he came floating close to the river bank; all night long the aged pilgrim had kept watch beside him on the sandy shore of the vast triangular reach where the Son united with another river before flowing down to join the Ganges.

"The world's all dark. The Himalaya's snowy peaks have died!" Sudhana murmured, gazing towards the river in the dim light of early dawn. Manjushri's companions were rolling up the tents of their little encampment.

"This little fellow knows all about snowy peaks! Ha ha, mountains dying Who ever heard of such a thing?" Asvajit asked, quite mechanically; Asvajit stood out among the disciples accompanying the holy man by his habit of always asking questions, even when there was nothing to ask questions about.

The bodhisattva Manjushri stayed silent for a moment, then replied.

"A child knows everything, as a river at dawn knows everything; the reeds and trees along the banks of the Son know that the far-off Himalayas are dark; to know one grain of the sand on this shore is to know the whole universe...."

He spoke in a low voice, not wanting to trouble the river's murmur.

"Child! Your eyes are open! you've come back to life, you're alive!"

"I've seen you somewhere before, grandad, haven't I?" Sudhana's voice rang with the pure tones of dew pearling in mango flowers at day-break. Manjushri nodded, as if to suggest that they had surely shared an abundance of times together in past lives. (...)

"Grandad, I want to go home. There's plenty to eat there, and lots of slaves, and elephants to ride on. Where am I?"

The old man had an inner vision of Sudhana's house. First he saw a palatial mansion built of stone blocks carted down from mountain quarries, filled with every kind of treasure; then it turned into a heap of smoking rubble. Such was the knowledge he gained from his serene meditation. He opened his eyes and the vision faded, giving place to Sudhana's face.

"No," he said, "there's no call for you to go back there. I'll show you the way you must go." He pulled him to his feet. Only a moment before, Sudhana had looked as though he could barely stagger, yet now, astonishingly, he had regained his full health and strength. Manjushri rejoiced again.

Just then, Asvajit and others came to propose that Sudhana should join their company, but the master would not allow that, although Sudhana longed to stay with his new companions.

"No, it wouldn't do. Look at that old sal tree branch. In a mysterious manner, that branch is showing you the way. That is the way you must go, Sudhana. I have other work to do."

The Sage bowed towards the tree with joined hands, then gave Sudhana a gentle shove in the back, as if pushing a boat off from the shore. Morning broke, and Sudhana the orphan found himself alone in the world.

Go. Don't you see that branch pointing the way?

As trees know the past, and tremble in the wind,

Each one knows which way to follow, their branches stretch.

The novel's title in Korean is *Hwaom-kyong*; the huge Buddhist scripture called in Sanskrit *Avatamsaka Sutra* is known in China as the *Hua-yen* and in Korea as *Hwaom-kyong*. Whatever name we use, it will hardly be familiar to Western people who are not well versed in Buddhism. Even among Korean Buddhists, it is a book that few have read and it is generally considered to be extremely difficult as well as very long. Recently translated into English by Thomas Cleary (published by Shambhala 1993) with the title "The Flower

Ornament Scripture," its complete name means "The Teaching of the Garland of Buddhas" and its final, thirty-ninth section, which is really an independent Scripture called the *Gandavyuha* or *Entry into the Realm of Reality*, tells the story of a child's pilgrimage in search of the Wisdom that brings enlightenment. Young Sudhana encounters fifty-three teachers from whom he receives instruction. These teachers are not all conventional holy men and monks, they include several women of various social levels and people involved in worldly activities.

The Korean poet and writer Ko Un was a Buddhist monk for ten years in the 1950s. During that time an old monk suggested that he should write about Sudhana's journey. He left the monastic life in 1960, but he continued to write. He began to publish the story in installments in a magazine and had reached the middle of Sudhana's pilgrimage before life took him in other directions. In the 1970s his main concern was with social issues, he was a leading spokesman for dissident writers, he was often arrested. In the later 1980s, now married and recognized as a leading poet and writer, he returned to the task and to a closer relationship with the world of Buddhism. The completed novel was published in 1991. Ko Un has said that the child's pilgrimage his novel relates is a reflection of his own life's journey. In recent years, Ko Un has not only published this novel, he has also written a series of short Son (Zen) poems, and begun to publish a huge series of novels on the development of Son (Zen) Buddhism in China.

It has long been recognized that the *Avatamsaka* has played an extraordinarily important role in the development of Far Eastern Buddhism since its introduction into China at the start of the modern era, when it underwent various translations in multiple versions. In Buddhist tradition, the *Avatamsaka*'s entire contents are said to derive from a series of sermons preached either by the historical Buddha, Gautama, or (according to Ko Un's 59th chapter) by his disciple the bodhisattva Samantabhadra, in various locations, both earthly and heavenly. In the course of his novel, Ko Un refers to this tradition and to the problem posed by the difference in contents and style between this and other, simpler scriptures which also claim to transmit the teachings of the Buddha; one solution proposed is that the Buddha preached the *Avatamsaka* early in his teaching, realized that the contents were too difficult for people and preached the other scriptures at a level better adapted to their capacities. The *Avatamsaka* remained hidden until the time came when a few people could understand its contents.

Modern secular scholarship naturally discounts this kind of legend and prefers to see the *Avatamsaka* as an encyclopedic compilation of a whole

series of originally independent works of high philosophy and spirituality, culminating in the story of Sudhana's pilgrimage. The first Chinese translation of a fairly full version of the *Avatamsaka* was done under the direction of an Indian monk, Buddhahadra (359-429); later a translation of a longer version was directed by a Khotanese monk, Shikshananda (652-710). Much of the original Sanskrit or Pali text has since then been lost. The powerful vision of the work inspired a vast school of philosophical Buddhism in China, the *Huayen* school, and was equally important in the development of *Ch'an* (Son/Zen).

The dramatic potential inherent in the story of Sudhana's journey has long been recognized. In contrast to other scriptures or other parts of the *Avatamsaka*, something human happens in these pages, a child meets individual people with specified names and occupations. Above all, it is striking, not to say revolutionary, that the enlightened wisdom that Sudhana finds in them is not the monopoly of monks and recognized teachers. However, the immense philosophical discourses which Sudhana's initial question provokes each time are not very exciting or accessible and there is no development of the potential for dialogue inherent in the structure. Sudhana listens, says thank you, and is directed to his next teacher.

Ko Un's novel takes very little of its actual contents from the *Avatamsaka*, beyond the bare structure of the fifty-three encounters with people who often, though not always, have the same names as in the scriptural story and who sometimes live in places with the same name. There are also encounters with people who do not count among the fifty-three, to say nothing of a talking elephant. The encounters in the novel rarely lead to prolonged discussions of abstruse philosophy; exactly what Sudhana learns is often not made explicit at all. The story is set in India at the time of the historical Buddha, divided into many warring states. The work evokes the Buddhist reaction to the caste-system and at times suggests a Buddhist Utopian society. As in the original Sutra, the text frequently passes into poetry in order to transcend the limits of mere factuality. The presence of so many poems gives the story much greater intensity.

It is not easy to summarize the central message of the Buddhist *Avatamsaka Sutra*. One of its central concerns is the universal potential that, according to its form of Buddhist vision, exists everywhere for what is usually known as enlightening or awakening. Only since this enlightening is what characterizes the nature of a Buddha, and since the potential is present everywhere once there is any trace of enlightened compassion, every sentient being is potentially Buddha. This opens the way to an immense vision of unity and equality. There is "The Buddha" but at the same time there are "all the bud-

dhas," not just a few special beings but an innumerable host. Every being and every atom of every being is full of potential buddhahood.

The historical Buddha known as Shakyamuni plays virtually no role in this vision of reality; beyond and in the illusory nature of things buddhahood is everywhere latent. Time or history are not important since buddhahood is not attained by any techniques or cause-and-effect processes. The key question that the scriptural Sudhana keeps asking is "how?" yet all the replies he gets tend to suggest that it is not a matter of doing but of seeing: "I seek the practice of *bodhisattva*. Please tell me how to learn the practice of *bodhisattva*, how to orient myself to the disciplines that will perfect all sentient beings while I am learning, how to see all buddhas...." The English language has no word able to translate the term "bodhisattva" which is central to the *Avatamsaka*. Cleary uses the phrase "enlightening beings" but on the whole I find it confusing and prefer to use the Sanskrit word.

One of the main features characterizing the bodhisattva, the person in whom the wisdom and will leading to awakening exist, and have already born fruit, is a concern for the good of all other beings. That in turn leads us to consider the Buddhist response to pain and suffering, which is not very similar to any of the responses known in the West since it leads to a recognition of the illusory nature or emptiness of all sensory awareness and of "reality" itself.

For Ko Un, this aspect of the work must have been of great importance since his life's vision is deeply marked by social commitment and concrete concern for the common good. He knows that Buddhism has often been criticized as encouraging self-centeredness; he himself turned away from all religious dimensions for many years with similar feelings. If he returned to work on the novel, it was in part because he found that the central vision of the *Avatamsaka Sutra* includes a strong call to altruism, life-for-others.

In contrast, an important aspect of the Sutra that is given less development by Ko Un is what might be termed the "mystical" theme of the interpenetration, the interdependence and oneness, of all things. This reaches its climax in the *Avatamsaka* nearly at the end of the pilgrimage, when Sudhana meets the future world-Buddha Maitreya outside a great tower, the chamber of the adornments of Vairochana, the illuminator. Together they enter the tower:

He saw the tower immensely vast and wide, hundreds of thousands of leagues wide, as measureless as the sky, as vast as all of space, adorned with countless attributes; countless canopies, banners, pennants, jewels, garlands of pearls and gems.... Inside the great tower he saw hundreds of thousands of other towers similarly arrayed; he saw those towers as

infinitely vast as space, evenly arrayed in all directions, yet those towers were not mixed up with one another, being each mutually distinct, while appearing reflected in each and every object of all the other towers... by the power of Maitreya, Sudhana perceived himself in all of those towers....

Not surprisingly, the cosmic vision of the *Avatamsaka* appeals to mathematicians and astrophysicists. In particular, it is striking to find such an ancient work intensely aware of the immensely vast dimensions of the universe, and of the molecular tininess of its component parts. The scripture employs both the vastness and the minuteness of things: "In a single atom (bodhisattvas) see all worlds.... In every single atom are all things of all places and times." In the West, there is a somewhat similar pattern in the Platonic notion of microcosm and macrocosm, where each distinct concrete reality here is seen as the reflection of an eternal *Idea*; but in the traditional image of Indra's Net or of the tower of Vairochana, everything is a reflection of everything and contains everything while remaining itself, and there is no absolute reality giving origin and form to contingent realities.

For a novelist, whose raw material is mostly the difference between individual persons and places, it is not going to be very helpful or interesting to declare that "each thing is everything, each moment is every moment, each being is all beings." There is, however, an important influence on Ko Un deriving from these perspectives; his novel is not a *Bildungsroman* in the usual Western sense, indeed it is not quite sure that it should be considered a "novel" in the normal sense at all. For there is virtually no sense of growth and development in the central character as one encounter follows another. Sudhana is never felt to get any older or any cleverer, humanly speaking, in the course of his vast pilgrimage which happens without any clear time-scheme being established. He is always simply himself, a child.

It is only near the end of Ko Un's work that the narrator looks back over Sudhana's travels and explains that he has gone through various traditionally recognized stages in the passage towards awakening. One of the challenges to the novel as a literary form that Ko Un cannot avoid is the fact that the Buddhist vision of the nature of things almost denies the reality of progress and the possibility of ending. Another challenge is that the deeply philosophical Buddhism of the *Avatamsaka* tradition does not lend itself to simplification.

As a result, the last third of the novel grows increasingly burdened with a technical Buddhist vocabulary of considerable difficulty. Yet the main narrative is quite simple, indeed almost austere. Like the Sutra itself, Ko Un maintains a separation between Sudhana and the historical Buddha although the

two are considered to be living in the same moment of time and on the same Indian subcontinent. They are destined never to meet. If all are potentially Buddha, no one Buddha stands above the rest as The Buddha. This kind of Buddhism lays little stress on the specificity of the historical Buddha.

Ko Un's poetry often depends for its effect on a cumulative effect. He has published a series of nine volumes with the overall title *Maninbo* "Ten Thousand Lives," containing hundreds of short poems in which he tries to record all the individuals who have left a mark in his memory and in his life. If his plan materializes he will continue this series. He writes about those who are usually considered insignificant people: children who died or were killed, village women whose only task was housekeeping, about farmers and layabouts, a host of figures. He is convinced that the only true history of Korea is a collective history paying attention to each of these, not the usual "history book" picture of famous men, important politicians and such.

The same happens in the *Avatamsaka Sutra* itself, with its pages of repetitions, of lists and cumulative imagery. This is no simple allegory of the moral and spiritual challenges of ordinary people's daily life like the Pilgrim's Progress told by Bunyan, and yet it is a tale evoking a great variety of lives in a multiplicity of styles. To read a few sections is the only option available, but it is not the way this work ought to be read, and we really need to pursue our path through its lengthy text like Sudhana, nearly dropping with fatigue under the blazing sun, unsure if there is anything ahead of us waiting to be found, or not.

Because the novel was written over nearly twenty years, at different stages of the author's career, its style and its main concerns vary greatly. The early sections are lyrical, set in a delightful fantasy world. The central chapters develop more directly social themes, such as the need for the rich to free themselves of their accumulated wealth, the democratic nature of good government, the need to abolish dictatorships. Towards the end, Ko Un introduces more and more explicit Buddhist terminology, not only the cosmological system with its multiple systems of heavens and worlds but also the traditional stages of the enlightening life.

Many Koreans think of Ko Un as a "dangerous radical" and some even call him a "Leftist" yet the contents of *Hwaom-kyong* show him telling tales far removed from ideology and often very close to the idealism of St Luke's Gospel. For a long time in the second half of the story, the characters that Sudhana meets are not human beings at all, but spirits of the night and spirits of the underworld, to say nothing of heavenly beings. Their messages are sometimes very much more pragmatic than is usual in Buddhism, about feeding the

hungry and sharing wealth, for example. But always as a way of practicing compassion (Chapter 41).

Then the spirit of darkness began to tell Sudhana stories about its past lives, as if it were Sudhana's father or uncle.

They had been standing, but at a given moment they sat down on the ground at the foot of a centuries-old anantha tree. It was impossible to tell which sat first, they had grown so close in their relationship, teller and listener.

"Long, long ago, many many ages before this present world, I was a young girl. I met that world's bodhisattva Samatabhadra and at his encouragement went to visit someone. In order to provide a lotus-flower throne for Sariputra to sit on, I offered up the *keyura* necklace that hung around my neck. It had been passed on to me by my mother. She had it from her mother, who had it from hers ... and so it was passed on to me. It was something that I was expected to pass on to my daughter, only I gave it up for Sariputra's throne."

"Divine spirit, most sacred teacher."

"Listen further. Thanks to that necklace, I established firm roots of good karma merit, I was able to get free for ever from the effects of evil karma. I was reborn in the heavens, as well as on earth, always enjoying a comfortable life; I was able to become a ruler, a leading citizen ... but naturally I could not help asking myself if it was right to become a ruler or heavenly spirit by virtue of good merit. I only had to say one word, I received at once whatever I wanted; if I spoke, condemned criminals were granted their lives; even seconds before they were to be executed. All the people considered my rule to be blessed and bowed down towards me three times or more every day. The treasures of mountains and oceans were offered before me. My subjects went so far as to say that the food they ate, the clothes they wore, their houses too, were all effects of my gracious rule. I was indeed a sovereign the whole world looked up to. And yet...."

Jahshri broke off the tale and began to sing in a low voice,

Bliss enjoyed in this world is the fruit
Of ten thousand people's ten thousand suffering lives.
Henceforth I will become a beggar
Become a joy filling a moment in ten thousand lives
Will flow as a spring in the early dawn.

When the spirit of darkness had finished singing, it took the fruit it had been holding, broke it in half, and the two of them ate together. The fruit was both sour and sweet. These were paru fruits, only a few of which ripen on each tree. His hunger abated.

They rose from where they had been sitting at the foot of the anantha tree and started to stroll slowly through the shady forest clearings. Jahshri began to reminisce again, whether continuing the previous tale or starting a new thread was hard to tell. Sudhana came to feel close to Jahshri, as if he had penetrated the spirit's heart. Was one now two? Or were two now one?

"I came to a decision. Late one night I resolved that henceforth I would not be served, I would become a servant. To follow that path, I left the palace.... I had scarcely begun to travel before I fell ill and only survived thanks to the help of one humble fellow, then I became a slave of the warrior caste as that fellow was until, after more than ten years as a slave, I and several others of the same humble class escaped from a nobleman's slave camp and went to live in mountains that were covered with eternal snows.

"During those ten years of life as a slave, I came to see clearly how wrong this world's system of wealth and honour is, I got to know many poor people who were crushed with countless torments so that the rich and powerful could flourish. What then were the so-called roots of the good karma I had received? What was the sense of my offering up that precious necklace? What was the throne of Sariputra? What was my good karma merit?

"I wandered through the mountain, pondering those questions, until I found myself separated from those I had run away with. I got lost while I was out looking for something to eat, and could not find the way back. For three days I wandered through the trees and shrubs of that mountain's valleys, until I glimpsed a kite hovering in the sky visible between the trees; I walked in the direction it was flying towards and arrived at a mountain village of the Allia tribe. There I met the gentlest people in the world, and there I met one old man from whom I heard talk of many Buddhas."

As the spirit continued this tale, it would sometimes break off and sing.

The old man left that place with her and went to where the Buddha lived in company with a large number of other Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and disciples. There she became a disciple and attended the Buddha with great devotion. The doubt nagging at her gradually eased, and she sensed that she was turning back into the girl she had been before. Before offering up the necklace, that is. All she lacked was the *keyura* necklace that had been a family heirloom for so many generations. There was no way she could know that the necklace was buried deep in the mud at the roots of a lotus that was blooming in a pond not far from the throne occupied by the Buddha of that place. The necklace she had offered had summoned her. Her ignorance of the fact was a credit to her virginal purity.

One young girl
Had a necklace, a family heirloom.
That *keyura* necklace she offered up
For a lotus pedestal.

A merchant received that necklace,
Exchanged it for the pedestal's stone slab
And it became the stone-mason's daughter's
Only she soon left this world.

The now ownerless necklace
Following its previous owner's intention
Found itself thrown into a lotus pond
Where a lovely lotus grew.

Tangled among the lotus roots
Long sunk in that watery filth
Though hidden in a gloomy cesspool
It summoned its former owner.

Then the story continued. The girl visited many other places inhabited by Buddhas and bodhisattvas, no less than five hundred places in all, meeting Buddhas and bodhisattvas, disciples and pilgrims of every caste. She drew water for them to wash with, in exchange for something to eat, and took care of them when they were sick.

Nobody knew where she got the strength from, she worked so hard. She received high praise from Buddhas and bodhisattvas alike. At the four hundred and ninety-fifty station on her pilgrimage, she was praised in the words, "Her vow made in a previous life began with the sage Samatabhadra and today has become a great river." There they knew that her existence had been marked by an encounter with the bodhisattva Samatabhadra.

At once she left her tasks within the shrine and went to join the humble folk outside, sharing their poverty and disease, their ignorance, and their violence. Out there she tried to discourage one gangster, he raped her and after that she passed from one man to another, ending up in a bar.

There she enchanted everyone with her sad songs and beautiful dances. It was said that she could raise a nation up and bring a nation down by her songs.

The five hundredth station was in a forest grove not far away from that bar and one day she went to visit the Buddha there with the bar owner and his family. On arrival, she offered her songs and dances at a party to welcome the gathered company, in the presence of a host of Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and

disciples.

Delighted by her performance, the Buddha sent out a ray of light to her. Receiving the light, she became a goddess more beautiful than any hitherto seen, and enjoyed the Buddha's love.

Ah, such bliss.

Bliss nothing can surpass

Receiving Buddha's light

Receiving Buddha's love

Bliss nothing can surpass above

Bliss nothing can surpass below

This body born and dying a trillion times

One lotus blossom.

It is important to notice what happens at the end of Ko Un's work. In Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, the main character Christian comes to the gates of the Heavenly Jerusalem; the sense is that every journey, every human life has a goal and an ending. "Journey's end in lovers' meeting" as Shakespeare's song puts it, even if here the lover is God. Very many novels end in lovers' meeting; Western lives end in a tomb; the West is unconsciously but deeply apocalyptic in its vision of time. There is to be an end, which beyond death is expressed in Christianity as Heaven, union with the Eternal (usually called God) who is believed to be the origin and unending fulfillment of all that ever has been.

In Buddhism, as in modern astrophysics, there is not the same form of end proposed and this might even help explain why Buddhism did not develop the narrative form so popular in the West: there is no end, yet you cannot have an endless book. So when we reach the last page of Ko Un's tale of Sudhana's pilgrimage, we are not surprised to find there is no end but instead a new beginning. If Sudhana has indeed attained bodhisattva enlightening, and there is no way anyone can be quite sure about that, it does not give him any kind of privilege. He has not in any sense "made it" and he will have to continue living even if he dies since it is in the nature of "enlightening beings" to remain turned towards those still caught in the sufferings of the illusory world.

On the first day, or was it the second, of his journey through the forest, he came across a little boy. He was about ten years old, and he was crying.

As soon as Sudhana asked why he was crying, the answer came:

"My mother died a while ago."

Asking just how long ago she had died, he intended to suggest they pray for her repose. He thought the prayers for her repose would bring comfort to

the child.

The crying stopped the time it took to repeat, "a while ago."

Once again Sudhana asked:

"Yesterday? Or the day before?"

The child replied he didn't know exactly, but about ten years ago. Sudhana was taken aback. Then from within his heart, like a sudden slap on the knees, glee came surging up.

That was it. It was characteristic of the people of India that when they said, "just here," they might mean anything up to a million leagues away, while "a little while ago" might mean ten years or it might signify several hundred aeons. For them, time meant primeval time, while time taken without the cosmic realities of primeval time was nothing more than the foam left by the waves that come crashing onto a sandy shore.

Surely that is the unfolding of the cosmos of empty eternity, the coming into being of ten infinities of cosmos and selfhood.

Among all the teachers Sudhana had met, there had been one woman called Gopa. She had talked about her past to Sudhana. Mother and daughter were both whores and because they thought their bodies belonged to all men, a prince's suit had been rejected, on the grounds that such a woman could never become just one man's wife. Notwithstanding, the prince had made a strong appeal, determined to take that beautiful whore to be his wife. Gopa's tale had ended without any mention of the prince's appeal, but Sudhana had guessed what had been omitted.

That was it. The little bodhisattva Sudhana would visit many places in the world, appealing for love. Thus he would attain the gateway of universal union where subjective and objective, active and passive fuse into one, entering by force into unrestricted freedom in the Flower Garland Dharma Realm where the particular and the general, the general and the particular, active and passive, passive and active alternately fuse together and part again.

Yet whether at this high level or at the most basic level, the principle of the identity of differences which establishes unity between different natures is always the same. For unless the resplendent Flower Garland is seen at one and the same time as a madman's ravings and a Buddha's *samadhi*, there is nothing but hell implacably waiting there.

The little traveller and the weeping child emerged from the depths of the forest and headed together for the harbour.

"Come on, let's be off."

What has finished is the story of Sudhana's meetings with fifty-three masters, a story that had been related in the preaching of the *Avatamsaka* even

before Sudhana was born! Sudhana is now free, since the essence of awakening is that it is a liberation from all determinisms, and he can go where he will. The bodhisattva's place is not on a podium in a temple or a university, though it may sometimes be there too, but buried deep in the living fabric of suffering humanity. The bodhisattva needs no teachers, needs indeed nobody, but has chosen to be there, embodying the great Compassion wherever life leads, for anyone that life sets on the path. For Sudhana, the story is over; life can begin.

The Buddhist Transformation of Silla Kingship: Buddha as a King and King as a Buddha*

by N. M. Pankaj

The spread of Buddhism beyond the borders of India represents one of the most fascinating chapters of human civilisation, for wherever Buddhism dug its roots it redefined the entire repertoire of human experiences. There is a broad spectrum of innovative researches available in the English language on the changes that Buddhism effected in the cosmology of China and Japan. Hu Shih was one of the pioneer scholars to investigate the Buddhist transformation of China, but constrained as his inquiry was by the political agenda articulated eloquently during the May Fourth era he denounced Buddhism as a bane of China's evils and advocated a speedy exorcising of his country from the Indian cultural influence.¹ Later Eric Zurcher,² Arthur Wright³ and Kenneth Ch'en⁴ made a careful study of the process of Sinicisation of Chinese Buddhism, and offered a comprehensive perspective on the interplay between Buddhism and various facets of Chinese life. In the Japanese context as well several scholars including M. W. De Visser,⁵ J. M. Kamstra,⁶ and Joseph Kitagawa⁷ focussed on some aspects of the social and political role of Buddhism. However, no serious and substantial attempt has been made in the English-speaking world to examine the social and political dimensions of Buddhism in the early history of Korea. A short article by S. Keel (Keel Hee-Sung),⁸ English translations of two relevant papers of Ki-baik Lee⁹ and a very informed essay by Robert E. Buswell¹⁰ which forms the introductory chapter of his Complete Works of Chinul shed some light on the theme, but they are chiefly important

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as reminders of the lacuna in our scholarship of the history of early Korean Buddhism.

This paper seeks to understand the initial phase of transformation that Korea underwent when it came into contact with Buddhism, but its scope is limited as it focuses on Silla kingship in the era prior to the peninsular conquest in 667. Central concerns of the paper are: what constituted the historical context of the intersection of religious practices and political strategies; second, in what forms the rhetoric and ritual of Buddhist kingship were articulated; and finally, what political purposes they served. There are two basic considerations behind my choice of Silla. First, as Silla erased its two rivals on the peninsula, Koguryo and Paekche, it was broadly the spirit of Silla Buddhism which was transmitted to later generations and became instrumental in shaping the future course of development of Korean Buddhism. Silla, therefore, constitutes the firm foundation on which the edifice of Korean Buddhism stood, and is crucial to a holistic understanding of Korean Buddhism. Secondly, materials on Silla are more abundant than those on Koguryō and Paekche, enabling us to go beyond a sketchy and speculative treatment of the topic. Before we deal with the Buddhist transformations, it is essential, however, to describe social and political challenges that the Silla monarchy faced in the early sixth century, and to refer as well to inadequacies of the indigenous spirit-cult and the related religious beliefs of the times in responding to them. It was in fact the political developments of the times and the corresponding inadequacy of the native religious faith which compelled the Silla monarchy to patronise and promote Buddhism.

A feature of the political structure of Silla was the "Hwabaek,"¹¹ the Council of Nobles, which wielded immense political power, and arbitrated important political issues of the times on the principle of unanimity. The title "wang" was not a monopoly of the ruler, but was used by all the members of the council. In the Yong'il Naengsuri inscription believed to be dated 503 A. D. members of the Hwabaek are referred as *wang* (king). It says, "The seven kings jointly discussed it."¹² The system was reminiscent of the Sakya and Liccavi, the tribal republics of ancient India which existed at the time of the Buddha. These republics were ruled by powerful families who commonly bore the title of *rajan* (kings). In a political system which is but a confederation of pluralistic clan-centered units policy decisions can be mandatory and can have a uniform appeal only if they are based on consensus. This political structure meant that the Silla king was not an absolute ruler of a centralised monarchy, but just *primus inter pares*, one whose authority was under constant check by the powerful aristocracy.¹³ But political and social developments of the times

were undermining the relevance of some of these primitive institutional arrangements. As early as 433 A. D. when Silla's simmering conflict with Koguryŏ threatened to explode into military skirmishes and the attendant loss of territory at its border, it played an adroit game and concluded an alliance with Paekche. Reorganisation of *yuk pu* (six clan communities) into administrative districts was a first major step in the direction of a centralised monarchical structure. The gradually increasing belligerence of Koguryŏ and fragilities with Paekche made the existence of Silla more precarious. Silla had to grope for ways to strengthen its institutions. In 503 a standard way of writing the name of Silla in Chinese characters was adopted. The characters chosen *Sin* (new) and *ra* (net), taken from Silla's self-confident motto: Virtuous deeds daily reNEWed/NET gathered in four directions.¹⁴ Again at the turn of the century the native title *maripkan*, meaning chieftain,¹⁵ was discarded in favor of the Chinese word *wang*, meaning king, a significant change indeed, representing Silla's wish to embrace continental ideas of the strong monarchical state. Silla wanted to "modernise" its institutions to face domestic as well as external challenges.

As regards religiously articulated rituals of the royalty, they were centered on ancestor-worship. Originally sacrifices were offered to the shrine of Hyŏkkŏse, the supposed founding king of Silla believed to have descended from Heaven. In the beginning of the sixth century the *Shinkung* (Divine Palace) was constructed at Naul, a place where Hyŏkkŏse was supposed to have descended from heaven. Sacrifices and ancestor-worship had no doubt their own functions in the early Silla society, but they lacked universal appeal, and their limitations must have become apparent when advanced continental ideas and institutions were imported, and territories of Paekche and Koguryŏ were brought under the Silla sway. As Hyŏkkŏse was not directly related to the ancestral lines of the people of the other two kingdoms on the peninsula, they may not have been susceptible to the political overtones of Sinkung sacrifices offered to the founder-ruler of Silla. This was a period in which traditional institutions were breaking down. Use of iron technology, launching of irrigation projects and plowing of fields by oxen led to an intensive agriculture which in turn brought about massive social and economic changes in Silla. Surplus production gave rise to urban centres and growth in the network of trade.¹⁶

But in the process a section of people could well have been dislocated from their traditional social anchorages and the contemporary religious ideology which gave cohesion and coherence to life in the "Pu"-centered society. In other words, disintegration of the traditional clan-based political organisation

and emergence of a new monolithic and bureaucratic structure of the state necessitated the adoption of an ideology with a universal orientation and values. Koguryō Buddhism had already penetrated into Silla during the reign of Nulchi Maripkan (417-458 A.D.),¹⁷ and the refurbished form of Buddhism emphasising magic, miracles and worldly prosperity¹⁸ which prevailed in Koguryō must have appeared very attractive to the Silla monarchy. The Buddhism which was disseminated into Silla via Koguryō was not Han Buddhism, but “Silk Road Buddhism” as Lewis Lancaster calls it,¹⁹ and which made its way into the northern kingdoms of pre-Sui dynasty China. Non-Han rulers of the North patronised such legendary monks as Fo T’u t’eng and Tao An, whose miraculous powers have been described in detail in the *Kao-seng chuan* (Biographies of Eminent Monks). They were said to possess powers of rain-making and healing seemingly incurable diseases, and they were consulted even on important state matters because of their knowledge of secular arts and sciences. The non-Han rulers invoked the ideals of Cakravarti, the Buddhist concept of universal ruler, subordinated Buddhism to the interest of the nation, gave great authority to the belief in the Maitreya’s descent on the earth for the peace and prosperity of mankind and embroidered Buddhism into their indigenous pattern of beliefs such as ancestor-worship by employing Buddhist rituals for sacralisation of their ancestors. It is apparent that such a system of belief could be woven into the texture of the extant faith; at the same time it could be used to reinforce the aggressive monarchy.

In the fifth century a major adaptation was made by the Northern Wei in the institutional premise of Buddhism which appears to have enhanced its usefulness for the Silla kingship. Rulers were accorded the sacred status of Buddha. Wei-shu records that the influential monk Fa Kuo used to say, “Emperor T’ai-tsu is enlightened and likes the Buddha dharma. He is the Tathagata of today. Monks must and should pay him obeisance.” Since monk Fa Kuo equated the ruler of his times with the Buddha, he argued that “he was not paying homage to the Emperor, he was merely worshipping the Buddha.”²⁰ The same historical text also records that in A.D. 454 the Wei emperor Kao-tsu issued an imperial edict to cast Buddhist statues in the likeness of the five present and past emperors commencing from T’ai-tsu Tao Wu-ti.²¹ Silla’s own tradition of kingship was compatible with such a “caesaro-papal”²² tradition of Buddhist kingship in North China. Rulers of Silla once assumed the role of “shaman kings,” as is demonstrated both by the primitive title for Silla king *ch’ach’aung*, meaning shaman, and the antler-shaped Silla crown, resembling the headgear of Siberian shamans. Moreover, rulers of Silla presided over both the sacred and profane domains through history. This was not the case in the

Han tradition where an emperor, as Arthur Wright has rightly put it, was a *Mahadanapati*,²³ a generous benefactor and not an overlord of sangha. In the south monks did not bow to emperors and Sangha wielded 'extraterritorial' authority which culminated during the reign of Emperor Liang Wu-ti. The emperor gave himself three times to the sangha as a hostage and was ransomed again at a great financial loss to the state and equally great gain to the Sangha. Thus the Buddhism that developed under Silla was so closely allied to the monarchy that it is popularly known as nation-protecting Buddhism (*Hoguk Pulgyo*). Buddhism informed and penetrated the polity of Silla and inspired a national consensus for peace at home and victory beyond the border. The fact that protection of the nation was the most significant function of Silla Buddhism can be amply attested by the contemporary epigraphic sources as well. A votive inscription on a Buddhist icon of the Silla period dated 673 is dedicated to the ruling king, great ministers and deceased parents and ancestors of the seven generations of its sponsors.²⁴ Other important evidence which can be cited to substantiate the nation-protecting character of Silla Buddhism are writings of the 9th century scholar Ch'oe Ch'iwon. In the Record of the Manjusri Stupa at Haein Monastery he wrote, "Protection of the State generally forms the core of the Buddhist path of the vow-wheel, whose other function is to save the souls of those who have died resentfully and violently."²⁵ At another place (Chijŭng taesa pi), he wrote in an ornate style, "An official was martyred, monarchs took monastic vows, our monks travelled East, foreign monks visited our land, enemies were annihilated and the peninsular conquest accomplished."²⁶ By describing, as it were in sequence Yi Ch'adon's martyrdom to promote the cause of Buddhism in Silla, King Po-phŭng and King Chinhŭng's becoming monks in their old age, Silla's integration in the wider cultural realm of contemporary Buddhism and its success in the ongoing war of peninsular conquest, Ch'oe Ch'iwon sought to attribute the rising political fortune of Silla to the strength of Buddhism. Though the nation-protecting Buddhism found its expression in several forms, its most clear manifestation was the character of Silla kingship. And as an invocation of the religio-political notion of cakravarti was the first substantial attempt to employ Buddhist values, we need to look briefly at the meaning of the concept of cakravarti and the process of its evolution.

THE CONCEPT OF CAKRAVARTI

The political philosophy of early Buddhism²⁷ is encapsulated in the concept of Mahasammata (The Great Contract—implying the one chosen by the people), an idea derived perhaps from Buddha's nostalgia for tribal republicanism. The republican view of kingship figures in the Pali canon *Digha Nikaya* and the Tibetan work *Dulva*. It depicts gradual degeneration of mankind from the primeval stage of perfect purity and the attendant need for the reorganization of society based on the collective consent of the people, a view having close resemblance with that of the Chinese philosopher Motzu.²⁸ However, with the rapid rise of centralised monarchy in the Gangetic valley of north India Buddhism compromised its original ideal and formulated the concept of cakravarti (Pali: Cakkavatti). Cakravarti is the ideal of normative kingship, *Dhammikko dhammaraja*, a king, who is divine in essence and who upholds dharma. He possesses seven gems, including a wheel of divine attributes and to his moral strength the whole universe submits. He is generously endowed with the ten *rajadharmas* (Kingly Virtues) of liberality, good conduct, non-attachment, straightforwardness, mildness, austerity, non-anger, non-injury, patience and forbearance. He protects his subjects, and provides for those who are weak and destitute. Cakravarti is primarily a later Vedic idea, and in the Brahmanic tradition it refers to a monarch whose rule stretches from the Himalayas to the ocean. Buddhism seems to have coloured the Brahmanic concept with the norms of dharma. A Cakravartin is in reality a secular counterpart of Buddha who is a spiritual cosmocrat. However, as Frank Reynolds has rightly argued, the mystic motifs in the career of Buddha relate so unambiguously and directly to the career of a cakravarti that the line between Buddha and cakravarti becomes blurred.²⁹ If we take for instance major events of Buddha's life, we find them inseparably intertwined with the cakravarti elements. When Buddha was born the royal soothsayer prophesied that the child would choose one of the two paths—those of an enlightened one or a cakravarti king. When Buddha gave his first sermon at Sarnath, the act was termed "Turning of the Cakra (Wheel) of Dharma." Then we have on the evidence of the *Mahaparinibbana sutta* that when Buddha was at his death bed, he said he had chosen the place for his Nirvana, because it was the capital of his state in his seven previous lives as a cakravarti king. In the same sutra Buddha's chief disciple Ananda tells Mallas of Kusinagara, the place where Buddha died that as a Buddha he deserved to be accorded the same elaborate funerary honours as a cakravarti. Furthermore, the Buddhist texts state that the Maitreya descends to earth and preaches under a Nagapuspa tree when a cakravarti king rules.

Frank Reynolds underscores the close association that the Buddhist world forged between the Maitreya and a cakravarti king and argues that ‘the association is later developed in such a way that the two figures are often merged into one in which the Buddha elements and the cakkavatti elements are inseparable.’³⁰

The concept of cakravarti underwent several revisions in later centuries, first when Asoka realised the early imperial ideals and his conquest touched the limit of the land in the Indian sub-continent. The characteristics of a cakravarti in many Pali canons are paralleled so closely to the life and career of Asoka that systematization of the early narrative tradition seems to be a post-Asokan enterprise, as both A. L. Basham³¹ and Romila Thapar³² have pointed out. The fact that the name of Mahasudassana which appears in the Mahasudassana Sutta, a canon explaining the virtues of a cakravartin, has etymological affinity with Asoka’s appellation Priyadarshi lends further credence to our speculation. Both the words Mahasudassana and Priyadarsi mean ‘fine in appearance.’ As Asoka’s initiatives led to a wide popularity of Buddhism within India and beyond its borders, his empire touched the limits of the land in India and though the content of dhamma proclaimed by him was not identical with *dhamma* of Buddhist soteriology, he gave his policies and royal proclamations the rubric of *dhamma*, he was elevated as a concrete embodiment of cakravarti ideal in the history of Buddhism. Such legends as his mobilisation of heavenly spirits to build 84,000 stupas all over the Jambudwipa became so popular that almost all the Buddhist lands claimed to possess relics of some of the “Asokan stupas,” and initiated their own stupa-building projects. Conversely, the Buddhist world borrowed Asoka’s ideals and ideas to give the Vedic notion of cakravarti a systematic structure. The Brahmanic notion of cakravarti was tempered with the concept of dharma. Four categories of cakravarti were formulated, apparently to accommodate within the Buddhist hermeneutic military aspirations of monarchs, for Iron-wheel, the lowest category of cakravarti was entitled to the glory without forsaking brute force.

KING CHINHŨNG AS A CAKRAVARTI

King Chinhŭng³³ was the first Silla king to invoke the concept of cakravarti. He demonstrated his allegiance to the concept by naming his sons *Tongnyun* (Bronze Wheel) and *Saryun/ Kumryun* (Iron Wheel/Gold Wheel), deriving inspiration from the Buddhist political ideology. King Chinhŭng is also said to have made Hwangnyong temple and later installed “Asokan” staves in it. While

several works have appeared on the political significance of the temple, historians have overlooked the two layers of meaning that the enterprise carried and dual interpretations that it laid itself open to. The temple was a representation of Buddha, and at the same time it had an unambiguous allusion to the builder of the temple King Chinhŭng himself. According to several art historians, notably Padma Kaimal³⁴ and Susan Huntington,³⁵ there are several means to determine the fact that images had simultaneous allusion to kings and gods. The image may not be a naturalistic portrait of the ruler, as we find in the case of cave temples of China conceived and executed by the Northern Wei rulers as well as by the “Gold-Wheel Bodhisattva” Empress Wu Tse-t’ien, or in the southeast Asian context the Devaraja (literally godking) temples built by Khmer rulers. But one may decode and determine its reference to the ruling monarch in the allied legends, texts and the related epigraphic sources. All the historical texts, Samguk sagi, Samguk yusa and Haedong Kosŭngjŏn note that the building was originally intended to be a palace, but as a yellow dragon was seen at the site it was converted into a temple. Fusion of the two aspects, intended palace and the realised temple, points to the cultural context of Silla which subsumed profane (palace) into sacred (temple). The double layer of interpretation is sustained even in the word—Hwangnyong. In its meaning of yellow dragon it points to the primitive belief of the Silla people in dragon-worship, and at the same time to royalty, as both yellow and dragon are symbols of kingship. The other meaning of the word Imperial Dragon makes the reference rather overt. The Triad (16-foot Buddha statue flanked by two Bodhisattvas) that was installed in the Yellow Dragon temple was, according to legend, made of a shipload of iron and gold sent by King Asoka.³⁶ The ship drifted to various kingdoms, but no ruler succeeded in moulding the metal into Buddha images. It was King Chinhŭng of Silla who finally accomplished the divine project conceived by King Asoka. Analogy inherent in the legend between the divine and archetypal Buddhist emperor Asoka and King Chinhŭng is apparent. Hwangnyong temple, therefore, can be reckoned as a beginning of the cult of Buddhologically sacralised and deified kingship in Korean history. Political and propagandist activities, particularly the *Inwanghoe* (Chinese: Jenwanghui—Assembly for the Recitation of Benevolent King Sutra) that were sponsored in the temple further confirm our belief in the two layers of meaning that the temple had, and the dual functions of secular and spiritual that it combined. The apocryphal sutra *Inwang Kyŏng* (Chinese: Jenwang Ching—Benevolent King Sutra) which was circulated as a text supposedly “Translated by Kumarajiva” was reckoned to be efficacious in protection of the nation against calamities. Rituals based on its authority were sponsored in all the East Asian states for sacralisation of power

and political legitimation. The fourth chapter of the sutra, "Hogukp'um" (Chapter on Protection of the nation), was particularly useful in subjugating Buddhism to the interest of the state. In this chapter Buddha says to great kings:

"Listen attentively! Now I shall explain the Dharma of Protecting the country. You great kings, when your countries are threatened with disorder, ruin, robbery, arson, bandits and the destruction of state, you ought to receive and keep and recite this prajna paramita. You ought to decorate temples, to install one hundred images of Buddha, one hundred images of Bodhisattva, one hundred lion-seats and invite one hundred dharma masters to explain this sutra.

Before the hundred roaring lion thrones you should light one hundred lamps and burn hundred incenses and scatter various flowers. You should offer food with munificence and distribute widely various items of need such as beds, medicine, houses and seats. And you should have teaching and reading on this sutra twice a day.

If kings, great ministers, monks, nuns and lay devotees listen to it, receive it and read it and adhere to the law, calamities will disappear.

O Great Kings, in all the lands of your kingdoms, there are a hundred ghosts and spirits. Each has its innumerable followers. If those ghosts and spirits happily hear the sutra, they will protect your lands.

If chaos is imminent, the ghosts and spirits get disturbed firsthand. And as they get disturbed, people fall into disorder. At the time bandits rise up in arms to steal the country and the common people lose their lives"

Extant records do not give any indication that Assemblies for the Recitation of the Sutra known as *Jenwanghui* were ever sponsored by the non-Han rulers. The first assembly was organised during the reign of Emperor Wu of Ch'en in the Imperial palace in 559, the third year of the Yung-ting era.³⁷ During the same dynasty Emperor Hou Chu also organised Jenwang assembly and invited Chih-yi to attend.³⁸ In the third year of the Chengkuan era in the reign of T'ai-tsung of T'ang dynasty, an edict was issued to order the monks to hold an assembly and recite the text of Jenwang Ching at Chang'an on the twenty seventh day of every month and pray for the well being of the nation.³⁹ Soon thereafter Jenwang assemblies with hundred seats were held at Tsesheng and Hsiming monasteries of Ch'ang'an.

There are two important studies on the Benevolent Sutra assembly in Silla, one by Keinin Ninomiya⁴⁰ and the other by Rhi Ki-yöng.⁴¹ Ninomiya's article deals with the ritual associated with the sutra in Silla as well as Koryö periods. Rhi's paper deals with various aspects of the Sutra and ceremonies in China, Korea and Japan. But strangely enough, Rhi's article does not make any mention of the first assembly in Silla held in 551 A.D., twelfth year of the

reign of King Chinhŭng. Tamura Encho has also dealt with Jenwang assemblies in his work on early Buddhism in Japan. He argues that the record of Samguk sagi that Silla conducted its ceremony in the twelfth year of King Chinhŭng's reign is "either an intentional distortion or error, because as China held its first assembly in 559, it is impossible to think that any Jenwang assembly had been previously held in Silla".⁴² It does not seem appropriate to discredit Korean records only because Chinese records do not provide reference of their antecedents. Liang Wu-ti (502-549) dismissed the text because of its apocryphal character and it is therefore hardly surprising that no Jenwang assembly was held during his reign. The empire he bequeathed was weak and his successor was not so passionately devoted to Buddhism and therefore not a favorite of monks. Even though an assembly was organised during the nine years' rule of the last emperor of Liang, it is likely that their records either did not survive or were not recorded by historians because of their antipathy. Soon after the new Ch'en dynasty was founded in 557, a Jenwang assembly was held in 559.

When a famous monk of Koguryŏ Hyeryang escaped to Silla with Kŏch'ilpu in the 11th year of King Chinhŭng's reign, he was appointed chief abbot of the monastery and asked to recite the *Inwang Kyŏng* (Benevolent King Sutra).⁴³ Assembly for the Recitation of the Benevolent King Sutra was organised in the twelfth year of his reign (551) against an important political backdrop. In 548 Silla had sent strong military assistance to Paekche in its battle with the joint forces of Koguryŏ and the Ye tribes, and though it succeeded in repelling the enemy, it suffered heavy casualties. In 551, the year Inwanghoe was organised for the first time in Silla, King Chinhŭng turned 18 and took the reins of power in his own hand. He had ascended the throne at the age of seven and his aunt had ruled on his behalf as regent for 11 years. That year he directed his army to attack both the Koguryŏ and Paekche forces in their moments of utter exhaustion and war-weariness and annex the outlying areas. In this battle Silla seized the Koguryŏ fort of *Tosal* as well as the Paekche township of *Kumsi* which Koguryŏ had occupied.⁴⁴ Rituals based on recitation of the virtues of the king and divine ability of the sutra to ensure peace and prosperity for the nation might have boosted the morale of his forces and given spiritual comfort to the anxious and anguished population in days of uncertainty. I am reminded in this context of the wise words of Hsun Tzu. He said, "Man without ritual will not live; an undertaking without ritual will not be completed; and a nation without ritual will not be tranquil."⁴⁵

Through the above discussion it becomes clear that King Chinhŭng's career was a precise parallel of the cakravarti ideal, and it is also obvious that

his religious projects contained subtle allusions of his deified status. The concept of *cakravarti* with Asoka as its paradigm was certainly useful to him as a mode of legitimation at a critical juncture of history. It provided an ideological rationale for waging war against neighbouring kingdoms and in conformity with the practices of shamanistic lineage, it reaffirmed the sacrality of Silla kingship and continued the tradition of unity between sacred and profane.

The successor of King Chinhŭng, King Chinji ruled very briefly,⁴⁶ and not many records about him survive. However, the *Samguk yusa* tells us that it was during his reign that the famous institution of Hwarang⁴⁷ which was founded during the reign of King Chinhŭng came to be associated with the belief in Maitreya. A monk of Hŭngnyunsa named Chinja worshipped the image of Maitreya and prayed devoutly that if Maitreya was reborn as one of the Hwarang youth, he would serve him. And lo and behold, Maitreya descended on the earth under the name of Miri (a word with remarkable phonetic continuity with Mirŭk, the Korean word for Maitreya). He became the leader of the Hwarang group.⁴⁸ The legend is a significant reminder of the fact that the Silla kings aspired to be invested with the attributes of a *cakravarti* ruler, and by implication, of the Buddha; and at the same time they also wished Buddha to be reborn in their exclusivist Chingol (True Bone) group from whose ranks Hwarang members were mostly drawn.

KING CHINP'YŎNG'S SACRALISATION OF ROYAL LINEAGE

King Chinp'yŏng (570-632) vigorously revived the tradition of King Chinhŭng and used Buddhist rhetoric with great sophistication to articulate his political concern and strengthen his power. He named himself Suddhodana and called his wife Maya (Buddha's parents, Suddhodana and Mayadevi) and the king's two brothers too were named after the two brothers of Suddhodana, Suklodana and Dronodana, emphasizing the message that the kingdom was a Buddhist realm. The political import of the message becomes more pronounced when it is examined in conjunction with a legend of *Samguk yusa*. The legend says:

"About 100 li to the east of Chungnyŏng there is a mountain that juts impossibly high into the sky. In the ninth year of King Chinp'yŏng, cyclical year Kapsin (587), there was a great boulder that unexpectedly fell from heaven onto the peak of the mountain. It was a cube one chang (10 feet) square, and images of the Tathagatas were carved on its four sides, all of which were protected by red gauze. Hearing of this, the king ordered a trip to pay respects (to

the boulder). He then had a monastery founded next to the boulder and named it Taesung sa (The Great Vehicle Monastery). He invited a Bhikshu who was a reciter of the Lotus Sutra to live in the temple, worship the boulder and burn incense ceaselessly. The mountain was called *Sabul san* (Four Buddhas Mountain).”⁴⁹

Later yet another legend that Silla was the abode of the past seven Buddhas gained popularity. The legend of Buddha’s descent to Silla has an unambiguous meaning and message that Silla was the Buddhist realm par excellence. And if the legend of Buddha’s descent to Silla accords the kingdom the attribute of a Buddhist realm, the fact that King Chinp’yǒng’s whole family was named after Buddha’s clan has the implication of sacralization of lineage. The situation is not unique to Silla, for we find legends about the Sakya clan in various Buddhist lands. According to Mahavansa, a Sinhalese chronicle, a daughter of Pandu, the only surviving member of the Sakya clan after it was destroyed by the king of Kosala, was set adrift on a boat. After reaching the kingdom of Sinhala she married a Sinhalese prince. In the 10th century when the island of Sri Lanka experienced intense political tumult stemming from threats of foreign invasion and internal factional strife, many royal inscriptions proclaimed that the contemporary Sinhalese rulers were progeny of the Sakya clan.⁵⁰

The situation in the late 6th and early 7th century Silla when King Chinp’yǒng ruled was not much different. The state was also torn externally by attacks from the neighbouring kingdoms of Koguryō and Paekche and internally by simmering tension between royalty and aristocracy which always threatened to explode.

We can gain an insight into the precarious circumstances of King Chinp’yǒng’s reign, if we look at the life and teachings of Wonkwang, a renowned monk who had spent several years in Chinese monasteries. One such event was the king’s request to him to write a letter to the Sui emperor and seek military help to pacify Koguryō. The monk replied:

“To annihilate others in order to preserve oneself militates against the way of a monk. But since I live on your majesty’s territory and survive on your grains, how dare I disobey your commands.”⁵¹

The Five Secular Commandments which he laid down as a guiding ideology of Hwarang, the assembly of aristocratic youths, also reflect the mood of the age. The commandments he enunciated were 1) Serve the king with loyalty, 2) Serve your parents with filial piety, 3) Be faithful to friends, 4) Do not retreat in battles, and 5) Do not kill indiscriminately.⁵² Its emphasis on loyalty

to the throne, the need to display valour in battles as well as self-restraint point to an atmosphere of uncertainty and unrest.

The myths of Buddha's descent buttressed the right of King Chinp'yŏng over the throne. In consonance with enhanced confidence, he took a number of measures to expand the bureaucratic structure and strengthen the foundation of centralised monarchy laid down by his predecessors. He established several new ministries and offices in the initial years of his reign, such as Director General of Naval Affairs in 583, Directorate of Cavalry in 584, Department of Ceremonies in 586 and in 589 Superintendent of Finances and Director-General of the Department of Military Affairs.⁵³

Employment of Buddhist rhetoric and changes in the structuring of governmental apparatus were accompanied by another major development—the bifurcation of the blood lineage of Silla. Silla aristocracy was based on the Kolp'um (literally bone-rank) system, and employment in political office or enjoyment of social privilege was strictly determined by one's status in the system. Only the true-bones were eligible as candidates for the Silla throne or the top five ranks in the seventeen-grade pyramid of administration. But it appears that after the understanding of Buddhism deepened in Silla during the reign of King Chinp'yŏng, royalty, proud of its so-called Sakyalineal descent formed a distinct group called *sŏngol* (Sacred bone). Records on the origin of Sŏnggol in the two earliest historical texts of Korea, Samguk sagi and Samguk yusa are scant and mutually conflicting. According to Samguk sagi, the first to twenty seventh rulers belonged to the sacred-bone group and the rest to the true-bone group.⁵⁴ Samguk yusa, on the other hand holds that the rulers starting from King Pŏphŭng, the 23rd ruler of Silla who officially accepted Buddhism down to the twenty seventh ruler Queen Sŏndŏk belonged to Sŏngol or sacred-bone group.⁵⁵ As is obvious, both the texts have common end-point, but hold divergent views on the starting point. Nonetheless, there is a rather faint clue to untangle the knot. The texts explain that Queen Sŏndŏk was chosen as a ruler, because there was no surviving male member at the time in the sacred-bone lineage group,⁵⁶ a fact which fails to stand up to close scrutiny.

Yongch'un, the first cousin of King Chinp'yŏng, was alive at the time Queen Sŏndŏk assumed power. He had the same blood lineage as King Chinp'yŏng and Queen Sŏndŏk. One may be tempted to believe that Yongch'un was excluded from the sacred-bone group, because this exclusivist blood lineage was formed during the reign of King Chinp'yŏng and then was retrospectively extended to his direct ancestors, Crown Prince Tongnyun who had died young and King Chinhŭng, his grandfather. As Yongch'un was the son of King Chinp'yŏng's uncle, he was reckoned as a collateral member of

the clan and thus ineligible to the status of a sacred-bone. It seems that the Sōngol group was not abolished, because records of the Chinese dynastic record Hsin T'angshu makes an allusion to the binary construction of bone-based Silla aristocracy.⁵⁷ Because of certain practical complications derived from increasingly narrow lineage, Sōngol might have ceased to be an effective criterion of accession to the throne.

As the war of peninsular conquest had intensified during the reign of King Chinp'yōng, he too sponsored an Inwang assembly presumably for victory beyond the border and peace at home. This state ritual was officiated by Priest Wōnkwang. According to Samguk sagi:

In the 7th month, in the autumn of the 35th year, Wang Shiyi, an envoy from Sui visited Hwangnyong temple where hundred seats were prepared, and Wōnkwang and other Buddhist priests were invited to attend and recite the Sutra.

Wōnkwang lived in China during the Ch'en and Sui periods and had personally experienced how the rulers exploited the possibilities that the political ideology of Buddhism held for them in their campaign of unification as well as for further reinforcing their imperial positions which according to Confucian political thought was contingent on the "Mandate of Heaven."⁵⁸ On his return home he became instrumental in institutionalising the 'nation-protecting' character of Silla Buddhism and establishing a symbiotic relationship between sacred and profane.

During the reign of Queen Sōndōk (A.D. 632-646), successor of King Chinp'yōng and the twenty-seventh monarch of Silla, Buddhist myth was invoked once again. Her name itself is suggestive of a strong Buddhist influence. It is derived from the Buddhist scripture *Tabangtūngmusanggyōng* in which there is an allusion to a Brahmin named Sōndōk. It is predicted that one hundred and fifty years after the death of Buddha he will be born as Asoka, a cakravarti ruler.⁵⁹ During the reign of Queen Sōndōk when the rival kingdoms on the peninsula perceived her as a weak ruler apparently because of her gender, and planned to intensify their offensives against Silla, Monk Chajang conveyed to the kingdom a pious proclamation and prophesy allegedly made by Bodhisattva Manjushri. According to Manjushri she was a queen of the Ksatriya caste and destined to be a Buddha.⁶⁰ She was elevated to the status of a cakravarti (inherent in the term Ksatriya), and at the same time she was deified as a future Buddha. The unified cakravarti-Buddha symbolism continued from King Chinhūng down to Queen Sōndōk, although the forms in which they were manifested were different. The practice to invoke Buddhist legends as a

means of sacralization of power ceased when after the destruction of Koguryō and Paekche the political structure of Silla was moulded on Chinese pattern and Chinese-style titles as T'aejo were posthumously used in honour of the deceased monarchs.

CONCLUSION

Korea was introduced to the concept of Buddhist kingship-the ideal of cakravartin-early in its history during the reign of King Chinhŭng. King Chinhŭng demonstrated his allegiance to the concept of cakravarti by naming his sons *Tongnyun* (Bronze Wheel) and *Saryun/Kumryun* (Iron Wheel/Gold Wheel). He is said to have installed "Asokan" statues in the Hwangnyong temple, the center of Buddhism in Silla and sponsored several Buddhist ceremonies for the peace and prosperity of his kingdom. Various legends and rituals undoubtedly reaffirmed his sacrality in conformity with the native shamanistic tradition of unity between religious and political domains. His successor King Chinji held power only for four years, but it was during his reign that a correlation was forged between Maitreya and Future Buddha. King Chinp'yōng, however, employed Buddhist rhetoric and rituals with extraordinary ingenuity. He linked himself with the clan of Buddha and sought to sacralize the royal blood of Silla. It is likely that Sōngol, sacred bone group as distinct from Chingol, true bone group was inspired by his affiliation with the sacred clan of Buddha and was formed during his rule. Queen Sōndök's name as well as her arrogation of the prerogative of ksatriya represent a continuity in the employment of Buddhist rhetoric for serving political aims. After the crisis of the unification wars had passed, the use of Buddhist legends and ideals to sacralise the Silla kingship actually gave place to the attempt to remodel the central authority on the Chinese pattern.

NOTES

1. Hu Shih, *Chinese Renaissance*. New York: Paragon Book Reprint Corp. pp. 84-89. Chengli Kuoku yu ta kui (Setting Our National Past Straight and Beating the Devil) *Hu Shih wenchun*, Series 3, Vol. 2, pp. 210-211.
2. Eric Zürcher, *The Buddhist Conquest of China*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1972.
3. Arthur F. Wright, *Buddhism in Chinese History*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1959. *Studies in Chinese Buddhism*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990.
4. Kenneth Ch'en, *Buddhism in China*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964. *The Buddhist Transformation of China*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973.
5. M.W. De Visser, *Ancient Buddhism in Japan*. 2 vols. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1935.
6. J.M. Kamstra, *Encounter of Syncretism: The Initial Growth of Japanese Buddhism*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1967.
7. Joseph Kitagawa, *Religion in Japanese History*. New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1966. *On Understanding Japanese Buddhism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987.
8. S. Keel, "Buddhism and Political Power in Korean History." *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*. Vol. 1 International Association of Buddhist Studies, Madison, Wisconsin, 1978.
9. Ki-baik Lee, Wŏn'kwang and His Thought. In Korean National Commission for Unesco, Seoul ed., *Korean Thought*, Seoul: The Si-sa-yong-o-sa Publishers Inc., 1983. "Early Silla Buddhism and Power of Aristocracy," In Lewis R. Lancaster and C.S. Yu ed., *Introduction of Buddhism to Korea: New Cultural Patterns*, Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1989
10. Works of translation and research by Robert E Buswell, Jr. have added significant dimensions to the field of Korean Buddhism, but they mainly focus on philosophical issues and textual research. Defining the role of Korean Buddhism in the context of Korea's historical realities is still a virgin territory in the Western world. There is, of course, an exception, a rather short Russian-language work 'Panniaia istoriia buddizma v Koree' (Early History of Buddhism in Korea) by Sergei V. Volkov, Moscow, 1985 which describes major trends in Korean Buddhism from 4-9th centuries A.D. (My information is based on its brief English abstract).
11. Yi Pyong-do, Kotae Namdang go (On Namdang of the Ancient Period) In *Han'guk kotaesa yŏn'gu*, Seoul: Pakyŏngsa 1975. "On the Primitive Assembly and Namdang (South Hall) in Ancient Korea," Seoul: *Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 13, December 1960. Pak Nam-su, Silla hwabaek hoeüi üi kinŭng kwa sŏngyŏk (Functions and Character of the Hwabaek Assembly of Silla In Susun Pak, *Yŏng-sŏk kyosu hwagap kinyŏm han'guk sahak nonch'ŏng*,

- vol. 1, Seoul: T'amgu tang 1992. Yi ki-baek (Ki-baik Lee), Taetŭng go (On Taetŭng), *Silla chŏngch'i sahoesa yŏn'gu*, Seoul: Ilchogak, 1973, pp. 78-82.
12. The inscription which was unearthed on 12 April 1989 in a village called Naengsuri of Yŏngil district, North Kyŏngsang province has contributed immensely towards broadening our knowledge of Silla polity. Previous scholarship recognised only kalmun wang as worthy of the prerogative of "wang," but in the light of new data we feel obliged to modify our view, and accept the strength of the Hwabaek assembly. Chu Po-don has masterfully argued that the stele confirms our conjecture of weak monarchical power in the early sixth century Silla. It did not enjoy an authority to independently arbitrate important matters of his state. Yi Hŭi-gwan has, however, suggested that in the light of the ever-strengthening power of Silla royalty at the turn of the sixth century it would be erroneous to interpret "ch'ilwang tŭng kong non (七王等共論)" as "seven kings jointly discussed it. He contends that the phrase means seven functionaries—one kalmunwang and six officials holding the position of tŭng (same as sangtae tŭng or taetŭng), but I am not quite convinced. As far as my understanding goes, the Chinese character Tŭng has been used to denote plural sense. If the author of the stele had wished to suggest different functionaries the grammatically correct form of Classical Chinese would have been; wangtŭng ch'ilin gong non (王等七人共論). Chu Bo-don, Yŏng'il Naengsuripi e taehan kich'ochŏk kŏmt'o (A preliminary Study of Yŏngil Naengsuripi), *Silla Munhwa*, Vol.6, Kyŏngju: Tongguk University, pp. 23-30, 1989. Yi Hŭi-gwan, Yŏngil Naengsuripi e poinŭn Chidoro kalmunwang e taehan myokkaji munje (A Few Issues Related with Kalmunwang as Shown in the Yŏngil Naengsuri Inscription). *Han'guk hakbo*, Vol. 60, 1990.
 13. Position of the Silla King at the time bears close resemblance with the Japanese rulers of the 6th and early seventh centuries. They are sometimes described as emperors which I reckon is an anachronistic term, at best a retrospective designation, because the ruler of Japan at the time was more or less like a Silla king, subject to various restrictions on monarchical authority powerful clans.
 14. Samguk sagi, Silla pongi 3, 4th year of Sojiwang.
 15. In the light of the information furnished by Dr Ken Gardiner that Maripkan was a Koguryŏ-derived title, I guess that in discarding it Silla may also have been asserting its complete independence vis-a-vis Koguryŏ.
 16. Relying on the vast corpus of archaeological data Chŏn Dŏk-jae has delineated a complete picture of economic and political changes that emerged in the 4-6th centuries Silla. Chŏn Dŏk-jae, 4-6 segi nongŏpsaengsannyŏk ŭi paltal kwa sahoe pyŏndong (A Study of the Growth of Productivity in 4-6th centuries and Social Changes) *Yŏksa wa hyŏnsil*, Seoul Vol. 4, 1990. Silla Chugunje ŭi sŏngnip paegyŏng yŏn'gu (A Study of the Background of the Establishment of territorial Organisation in Silla), *H'an'guksa ron*, Vol. 21 Seoul 1990.
 17. It is based on the record of Kyerim Chapjŏn written by Kim Tae-mun that monk

Mukhoja (meaning a dark barbarian) stayed secretly at the house of Morye during the reign of King Nulchi, a fact which was later incorporated in all the three major texts dealing with the Three Kingdoms Period, *Samguk sagi*, *Samguk yusa* and *Haedong kosŭngjŏn*.

18. King Koguryang's instruction to the people "to believe in Buddha and be rewarded with good fortune and missionary activities of monk T'anshih (Korean: T'amshi) in Koguryŏ (Liaotung) who was renowned for his magical abilities are some of its illustrations.
19. Personal EMail communication to the author in his post dated 29 March 1995.
20. Tsukamoto Zenryu, "Wei Shou on Buddhism and Taoism" translated by Leon Hurvitz in *Yunkang, the Buddhist Cave Temples of the 5th Century A. D.* ed. Mizuno Seiichi and Nagahiro Toshio, Kyoto, 1956. vol. 16 supp. p. 53.
21. Tsukamoto Zenryu op. cit. p. 71.
22. The term, probably deriving its initial inspiration from the Roman imperial legacy in Byzantine was used by Herbert Franke in his discussion of the politico-religious role of Mongolian rulers of Yuan dynasty China. See his small monograph "From Tribal Chieftain to Universal Emperor and God: The Legitimation of the Yuan Dynasty," Munchen: Verlag der Baerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1978. For a comparative approach towards the relationship between state and religion in the Buddhist and Christian traditions see Randall Collins, "Historical Perspectives on Religion and Regime: Some Sociological Comparisons of Buddhism and Christianity," In Jeffrey K. Hadden and Anson Shupe, ed., *Prophetic Religions and Politics: Religion and the Political Order*. New York: Paragon House, 1986.
23. Arthur F. Wright, *Buddhism in Chinese History*, op. cit. p. 51.
24. The statue (national Treasure 106) now in the collection of the Ch'ŏngju Museum was cast by fifty Paekche immigrants to Silla. For the text of the inscription see *Samguk sitae ūi pulgyo chogak* (Buddhist Sculpture of the Three Kingdoms Period) published by the National Museum of Korea, Seoul p. 165.
25. Peter H. Lee, ed., *Sourcebook of Korean Civilisation*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1993 p. 129.
26. Kim Yŏng-t'ae, *Samguk Silla sitae kŭmsŏkmun kojŭng* (An Investigative research of the Inscriptions of Three Kingdoms and Silla Periods), Seoul: Minjoksa, 1992 pp. 200-201.
27. I have discussed the political philosophy of Buddhism in detail in my M. A. dissertation which I submitted at the department of Korean history, Seoul National University in 1994. For exhaustive references to Sanskrit and Pali sources which formed the basis of my conceptual construct of Cakravari, readers are advised to refer to the dissertation. "Silla chunggogi ūi Chŏllyunsŏngwang Inyŏm: Indo Asokawang kwa Silla Chinhŭngwang ūi Chŏngch'i inyom ūi pigyo" (Manifestation of the Concept of cakravarti in Early Silla: A Comparative Study of the Political Philosophy of Indian King Asoka and Silla King Chinhŭng), To be

- published shortly in *Han'guksa ron* (Papers in Korean History), Seoul National University.
28. Mo Tzu (Moze)'s view diverges from the Buddhist view in only one minor respect. The king who brings order to the degenerating society was, according to him, chosen by "heaven." Yi-Pao Mei, *The Ethical and Political Works of Motse*, London: Arthur Probsthain, 1929 pp. 55-58.
 29. Frank Reynolds, "The Two Wheels of Dhamma: A Study of Early Buddhism," In Gananath Obeyesakere, Frank Reynolds and Bardwell Smith ed., *The Two Wheels of Dhamma: Essays on the Theravada Tradition in India and Ceylon*, Chambersburg, Pa.: American Academy of Religion, 1972.
 30. Frank Reynolds, *The Two Wheels of Dhamma*, op. cit. Reynolds raised this point in the introductory chapter of his PhD thesis (1971) as well. See his *Buddhism and Sacral Kingship: A Study in the History of Thai Religion*, Chicago: University of Chicago Microfilm..
 31. A.L. Basham, *The Wonder That Was India*, New York: Hawthorn, 1963, p. 83.
 32. Romila Thapar, *Asoka and the Decline of Mauryas*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 8.
 33. Though I tried to look at King Chinhŭng in this paper from a different perspective, some of my points may sound a bit familiar to those who have read my article "Life and Times of Silla King Chinhŭng: Asoka as a Role Model" which was published in the *Korean Culture*, Los Angeles, Spring 1996.
 34. Padma Kaimal, "Playful Ambiguity and Political Authority in the Large relief at Mamallapuram," *Ars Orientalis* 24 (1994).
 35. Susan Huntington, a respected art historian of India suggested a dual allegory in her discussion of the art of Pala dynasty in her book *Leaves from the Bodhi Tree: The Art of Pala India (8th-12th Centuries) and its International Legacy*, Dayton and Seattle: Dayton Art Institute and University of Washington Press, 1990. Later she sought to give a theoretical framework for studying dual meanings in the Hindu art in her insightful article, "Kings as Gods, Gods as Kings: Temporality and Eternity in the Art of India," *Ars Orientalis* 24 (1994).
 36. The first reference of yellow dragon appears in the famous Kwanggaet'o stele in which Chumong is described to have ascended to heaven, riding a yellow dragon. *Samguk sagi* also alludes to yellow dragon, in fact Yellow Dragon Country (Hwangnyong guk). It says that the King of Hwang-nyong guk heard of the bravery of Prince Haemyŏng, and in the twenty-seventh year, in the first month of spring (February, A.D. 8) sent an envoy with a gift of a strong bow, but the prince drew the bow in front of the envoy, and snapped it, remarking, "it is not that I am strong, but the bow itself is weak'." According to Dr Ken Gardiner's annotation, the term Hwang-nyong-guk, (Chinese: Huang-lung-kuo), was used in Southern China in the early fifth century to refer to the Feng family state of Northern Yen. The unofficial name of Northern Yen was probably derived from the state's capital, Lung-ch'eng, built by Mu-jung Huang of Former Yen in 341;

nearby was the spot where the same ruler had a vision of black and white (but not yellow) dragons. (K.H.J. Gardiner, *Annals of Koguryō*, Unpublished manuscript). The closest parallel of the legend, however, appears in the Kao-seng Chuan's biography of Monk Chuan. It says that Chuan first made a sixteen feet Buddha statue in the Yellow Dragon Country. Kao seng Chuan, Taisho 309c Shih seng Xuan.

37. Hsu Kao-seng chuan, vol. 7, Shi Paoch'iong Taisho, 50, p. 479.
38. Fo-tsu t'ungchi, Emperor T'ai-tsung.
39. Fo-tsu t'ungchi, Emperor T'ai-tsung. Jan Yun-Hua, *A Chronicle of Buddhism in China*, Shantiniketan: Visva-Bharati, p. 25. Bian cheng lun, vol. 4, Taisho 52, p. 512.
40. Keinin Ninomiya, "Chosen ni okeru Ninno-e no kaisetsu" (Establishment of renwang Assemblies in Korea) *Chosen gakuho*, Vol. 14, Nara 1959.
41. Rhi Ki-Yong (Yi Ki-yōng) says that the first Jenwang assembly was held in Silla in 613 at Hwangyong temple. See his *Inwang panya kyong kwa hoguk pulgyo: ku ponjil kwa yoksachok chongae* (Benevolent King Prajnaparamita Sutra and Nation-protecting Buddhism: The Doctrinal Basis and Historical Evolution), Seoul: Tongyonghak, vol. 5, 1975.
42. Tamura Encho, "Early Buddhism in Japan," *Studies in History No. 3*, Fukuoka: Kyushu University, The Faculty of Literature, 1971, p. 79.
43. Samguk sagi, yōljōn (Biographies) Ch. 44.
44. Samguk sagi, Silla pongi, 11th year of Chinhūngwang.
45. John Knoblock, *Xun Zi: A Translation and Study of the Complete Works*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988, p. 153.
46. According to Samguk yusa he was dethroned by "Kug'in (literally people of the state) which seems to be a euphemism for the Assembly of nobles.
47. The institution of Hwarang has been romanticised in post-Colonial Korea. Since its members played an important role in the peninsular unification in the 7th century, the Hwarang spirit was proclaimed by the military regimes of Seoul as relevant for people in South Korea who had to accomplish the task of defeating the Communist north and unifying the peninsula once again. And the fact that Silla was a southern kingdom legitimated their claim of being true inheritors of the tradition of Hwarang.
48. Samguk yusa, ch. 3 Mirŭk sōnhwa.
49. Samguk yusa, vol. 1, Tohwanyō (peach-blossom lady).
50. R.A.L.H. Gunavardhana, "The Kinsmen of the Buddha: Myth as a Political Charter in the Ancient and Early Medieval Kingdoms of Sri Lanka," *Sri Lanka Journal of the Humanities*, Vol. 2, No. 2, Dec. 1976.
51. Samguk sagi, Silla pongi, Chinp'yōngwang 30th year.
52. Samguk sagi, yōljōn, No. 5 Kuisan.
53. These dates are from Samguk sagi. (Silla pongi) sections on Chinp'yōngwang. There are two important studies on the political milieu of King Chinp'yōng: Pak

- Haehyŏn, "Silla Chinp'yŏngwangtae ũi chŏngch'iseryŏk ũi ch'uyi: Wangkwŏn kanghwa wa kwallyŏnhayŏ" (Transition of Political Power during the Reign of King Chinp'yŏng; Concerning the Strengthening of Monarchical Authority) *Kwangju: Chŏnnam sahak* vol. 2. Yi Chŏng-suk, *Silla Chinp'yŏngwangtae ũi chŏngch'ichŏk sŏnggyŏk: Sowi chŏnje wangkwŏnŭi sŏngnip kwa kwallyŏnhayŏ* (Character of the Politics During the Reign of King Chinp'yŏng; Concerning the Establishment of So-called Absolute Monarchy), Seoul: Han'guksa yŏngu, vol. 52.
54. Samguk sagi, Silla Pongi 12, Kyŏngsunwang 9th year.
55. Samguk yusa, 1 Wan gnyŏk.
56. Samguk yusa, 1 Wan gnyŏk.
57. Hsin T'angshu, Vol. 220, liechuan 145, Tongyi, Hsinluo.
58. The famous statement of Sui Wen-ti (quoted in the Buddhist text Li-tai san-pao chi, ch. 12, Taisho XLIX, 107c) in which he seeks to redefine the original ideals of Buddhism is its best illustration: "We employ the army of a Cakravartin king and extend the meaning of the Ultimately Compassionate One. (Buddha). Our ever victorious marches are practices of the ten Buddhist virtues. Therefore, our armouries have become like various incenses and flowers, and the expanse of our fields have become same as the Pure Land" (I looked at Arthur Wright's translation of the passage in his "Buddhism in Chinese History," op. cit. p. 67, but felt it necessary to attempt my own translation in order to be closer to the meaning of the original passage. The original text seems to recognise the fact that the acts of war are not in conformity with the original teachings of Buddhism, and therefore it is more appropriate to translate 伸至仁之意 as "extending the meaning of the Ultimately Compassionate One" rather than "spreading the ideals of the Ultimately Enlightened One" as Arthur Wright has done. For a discussion of Sui Wen-ti's patronage of Buddhism see Arthur F. Wright's *Sui Dynasty*, New York: Knopf, 1978 pp. 65-66, 126-138. Also see Yamazaki Hiroshi, "Zui to Bukkyo no kenkyu" (A Study of the Sui and T'ang Buddhism) which discusses the "Bodhisattva kingship" of Sui Wen-ti and his successor Sui Yang-ti. p. 158.
59. Choi Pyong-hŏn has raised this point in many of his papers, most recently in "Han'guk pulgyo ũi suyong kwa chŏngae: Samguk sagi silla pongi ũi pulgyokwangye charyo ũi kŏmt'o" (Accommodation of Buddhism in Korea and its Development: An Examination of the materials of Silla Pongi section of Samguk sagi), A paper presented at the Conference on Samguk sagi held at the University of Hawaii, February 1996, p. 9.
60. Samguk yusa, vol. 4, Hwangnyongsa kuch'ŭngt'ap.

The Origins of the British Museum's Korean Collection

by Jane Portal

The British Museum is one of the world's great museums. Its collections are huge, with perhaps 7 million objects, from all over the world, of which about 50,000 are on display. It was founded in 1753 by Act of Parliament to house the collections bequeathed to the nation by Sir Hans Sloane, a physician, naturalist and antiquarian whose collection was vast and wide-ranging. A Board of Trustees was set up and Montagu House in Great Russell Street, London, was bought. In 1759 the Museum opened to the public. Three important principles were established at that time which have stood ever since: first, the collections should be held in perpetuity in their entirety; second, the collections should be freely available to the curious; third, the museum should be curated by full-time specialists.¹

The museum started to attract gifts very quickly and has done so ever since. In fact it can be seen as a reflection of collecting history in Britain. It also benefited from the intrepid British archaeologists of the 19th century, whose efforts resulted in large increases in the collections from areas such as Assyria and Egypt. Sir Hans Sloane's collection did include some oriental art, such as woodblock prints and bronzes and stone carvings from China. However the large majority of the oriental collections were acquired in the second half of the 19th century and later.

Inevitably, attributions which were given in the 19th century or the early years of the 20th century have sometimes been revised as a result of developments in scholarship. Thus paintings which were catalogued on acquisition as Song dynasty Chinese, for example, may now be thought to be Ming dynasty. In the same way, objects which were collected as Chinese have turned out to be Korean. An example of this is a painting acquired by the museum's purchase in 1881 of the collection of Japanese and Chinese paintings belonging to

William Anderson (1842-1900), a professor of anatomy and surgery at the Imperial Naval Medical College in Tokyo. It was originally catalogued as Chinese 17th-18th century and is now catalogued as Korean 18th-19th century.

It is fortunate that, unlike some other large museums, the British Museum has stuck to the principle of refusing to allow de-acquisition. As scholarship and archaeological work develops in the field of oriental art, new attributions can continue to be made. This is particularly the case with Korean art because study and archaeological work in this field lags behind that of China and Japan. This is partly due to Korea's modern history and partly due to the relatively modest amount of interest Korea has aroused amongst 20th century oriental art collectors. This has resulted in the Korean collections in major western museums being much smaller than those of China or Japan.

The British Museum's Korean collection ranks amongst the largest and best in the West. It is perhaps not as significant as that of Boston Museum of Fine Arts, Harvard or the Smithsonian, but it is probably the best in Europe. It has antiquities in the Department of Oriental Antiquities, several thousand coins and coin-shaped charms in the Coins and Medals department and several hundred items of Folk Art in the Ethnography department. Many of the objects in the Korean collection come from donations by and purchase from individual collectors, while there are occasional purchases from dealers. In this category are items such as a rare Koryo dynasty lacquer sutra box inlaid with mother-of-pearl (Fig. 1) and a 17th century hanging scroll of the Bod-



Fig. 1 Lacquer sutra box, decorated with inlaid mother-of-pearl and silver wire. Koryo dynasty, 13th century. Purchased in Japan. B.M.O.A. 1966. 12-21. 1.

hisattva Kwanum. Most such purchases have been made in Japan.

Collectors of Korean art can be divided into two groups: the first group are those who were Oriental art collectors and who collected Korean art in conjunction with Chinese and Japanese. The second group are those people who had some close connection with or interest in Korea, perhaps as diplomats or businessmen or missionaries. Then there are a few people who seem to have collected the odd Korean piece out of an interest in the particular material it was made from. Examples of the first group are relatively well-known collectors such as George Eumorfopoulos, Sir Harry Garner, Sir John Addis, Mrs Seligman, Oscar Raphael and A.W. Franks. The second group comprise diplomats such as W.G. Aston, missionaries such as Homer B. Hulbert and Stanley Smith and members of the consular service such as Thomas Watters. Perhaps the most famous British collector of Korean art, the late Godfrey Gompertz (d. 1992), was an employee of Shell, who lived partly in Korea and mostly in Japan. He married the daughter of an American missionary in Seoul and honeymooned in the Diamond Mountains in 1930. His books on Korean celadons and porcelain, published in the sixties, are still regarded as the standard works on the subject in English. He, however, has been written about in other places and since, unfortunately, he did not give any of his collection to the British Museum, he will not be included in this survey.²

By far the largest group of objects from one individual's collection comes from that of George Eumorfopoulos (1863-1939), the British-born son of a Greek merchant from the island of Chios.³ These include the underglaze copper red celadon bowl exhibited in the Great Koryo Exhibition of summer 1995 in the Hoam Gallery (Fig. 2). Other Korean pieces of very high quality from his collection are a Koryo bronze censer inlaid with silver, a group of Choson dynasty Buddhist paintings, a group of Koryo celadons including a fine inlaid kundika and a considerable number of small metalwork pieces. Some of these things can be seen as they were displayed in his house at Chelsea Embankment in London during the 1930s (Fig. 3). He built a museum extension to his house where his Sunday receptions became a feature of London life at that time. He was always ready to show his huge collection to interested members of the public. The majority of the pieces were Chinese and many of the most famous Chinese objects in the British Museum came from him. He had always intended to bequeath his collection to the nation but financial considerations led him to offer it to the British Museum for the price of £100,000, well below the market price. The British Museum, although keen to acquire the collection, found it difficult to meet the cost and therefore had to invite the help of the Victoria and Albert Museum, Sir Percival David, The National Art

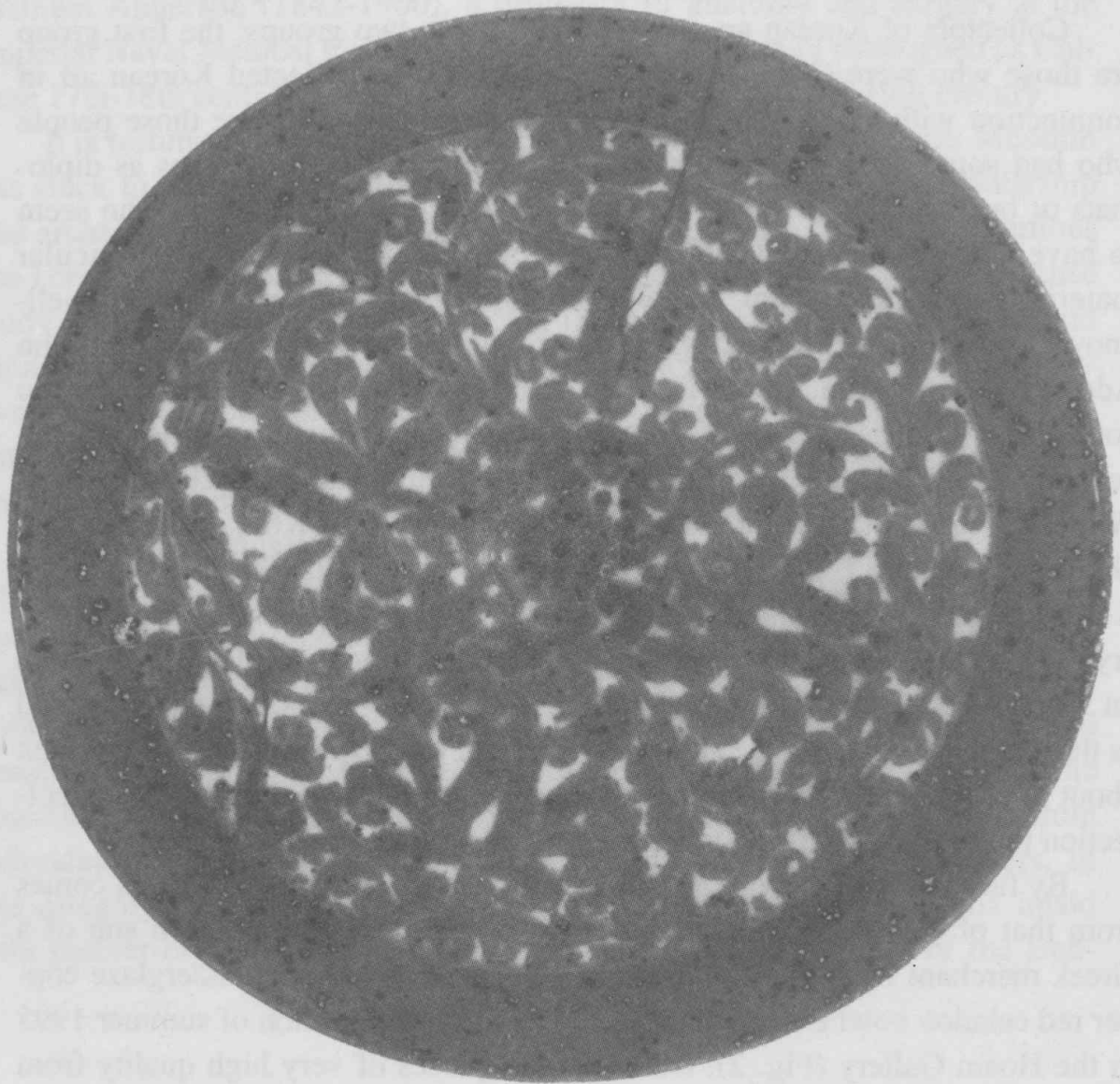


Fig. 2. Front view of a very rare celadon bowl decorated in underglaze copper red. Koryo Dynasty, 12th century. Ex Eumorfopoulos collection. B.M.O.A. 1938. 5-24. 763.

Collections Fund and the Universities China Committee as well as members of the public. However, it was eventually purchased and divided between the British Museum and Victoria and Albert Museum on the basis of three to two.

Other collectors of Oriental art who collected Korean pieces include Sir Harry Garner (1891-1977), from whom the British Museum acquired a magnificent Koryo dynasty illuminated sutra, dating to 1341, a Koryo bronze kundika and several pieces of Choson dynasty lacquer.⁴ Sir Harry was a distinguished government scientist who, after his retirement, collected Chinese porcelain, cloisonne and Far Eastern lacquer. He wrote several well-known



Fig. 3 Korean painting in the home of George Eumorfopoulos before it was acquired by the British Museum. London, 1934.

books, including "Oriental Blue and White" (1954), "Oriental Lacquer Art" (1984) and "Chinese and Japanese Cloisonne" (1962). He and his wife donated many pieces to the British Museum during his lifetime and, when he died, he arranged for his collection to be divided between the Victoria and Albert Museum and the British Museum in an arrangement whereby pieces could be purchased at a very low price at times in the future convenient to the museums. In this way, the Koryo sutra was acquired in 1984 for a very reasonable price. It is written in gold and silver on indigo-dyed paper and is dedicated by a monk to his mother. The title of the work is The Amitabha Sutra Spoken by Buddha. This is the shortest of the three major Pure Land scriptures which became very popular, partly because it was relatively short and partly because it advocated a quick and easy route to salvation. The frontispiece of this sutra shows the Buddha Sakyamuni in paradise scene with newly re-born souls being welcomed by bodhissatvas. This sutra is the only example of its kind in a European collection⁵ (Fig. 4).

Another scientist who collected Korean art was William Gowland, A.R.S.M., F.C.S., a metallurgist who worked for the Japanese mint in Osaka from 1872-88.⁶ He was also a distinguished amateur archaeologist who carried

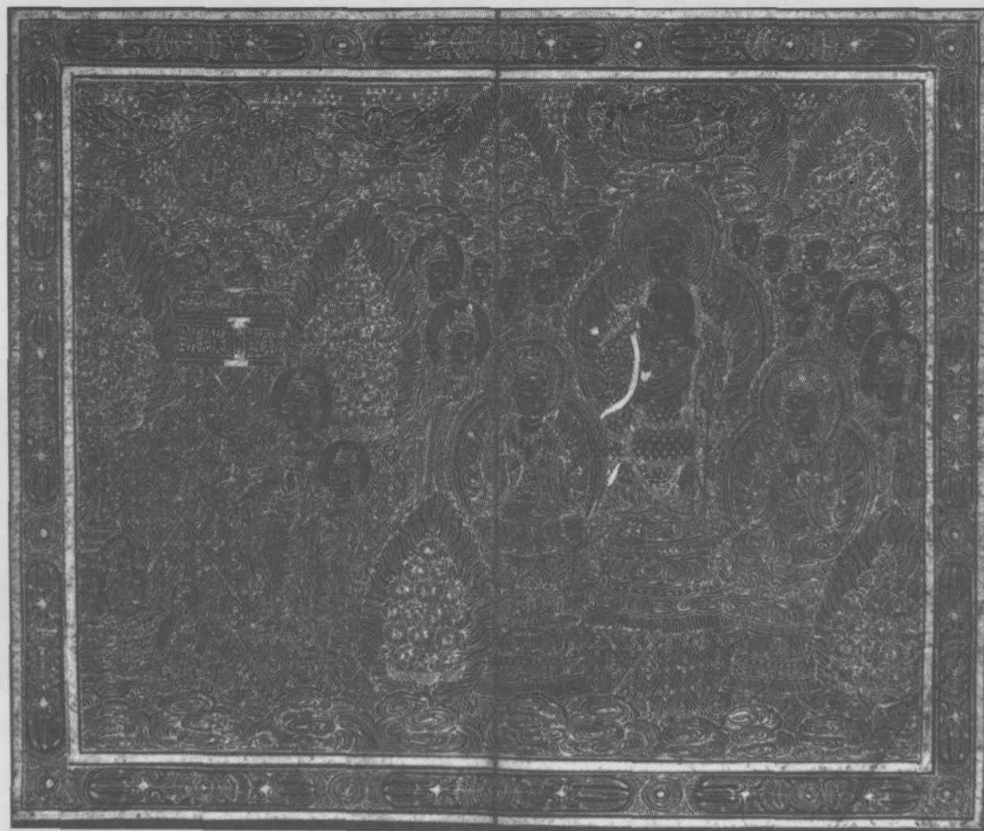


Fig. 4 Frontispiece to the sutra written in gold and silver on indigo-dyed paper. Koryo dynasty, dated 1341A.D. Purchased from the Garner Collection. B.M.O.A. 1983. 10-8. 01.

out many excavations of Japanese imperial tombs. Through his excavations, he came to suspect the connections between early Japanese tomb pottery and that of Korea, so in 1884 he visited Korea, travelling from Seoul to Pusan. It is from this trip that the collection of Three Kingdoms pottery in the British Museum originates (Fig. 5). Gowland was a remarkable man; his observations on Three Kingdoms pottery in the article he wrote about his trip are astute. For instance, he notices that the two most common shapes are the stem-cup (*kobae*), which he calls a tazza, and the wide-mouthed, long-necked jar (*changgyong ho*). He also remarks that he found few examples of pottery in Seoul but found that it was well-known in Pusan. This is hardly surprising, since Pusan is in the area of Silla/Kaya culture which produced these vessels in the largest numbers. He concludes that: "In form, inscribed designs, marks of matting, and the material of which they are made, many are allied to the sepulchral vessels of

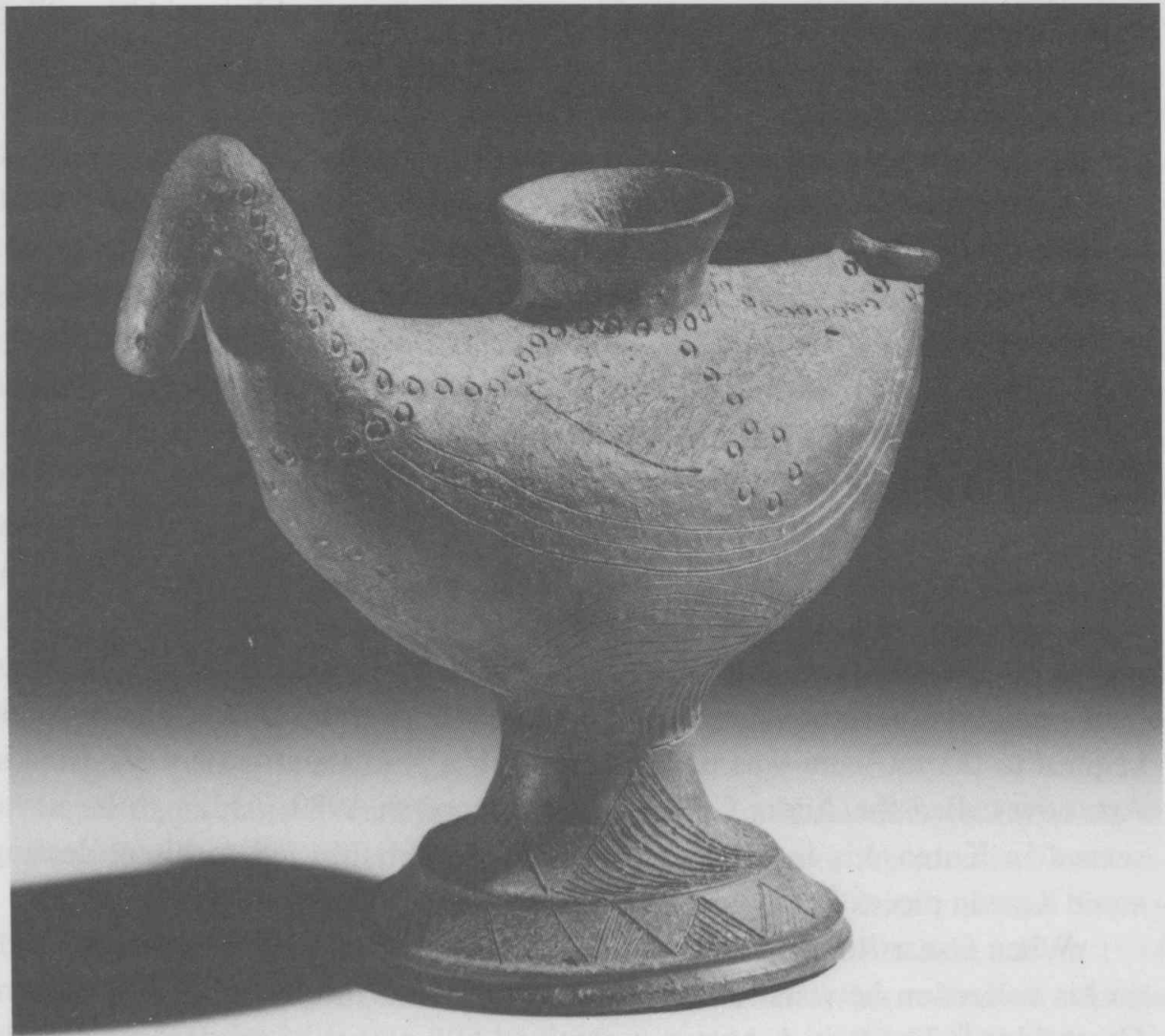


Fig. 5 Stoneware funerary vase in the shape of a duck. Kaya Kingdom, 5th century A.D. Donated by Sir A.W. Franks who purchased it from William Gowland. B.M.O.A.+583.

the dolmens of Japan, but they are not identical.”⁷ He also provisionally dates the pottery to between the 2nd and 7th century A.D., by comparison with the Japanese excavated examples. This is rather remarkably accurate.

Gowland's collection actually came to the *British Museum* after it was purchased by Sir A.W. Franks (1826-1897), Keeper of the Department of Antiquities and Ethnography from 1866 to 1896. He could be said to have been the greatest single benefactor in the history of the *British Museum*. He collected in a wide variety of fields, notably that of oriental ceramics. He was clearly interested in collecting Korean ceramics as he wrote the following to the American missionary, Homer B. Hulbert, in July 1887: “Our funds are also limited especially this year, when the annual grant has been reduced to nearly one half. There is one matter, however, in which you might assist the Museum as well as myself. I have given to the museum my extensive collection of oriental pottery, in which are a few pieces which I believe to be Corean. I should like to make the collection more complete, and I should be willing to expend a sum not exceeding £40 for this purpose out of my own pocket. I should wish of course to obtain very good and old specimens, the Corean origin of which is undoubted.... England has been deluged with some dreadful modern Japanese pottery which is sold as Corean but seems to have been imported there to supply the demand. My friend Mr Colbourne Baker has shewn me two pieces which he believes to be Corean, but one of which seems to me to be of Chinese work and the other Japanese.”⁸ Unfortunately, Franks was not able to acquire much more Korean pottery, apart from the Gowland Collection, although his Chinese and Japanese ceramics collections were huge.

Another well-known Oriental art collector, Sir John Addis (1914-83), donated two pieces of Korean art to the *British Museum*. These are two Choson dynasty blue and white porcelain bowls, decorated with auspicious symbols. Sir John is better known as a collector of early Chinese blue and white porcelain. He was a distinguished diplomat who served as Ambassador to China and who became a Trustee of the *British Museum*. After his death, his bequest to the museum was used to establish a permanent gallery for Islamic Art, now called the Addis Gallery. This opened in 1989. Although he never served in Korea, his interest in porcelain presumably led to his collecting some Korean pieces.⁹

When Oscar Raphael died in 1941, this great Oriental art collector divided his collection between the *British Museum* and the *Fitzwilliam Museum*, Cambridge.¹⁰ The *British Museum* received 698 pieces of oriental art, mostly Chinese and Japanese. There were, however, some pieces of Korean metalwork, including Koryo dynasty hairpins, chopsticks and two bronze, horse-

shaped, belt hooks dating from the 2nd or 1st century B.C.. He was particularly interested in ancient Chinese bronzes, collecting some important examples. He also collected a group of animal-shaped Chinese belt hooks of the Han dynasty and it may be that the two Korean ones were originally part of this group. Animal-shaped belt hooks were a feature of the Ordos style bronzes of Northwest China and there may have been some confusion as to the origin of the horse-shaped ones. There was, in any case, undoubted cross-cultural influence in North China, Manchuria and Korea at this time.

Charles Seligman was Professor of Ethnology at the University of London. When he died in 1940, his wife donated a Korean celadon vase from his collection in his memory. Then, after her death in 1965, the remainder of their collection was bequeathed to the museum. This included quite a large group of Koryo bronze mirrors as well as celadons such as a fine 12th century cup and stand. Professor Seligman was particularly well-known for his research on early Chinese glass beads. He built up a large collection and these are all now in the British Museum.¹¹

All the above are people who collected and researched oriental art and, as a result, happened to include some Korean pieces in their collections, the number of Korean objects being more-or-less in proportion to the size of their collections. Then there are people like Lord Invernairn (William Beardmore, 1856-1936), a ship-builder who was president of the Iron and Steel Institute in 1917 and who collected a magnificent Koryo dynasty bronze incense-burner stand inlaid with silver and dated to 1358 A.D.. This was donated to the museum by his widow in 1945. He presumably collected it because of his interest in metalwork, but there is no record of how he came to acquire it, and it seems that he was not an art collector.

Similarly, Sir William Bateson (1861-1926), an eminent biologist and Cambridge Professor, collected Koryo bronze bowls, swords, chopsticks and spoons which were donated by his wife after his death. In his case, he also collected Old Master drawings and Japanese prints and was elected as a Trustee of the British Museum in 1922.

Perhaps more interesting for those with a particular interest in Korea are those Britons who, because of some professional reason, resided in Korea and started to collect out of an interest in the country and its cultural history. William Aston (1841-1911), Britain's first consul-general in Korea from 1884-1886, was an example of this category.¹² Unfortunately his collection was dispersed and the British Museum has only one Korean pot donated by him, dating to the late Unified Silla/early Koryo period.

Thomas Watters, a British consul in Seoul around 1885, managed to

acquire quite a few Korean pots, despite his complaint of poverty to his superiors in 1867, while a second assistant in his fourth year of service in China.¹³ He reported that, after meeting outgoings for mess, servants, teacher and miscellaneous domestic expenses, he had only \$2 a month left over for medicine, clothing and any other essential needs. He could afford no sort of amusement, had had to sell his watch, bed and nearly all his furniture and was a few score dollars in debt. This suggests either that his situation had improved by the time of his appointment to Seoul or that he acquired the pots very cheaply. There are some Koryo celadons and some later porcelain pieces, none of first class quality, although there is one interesting white porcelain water dropper with openwork decoration of dragons (Fig. 6). He donated his collection to the British Museum in 1888.

A British missionary who worked in Korea from 1910-1914, Stanley Smith, built up a sizeable collection of Koryo celadons and a few pieces of Choson porcelain as well as some pieces of textile and furniture and a few



Fig. 6 Porcelain water-dropper with openwork decoration of a dragon and clouds. Choson Dynasty, 19th century. Donated by Thomas Watters. B.M.O.A. 1888. 9-13. 10.

paintings. The British Museum purchased four pieces from his collection in 1951, including one fine porcelain teapot with underglaze blue decoration of a crane and bamboos. At present most of the rest of his collection is still in the possession of his widow.

Homer B. Hulbert, the well-known American missionary and friend of Korea, donated a few things to the museum in 1900, including a steel halberd. He also donated a map, which is now in the British Library.¹⁴ The question of why he donated to the British Museum rather than an American one, despite his famous desire to be buried in Korea rather than in Westminster Abbey, is an interesting one. On the whole, perhaps not surprisingly, missionaries did not prove a very prolific source of Korean antiquities.

A donation of 45 pieces was made in November 1910 by E. Ogita, who is described in the British Museum's register as "Secretary of the Imperial Chosen Government, Office of the Japanese Commission." These pieces were made especially to be exhibited in a Japanese Exhibition which was held at the White City in Shepherd's Bush, London, in 1910. They were presumably donated to the British Museum after the close of the exhibition. There are also other pieces of porcelain which were donated by Ogita around the same date which were probably also exhibited at the exhibition. The Anglo-Japanese Exhibition of 1910 was designed to increase cultural and commercial ties between the two countries and the shared ethos of Imperialism was an important part of the exhibition in the year of the annexation of Korea by Japan.¹⁵ Work by the peoples of Taiwan (Formosa), Manchuria and the Ainu people were also exhibited, displayed in a Palace of The Orient, which had a Korean Pavilion, described thus: "The roofs of fantastic shapes covering the gateway and the walls which enclosed the exhibit from Korea showed the marked peculiarities of Korean work" (Fig. 7). The Korean pieces acquired by the British Museum as a result of this exhibition are of fine quality. They include a beautiful sedge mat decorated with the ten symbols of longevity (Fig. 8), some oiled paper fans with paper-cut decorations, marble tobacco boxes, a group of inlaid lacquer pieces and a model of a traditional Korean house, cut away to show the roof tiling work and the underfloor ondol heating system. It is interesting that all of the Korean items were in the category of what would nowadays be called "Folk Crafts," while the Japanese exhibits included "Fine Art" paintings, sculpture and porcelain, both ancient and modern. This was presumably to fit in with the imperialistic ethos of the exhibition. In fact the official report of the exhibition patronisingly states: "The development of Korea also, since that peninsular empire came under the guiding influence of Japan, was similarly shown by exhibits represented by and under the auspices



Fig. 7 Photograph of the Korean Pavilion in the Palace of The Orient at the Japan-British Exhibition at White City, London in 1910.

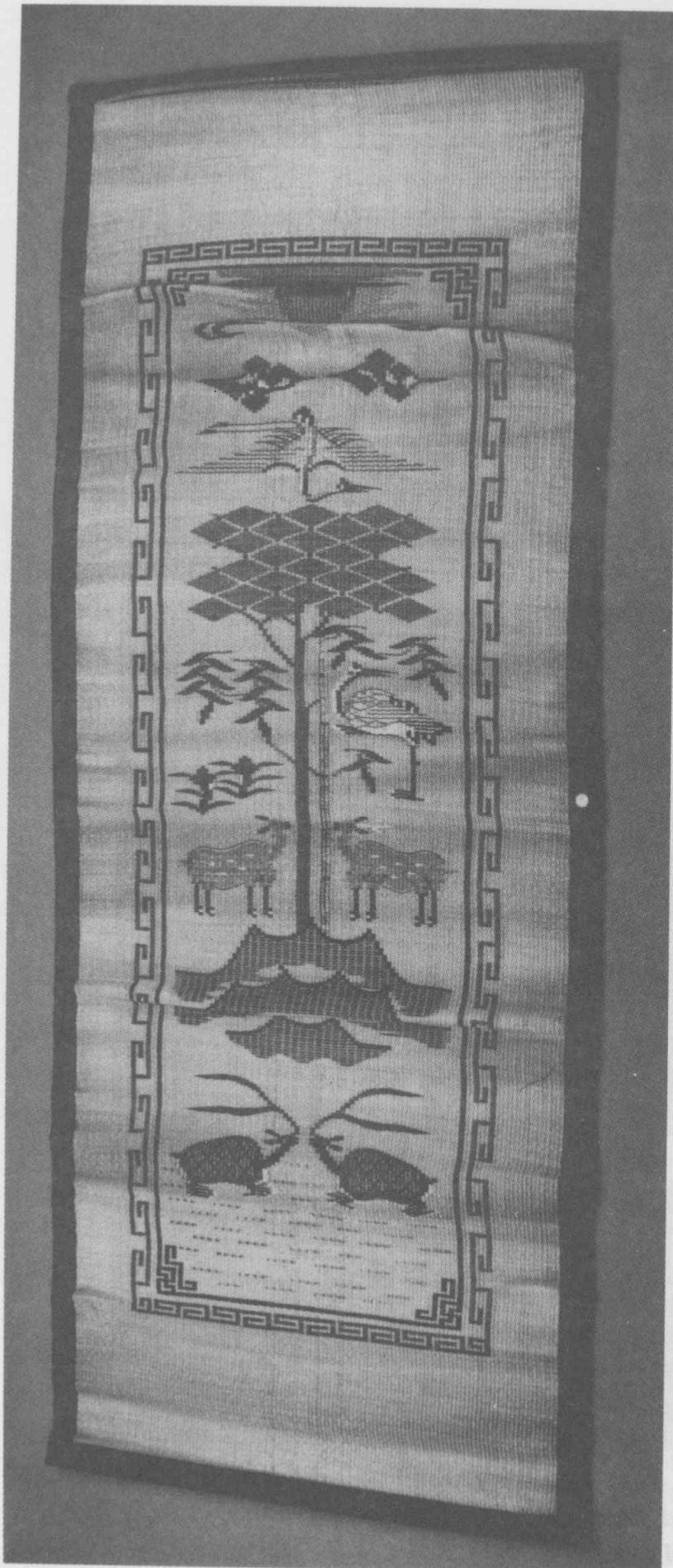


Fig. 8 Sedge mat decorated with longevity symbols. Made for and displayed at the Japan-British Exhibition in 1910.

of the Japanese Residency General in Korea.”¹⁶

The most recent donor to the British Museum’s Korean collection is Dr. A.G. Poulsen-Hansen, a Danish doctor who now resides in London. Dr. Poulsen-Hansen worked in public health programmes in Korea in the 1950s, after the Korean War. He lived in several towns, including Taejon and Seoul, and he managed to build up a considerable collection of ceramics at that time. Until recently he would delight in showing them to visitors to his house in Islington. In 1992, he decided to donate them to the British Museum. They include such fine pieces as a gourd-shaped Koryo celadon ewer, a monster mask roof tile from the United Silla period, and a small hexagonal bottle decorated with butterflies in underglaze blue, dating to the late 18th century¹⁷ (Fig. 9).

The museum continues to collect both antiquities and contemporary art. With the huge rise in prices of Korean art in recent years, however, it is increasingly difficult to acquire major pieces. The museum has a policy of

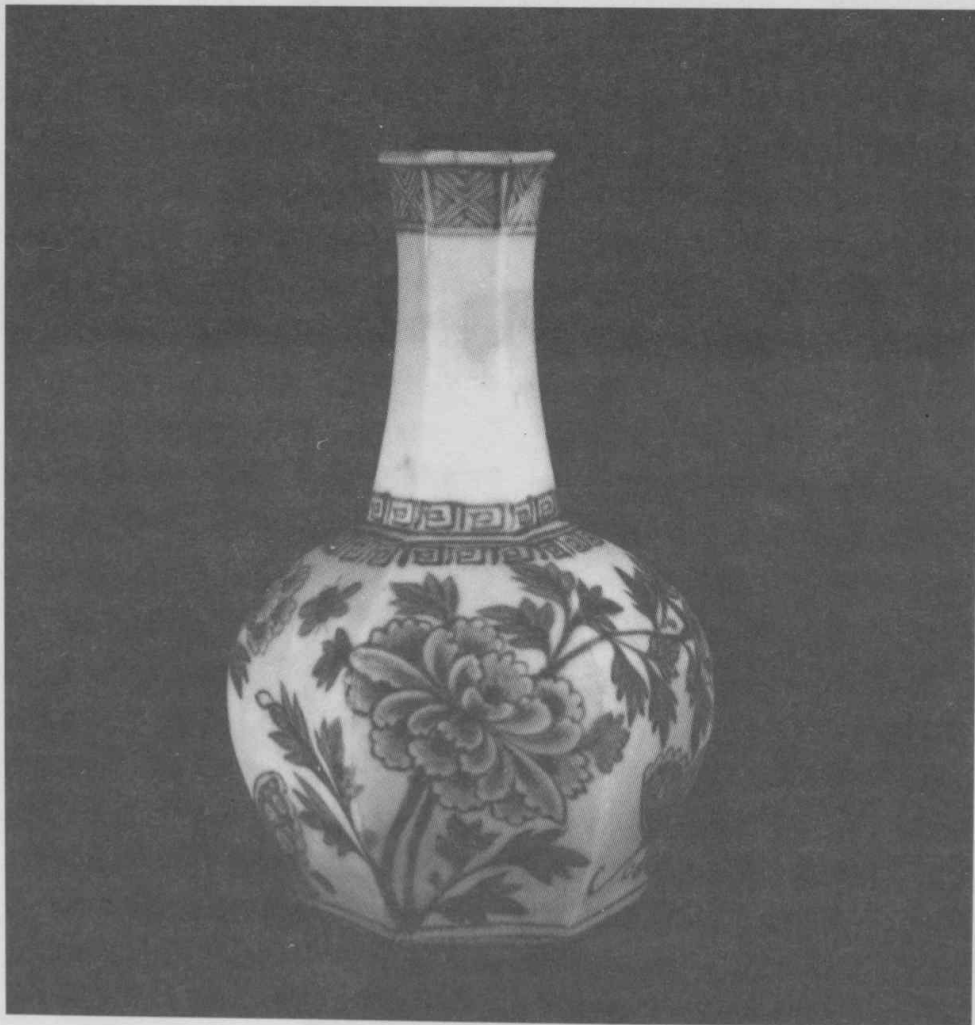


Fig. 9 Hexagonal porcelain vase with underglaze blue decoration of peonies and butterflies. Choson dynasty, late 18th-19th century. Donated by Dr. A.G. Poulsen-Hansen. B.M.O.A. 1992. 6-15. 33.

actively collecting 20th century works from Asia, conscious of the fact that this is a relatively unknown area in the West and that, as a major national museum, it is important to collect for the nation and the future. In this area, objects have been acquired in the last five years both through donation and purchase. The museum is trying to collect works which have some definite Korean quality, as opposed to more international style modern art works. It is sometimes difficult to explain the criteria for collecting in this area and, of course, the choice of works is, to some extent, ultimately a subjective one. A fine example of the type of work the museum has collected in recent years by donation is the painting in ink on paper of "People Dancing," by Suh Se-ok. This work combines traditional Korean technique and material with a completely contemporary interpretation. The modern punch'ong style ceramic works of Shin Sang-ho have also been collected for this reason.

The British Museum's Korean Collection has grown up during the last hundred years in a largely unplanned and unpredictable fashion. Much of it has not been seen by the public on a permanent basis, due to lack of display space. Now, as a result of a generous donation by the Korea Foundation, a permanent gallery for the arts of Korea can be established on the removal of the British Library. Visitors in the future will be able to see the works donated by and purchased from the collectors presented here.

N.B. I would like to acknowledge with thanks the help of J.E. Hoare of the Research Department, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, London and Miss Marjorie Caygill of the Director's Office, British Museum, London in providing references and information used in this article.

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11. *Op. cit.*, pp. 95-102.
12. For information about Aston, see Kornicki's chapter about him in *Britain and Japan 1859-1991: Themes and Personalities*, edited by Sir Hugh Cortazzi and Gordon Daniels (London, Routledge: 1991).
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15. Tomoko Sato and Toshio Watanabe, ed., *Japan and Britain, an Aesthetic Dialogue 1850-1930* (London, Lund Humphries: 1991), p. 159.
16. See "The Official Report of the Japan-British Exhibition 1910 at the Great White City, Shepherd's Bush, London," p. 135 and p. 284.
17. See Jane Portal, "The Korean Collection of Dr. A.G. Poulsen Hansen" in *Orientalia*, December 1992.

Remembering the Forgotten War: Anglo-American Scholarship on the Korean Conflict

by Allan R. Millett

The July, 1995 dedication of a new Korean War monument in Washington, D.C.—thirteen years after the unveiling of the Vietnam War memorial—dramatizes the belated recognition of America's first and most important conflict of the Cold War period. Caught between the global significance of World War II and the domestic trauma sparked by the Vietnam War, the Korean conflict never captured the enduring fascination of the reading public. This relative neglect has little to do with the war's importance in America's foreign policy since 1945 or with the suffering and sacrifice of the Korean people. Instead it can be found in the peculiar development of "schools" of Korean War authors who write for the Anglophone world, principally the nations of North America and Great Britain. As the fiftieth anniversary of North Korea's invasion approaches, more books are sure to appear, so it should be useful to know why American and British authors seem to be writing about several wars, not one.

The problems of Korean War historiography are not unique to this one conflict, but to writing about all wars in the United States and Great Britain. To borrow C.P. Snow's concept of "two cultures," the writers of history seek readers from two "cultural" audiences, the academic-government readers who constitute the nation's policy-attentive elite and the vast lay audience who read history for entertainment, escape, and exculpation. At issue within the first audience are questions of how "the lessons of history" should influence contemporary policy and how current policy problems have historic roots that must be nurtured or severed as the foreign policy establishment moves forward in its quixotic quest for "solutions" and "new world order." Academic-government history (defined not just by the audience, but by the historian's

employers and sponsors) has little influence on the books the lay population reads, which often approach comics without pictures or video games gone wrong. Some historians of considerable intellect and taste for research can and do reach a mass audience; the late Barbara Tuchman and William Manchester come to mind. Nevertheless, academic-government history is not defined by scholarship or sponsorship alone, but internal divisions within the historical profession itself on politics and the nature of historical study.

In more specific terms, American academic historians have too often disconnected the causes and prevention of conflict (diplomatic history) from the conduct of war (military history). Often the assessment of the consequences of war are disconnected again from a war's causes and conduct. Historians of the older tradition of organic, integrated political history—historians like Edward Gibbon and Francis Parkman—would read with wonderment some of the books that pass today as wisdom on world affairs, whether the authors were political scientists or historians. Contemporary university historians tend to be overspecialized, under-educated, and overzealous about contemporary political agendas that have little to do with the search for truth about the past, let alone the quest for national or individual virtue. The results are works that become the scholar's equivalent of a warrior's conquest; the favorable review is just another feather in one's war bonnet, placed there at the expense of some fallen warrior from another ideological tribe. Government historians have a different ordeal, which is the moral equivalent (to push the American Indian analogy) of a purification or puberty rite because their books must survive the review of the tribal elders, often not historians but military officers and career bureaucrats. Neither condition encourages fresh thinking.¹

The study of any war presents a daunting challenge for the historian. Following the traditional chronological organization, one should deal with a war's "three Cs" of causation, conduct, and consequences. This approach is as old as the books of Thucydides and Josephus and just as valid now as it was in the pre-Christian era. Influenced by the use of historical study to identify and understand the changes and continuities in modern warfare, some contemporary historians have experimented with a vertical schema of analysis that examines the politics of war (war aims, domestic politics, the stresses of mobilization), the strategy of war (the concepts for the use of military forces for political goals), the operational conduct of warfare (the organization and employment of military forces against an enemy's leadership, population, and armed forces over extended periods of time and geographic space), and the tactical conduct of warfare (the use of fire and maneuver in battle to destroy the enemy's will and capability to fight). Using the horizontal and vertical

schemas for the study of war and giving equal attention to all the belligerents requires a lifetime of study and the mastery of many scholarly skills, not the least the ability to work with documents in many languages. It is not surprising that "complete" studies of a single war (let alone the phenomenon of warfare itself) are hard to find, but they do exist.²

Choosing the most successful forays into the history of warfare is about as dangerous for academic authors as the real thing, but some books deserve historiographical "star" status: Donald Kagan's four volume *A History of the Peloponnesian War* (1969-1987), C.V. Wedgwood, *The Thirty Years War* (1938), Sir Michael Howard, *The Franco-Prussian War* (1961), and Gerhard Weinberg, *A World at Arms: A Global History of World War II* (1994). In wars in which the United States played a central role, the best books are James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (1988) and David F. Trask, *The War with Spain in 1898* (1981), but even McPherson's book does not meet the standards of Confederate-sympathizers (who prefer Shelby Foote's trilogy), and Trask deals with a war that may have not been "splendid," but at least was "little." Two books vie for the title of definitive history of the American Revolution: Don Higginbotham, *The War of American Independence* (1971) and Robert Middlekauf, *The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution, 1763-1789* (1982). There is no single authoritative book on World War I or the Vietnam War, whether one defines that as a war that began in 1930, 1945, or 1958. There is no "complete history" of the Korean War either.

THE LIMITS OF DIPLOMATIC HISTORY

At the moment the intellectual high ground among American diplomatic historians is held by Dr. Melvyn P. Leffler, Edward R. Stettinus Professor of American History and chair of the department of history at the University of Virginia and the author of *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War* (1992). Leffler is a past president (1994-1995) of the Society for Historians of American Foreign Policy (SHAFR), and his book has received high praise as well as multiple nominations for the most prestigious awards for non-fiction. *Preponderance* will no doubt shape the textbook accounts of the origins of the Cold War and the Korean War for the next thirty years, and it will not be easily supplanted since Leffler has written the book from sources wide and deep, redolent with archival dust. Yet *Preponderance* provides a stunning example of why diplomatic historians, even ones as accomplished as Leffler, seem incapable of

writing about war, especially those fought by the United States.

In his brilliant address upon becoming president of SHAFR, "New Approaches, Old Interpretations, and Prospective Reconfiguration," Leffler examines the uninspiring contemporary record of academic historians to write integrated history that anyone but other professors will read. Leaving aside the pitfalls of academic prose and the impatience of Americans with the written word in general, Leffler's argument has merit: diplomatic historians by definition deal with important historical and contemporary problems of American foreign policy and politics, but provide too little scholarship that connects foreign policy with changes in the international state system. Leffler is also wise in his evaluation of the contributions of Cold War "revisionist" scholars. Most of them are disciples of William Appleman Williams and Walter LeFeber, who argue that American ignorance, greed, megalomania, and adventurism caused the great confrontation with the Soviet Union. Certainly, no contemporary historian would dare ignore domestic political influence, especially exercised by special interest groups, upon the foreign policy process. Leffler quite correctly suggests, however, that the revisionists and their corporatist fellow-travelers, who emphasize the deterministic influence of competing economic organizations, have forgotten that there is a big, intractable world out there.³

Yet nowhere in Leffler's review of forty years of scholarship on American foreign policy does he ever include the use of force within the province of academic historians. Perhaps the view that war represents the failure of diplomacy means that writing about war is a sign of intellectual defeat. At the very least, war is the predictable expression of imperialism, militarism, racism, the struggle for national liberation, and the inevitable result of the clash of economic classes. One might now add another correct cause of war: the intractable conflict between people of different gender and sexual preference, except that it is difficult to identify any fought over the sanctity of genitalia. In fact, diplomatic historians remain so tied to the idea of American exceptionalism, especially the ideals of Wilsonian internationalism, that they tend to view foreign policy as simply an extension of domestic political history. Leffler and the best academics avoid this trip, of course, but even they attack other historians like John Lewis Gaddis, who insists that external threats and geopolitical concerns remain at the heart of American foreign policies.

Leffler's own treatment of the Korean War in *Preponderance* shows the limitations of the best diplomatic history in dealing with a war. In addition to his use of appropriate private papers and official documents, Leffler cites the best American scholarship on Korea's perilous place in Cold War diplomacy. The scholarship fuses international and domestic politics and keeps a critical

distance from official explanations and bureaucratic documents that reek of committee compromises. Leffler's sources cover the best scholarship of a generation: the articles and essays of Barton J. Bernstein; William W. Stueck, Jr., *The Road to Confrontation: American Policy Toward China and Korea, 1947-1950* (1981); James I. Matray, *The Reluctant Crusade: American Foreign Policy in Korea, 1941-1950* (1985); Peter Lowe, *The Origins of the Korean War* (1986); Charles M. Dobbs, *The Unwanted Symbol: American Foreign Policy, the Cold War, and Korea, 1945-1950* (1981); and Lisle Rose, *Roots of Tragedy: the United States and the Struggle of Asia, 1945-1953* (1976). International politics after June 25, 1950 are interpreted in Rosemary Foot, *The Wrong War: American Policy and the Dimensions of the Korean Conflict* (1985) and *A Substitute for Victory: The Politics of Peacemaking at the Korean Armistice Talks* (1990). The anticipated apogee of the internationalist books will be Stueck, *The Necessary War: Korea, An International History* (forthcoming, 1995 or 1996), which will supercede Burton I. Kaufman, *The Korean War* (1986) as the definitive account of the war within a global security framework.⁴

Leffler is much too astute to ignore the course of history within Korea as an influence on American decision-making, but he follows the conventional view of the war as an invasion by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (Pyongyang) against the Republic of Korea (Seoul), the unfortunate two Korean governments produced by the irreconcilable interests of the United States and the Soviet Union. For South Korea, this invasion ended the Tale of the Two Johns (Hodge and Muccio), the epic blunders and modest achievements of the U.S. Military Government in Korea and the U.S. Embassy and the Korean Military Advisory Group, and the bitter struggles of Syngman Rhee, Kim Ku, Yŏ Un-hyŏng, and Pak Hon-yŏng, none of whom is a household word for American academics except Rhee, the English-speaking master manipulator of Washington opinion. Like his academic contemporaries, Leffler goes to Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War*, 2 vols. (1981 and 1990) for instruction on "the inside story" and, to a lesser degree, to John Merrill, *Korea: The Peninsular Origins of the War* (1989). Cumings and Merrill, however, drew their inspiration not only from their own residence in Korea, but from a common mentor, the late Gregory Henderson, a foreign service officer in Korea (1948-1950 and 1958-1963) and the author of the seminal *Korea: The Politics of the Vortex* (1968). Henderson, not the iconoclastic journalist I.F. Stone, deserves the title of "father" of the American revisionists, for his insight into Korean politics (assisted by his fluency in Korean) set the bar high for Cumings and Merrill. Although few historians saw the same

responsibility for provoking a North Korean attack that Stone found in Seoul and Washington, the Henderson School sought to destroy the conventional wisdom that a Mao Zedong-Stalin-Kim Il-Sung evil triad started the war against a peace loving Republic of Korea.⁵

Even before the appearance of Cumings' first volume, the Henderson School entered the dispute with an edited volume: Frank Baldwin, ed., *Without Parallel: The American-Korean Relationship Since 1945* (1973). This volume produced the early work not only of Cumings, but Jon Halliday and Robert Simmons. The first scholar, an avowedly Leftist Briton, dealt with the war from the Russian perspective and the latter, a former Peace Corps worker like Cumings, specialized in Chinese history. Many of the same authors then contributed essays to Bruce Cumings, ed., *Child of Conflict: The Korean-American Relationship, 1943-1953* (1983), which included influential essays by Cumings himself, Merrill, Bernstein, Matray, and Stueck. Simmons went on to write *The Strained Alliance: Peking, P'yongyang, Moscow and the Politics of the Korean Civil War* (1975), refined and expanded only recently in Sergei N. Goncharov, John W. Lewis, and Xue Litai, *Uncertain Partners: Stalin, Mao and the Korean War* (1993). The Henderson School also profited from exhaustive studies of Marxist revolution in 20th century Korea: Robert Scalapino and Chong Sik Lee, *Communist in Korea* 2 vols., (1972) and Dae-sook Suh, *The Korean Communist Movement, 1918-1945* (1967) and *Korean Communism, 1945-1980* (1981). The Henderson School ultimately produced two histories of the war that integrated much of its research on Korean politics with its criticism of American intervention: Callum MacDonald, *Korea: the War Before Vietnam* (1986) the work of a British academic, and Cumings and Halliday, *Korea: The Unknown War* (1988).

MacDonald's subtitle reveals the problem of much academic writing on Korea. Like the TV black comedy "Mash," the Korean War is a way to condemn by allegory the American participation in the Vietnam War. It can also be interpreted as the Department of State's revenge against the rest of the United States government for blaming it for the success of the Chinese revolution. The Henderson School adds an extra element of *ex post facto* judgment, for it also holds the United States responsible for the dictatorship of Park Chung-hui, 1961-1979, and the excesses of his successor Chun Doo-hwan, the architect of the Kwangju Massacre of May 1980 and the political repression of the Fifth Republic. Even if their understanding of Korean politics makes their interpretation of events far richer than contemporary diplomatic historians, the Henderson School can be as counterfactual and selective in its analysis as the most dogmatic revisionists.

The weakness of diplomatic-political historians writings about war in general and the Korean War in particular is their obsession for fixing responsibility for the initiation of the conflict. Historical analysis becomes more like a legal indictment than an explanation of causation. There is little attention to the conduct of the war, although the consequences are normally listed like a jail sentence. Using the vertical model for war assessment, diplomatic historians seldom venture from the level of political analysis. While they may deal with *force* as a political phenomenon, they are uncomfortable in dealing with *armed forces* as human institutions or in writing about high commanders and the conduct of war. It is no accident that the elite of contemporary American diplomatic historians is dominated by academics who have no personal military experience or even government service outside of the Peace Corps. Like many other intellectuals, academic historians often declare that things they do not understand (like strategy, operations, and tactics) must be irrelevant or worse. The easiest way to deal with war is simply to condemn it.

THE OFFICIAL HISTORIES OF THE KOREAN WAR

One characteristic of a modern military establishment, officered by long-service professionals, is its interest in the history of warfare, especially its own participation. When military history began to emerge as a historical specialty in the nineteenth century, it did so because of multiple requirements defined by the higher headquarters of national armed forces. These demands for an ordered past served various needs: (1) to build unit esprit by preserving regimental traditions and wartime exploits — even in defeat — in printed form, (2) to provide reading/educational materials for student-officers in command and staff colleges, (3) to provide background studies on military issues for senior officials, military and civilian, (4) to describe a rationale for a service's functions, especially in the face of technologically-based new services like aviation, and (5) to create books on the conduct of war for the attentive public, whose participation in military policy would likely increase with the rise of representative government. First produced in a systematic way after the Napoleonic Wars by the Prussian army, military history had a distinctly military character since it focused on case studies of battles and campaigns from the perspective of senior officers, who, in fact, did much of the writing themselves.⁶

Until World War II military history in the United States remained the intellectual property of the American armed forces, which fulfilled its public education role by publishing multi-volume document sets. Real books on mili-

tary affairs came from individual authors like Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan, USN, or Colonel John McAuley Palmer, USA, or hawkish politicians like Henry Cabot Lodge and Theodore Roosevelt. The rise of public, "official," history throughout the federal government, however, reshaped the historical practices of the armed forces during World War II. Although historical analysis in the professional military educational system remained the province of officer-instructors, civilian-academic historians (some temporarily in uniform) brought new conceptions and standards to the historical divisions, which have never been the same since World War II. The influx of civilian professionals, many with limited or no military experience, into the armed forces historical divisions has continued since 1945; despite some cutbacks, the number of civilian historians working somewhere in the armed forces probably numbers seven hundred. Their professional and intellectual values are formed by their university graduate education (a minimum MA required) and their identification with other civilian public historians.

Their detractors have always called public historians "court historians," modern versions of royal chronologists, genealogists, tract-authors, and minstrels. Some public historians have felt more like jesters or sorcerers. Public historians in the armed forces — according to their own testimony — seldom encounter extra-professional pressures to adjust, trim, bloat, or fabricate their works to protect national, service, or individual reputations. Controversial matters are usually handled by silence or understatement. Although official historians have not escaped occasional censure for their bland treatment of spicy events, their record for clarity and objectivity is quite good as judged by their fellow professionals, who participate in panel reviews of "official" manuscripts and write reviews of government-sponsored books.

The principal problem of public history and America's wars is not honesty, but focus. The senior officers of the armed forces set the agenda: the strategic context, operational experience, and tactical performance are the things worth studying. Service historians are supposed to write about their service; the history of joint and allied cooperation or lack thereof is somebody else's problem. The causes and consequences of war are not a pressing matter, and political direction is largely off-limits. Logistics gets scrutiny, but intelligence does not, usually because agencies outside the military discourage it. Leadership failures are treated gently unless the embarrassment, like Douglas MacArthur's in 1941-42 and 1950, is too public to ignore. On the other hand, systemic problems of leadership, such as those in the U.S. Eighth Army in 1950-1951, do not attract much attention. Battlefield heroics make better reading than combat ineptness, whatever the reasons. For all their potential short-

comings, however, the historical divisions of the U.S. armed forces have not done badly on the Korean War, and they have more courage than their State Department counterpart, which still publishes only document collections (the *Foreign Relations of the United States* series) and slowly at that.⁷

The first limitation to the official histories of the U.S. armed forces and the Department of Defense on the Korean War is that they pay little attention to the pre-June, 1950 period. If it were not for unpublished histories by Headquarters, U.S. Army Forces in Korea, XXIV Corps, and U.S. Army Military Government in Korea, the pre-invasion insurgency and pacification campaign, 1948-1950, would pass unnoticed. The otherwise excellent Steven L. Rearden, *History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense: The Formative Years, 1947-1950* (1984) devotes one chapter of nineteen on "the spreading turmoil in Asia" and gives Korea equal billing with Japan, the Philippines, China, and Indochina, which is not much. The only study of the U.S. Army effort on the ground is Robert K. Sawyer, *Military Advisors in Korea: KMAG in Peace and War* (1962 and 1988) and it is incomplete in coverage, shallow in analysis, and too fulsome on the Army's level of effort and purity of intention in creating the South Korean armed forces. There is scant mention of the bitter fighting on Cheju-do and in the four Cholla and Kyöngsang provinces. (There are no official histories at all of the advisory groups in Greece and the Philippines either.) The raw material for a history of the pre-1950 war at every level exists, but no Chief of Military History thought such a study worthwhile, perhaps because such a history would discomfort the generals of the South Korean army.

From the June invasion until the July 1953 Armistice, the Korean War became a legitimate war for official historians. Of course, no public historian has written about the war from the perspective of the White House or the Department of State, but qualified academic historians have worked over Harry Truman and Dean Acheson and quickly debunked their self-serving memoirs. The view from the Pentagon is captured in several detailed, documented works: Doris Condit, *History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense: The Test of War* (1988); James F. Schnabel and Robert J. Watson, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and National Policy, III: The Korean War* (1979); and James F. Schnabel, *United States Army in the Korean War: Policy and Direction: The First Year* (1972).

The separate military services, building on their World War II historical programs, turned to with a will on the Korean War. The U.S. Army Center of Military History produced three "in-theater" operational volumes in its *United States Army in the Korean War* series: Roy E. Appleman, *South to the Nak-*

tong, *North to the Yalu* (1961), which covers June-November, 1950; Billy Mossman, *Ebb and Flow* (1990), which carries the war to July, 1953; and Walter Hermes, Jr., *Truce Tent and Fighting Front* (1966), which covers October, 1951 to July, 1953. The chronological void (July-October, 1951) is telling, however, for during this period the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps senior officers in Korea urged a second major amphibious operation to exploit the summer collapse of the Chinese People's Volunteer Force and to reestablish United Nations Command along the Pyongyang-Wonsan line. General Matthew B. Ridgway, MacArthur's successor as CINUNC, scotched the idea and accepted a plan from Far East Air Forces (General O.P. Weyland) to bomb the Chinese and North Koreans into submission or cooperative negotiation. No history yet covers this important strategic debate and Ridgway's decision. Ridgway gives Operation Talons scant attention in his own memoir, *The Korean War* (1967) and even less analysis of Weyland's air option, Operation Strangle.

At a less controversial operational level, Army historians have published useful special studies of various aspects of the war. Terrence J. Gough, *U.S. Army Mobilization and Logistics in the Korean War* (1987) provides a broad framework and literature review while John G. Westover, *Combat Support in Korea* (1955 and 1987) provides logistical case studies. Revealing medical statistics and analysis may be found in the Surgeon General, U.S. Army, *Battle Casualties and Medical Statistics: U.S. Army Experience in the Korean War* (1973); and Albert E. Cowdrey, *U.S. Army in the Korean War: The Medic's War* (1987). Tactical case studies may be found in Russell A. Gugeler, *Combat Actions in Korea* (1954 and 1970) and William G. Robertson, *Counterattack on the Naktong, 1950* (1985). These special studies are only the tip of an iceberg of unpublished studies written by officer-historians of the Eighth Army's 5th Historical Detachment and stored in the National Archives or the U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

The Air Force put all its Korean War historical bombs in one bomb bay: Robert F. Futrell, *The United States Air Force in Korea, 195-1953* (rev. ed., 1983), which might have been subtitled either "we could have won the war" or "we tried harder." Futrell does the obligatory task of describing Air Force planning and operations, largely on an industrial-bureaucratic model that infers success from the level of effort, e.g. number of sorties flown, tons of bombs dropped, and readiness rates of aircraft. The Communist air war is described with inaccuracies intact since 1959. Lin Biao commands the Chinese People's Volunteer Force; the Russian participation in the air war is minimized; the Chinese are Soviet surrogates. What is striking about Futrell's air

campaign analysis is his limited attention to Navy and Marine Corps tactical aviation and his party-line analysis of the issue of close air support for ground troops. In a flurry of post-Futrell studies of air employment issues, the Chief of Air Force History sponsored Korean War case studies of aviation functions: Thomas C. Hone, "Korea," in Benjamin Franklin Cooling, ed., *Air Superiority* (1991), 453-504; Allan R. Millett, "Korea, 1950-1953," in Benjamin Franklin Cooling, ed., *Close Air Support* (1990), 345-410; Thomas C. Hone, "Strategic Bombing Constrained: Korea and Vietnam," in R. Cargill Hall, ed., *Strategic Bombardment* (in press).

Navy and Marine Corps historians do not argue that their services carried the American war effort, only that the naval services performed to higher professional standards and would have fought the Korean War harder and smarter if Navy and Marine officers had been in charge. The Navy history is James A. Field, *History of United States Naval Operations Korea* (1962), and the Marine Corps companion is Lynn Montross and Nicholas Canzona, et. al., *History of U.S. Marine Operations in Korea, 1950-1953*, 5 vols. (1954-1972). Unlike the Army and Air Force historical programs, which keep a tight rein on official sponsorship, the Navy and Marine Corps encourage "semi-official" publication, which means that service authors writing on or off duty time can publish outside the time-consuming review and production process dictated by regulations. For the Korean War, see especially Malcolm W. Cagle and Frank A. Manson, *The Sea War in Korea* (1957); Richard P. Hallion, *The Naval Air War in Korea* (1986); Andrew Geer, *The New Breed: the Story of the U.S. Marines in Korea* (1952); Lynn Montross, *Cavalry of the Sky: The Story of U.S. Marine Combat Helicopters* (1954); and Robert D. Heinl, *Victory at High Tide: The Inchon-Seoul Campaign* (1968). These books are much more unabashed in service partisan bias and forthright on personalities, but they still require careful reading. For example, the 1st Marine Division, unlike its Army counterparts, never accepted raw Korean conscripts, which preserved its unit cohesion and combat performance. Instead the Marines adopted the 1st Regiment, Korean Marine Corps, manned it with their own advisors, and added it as a fourth infantry regiment to the 1st Marine Division. There are no published or unpublished studies about this alternative to the Korean Augmentation to the U.S. Army (KATUSA) program.

What is conspicuously missing from the Korean War official history library is an account written from the high ground held by the Commander-in-Chief, Far East Command/United Nations command, who dealt or should have dealt with every aspect of the war's conduct. MacArthur's own *Reminiscences* (1964), Ridgway's *Korean War*, and Mark W. Clark, *From the Danube to the*

Yalu (1954) do not qualify as definitive, so the only substitutes for subjectivity are D. Clayton James, *The Years of MacArthur*, Vol. III *Triumph and Disaster, 1945-1964* (1985) and *Refighting the Last War: Command and Crisis in Korea, 1950-1953* (1993). The vacuum created by FECOM's non-history perpetuates silences and allows historians to dodge crucial political issues. For example, there are no studies of Japanese collaboration in the UN war effort, interservice disagreements on strategy and operations, theater intelligence and special operations failures, relations with the Rhee regime in 1952-1953, the bitter conflict between Civil Assistance Command of United Nations Command and the United Nations Korean Reconstruction Agency, and the whole, still largely untold, story of UNC's handling of Korean and Chinese prisoners-of-war and internees. Such subjects are not necessarily food for scandal; the Henderson School already knows much of the story. Their study would simply clarify American policies and illuminate the perceptual differences between the adversaries — and allies.

The best way to step back from an American-centric view of the war is to read the official histories of the Commonwealth allies in United Nations Command: General Sir Anthony Farrar-Hockley, *The British Part in the Korean War*, Vol. I, *A Distant Obligation* (1990) and Vol. II, *A Honourable Discharge* (1995); Robert O'Neill, *Australia in the Korean War*, 2 vols (1981, 1985); Herbert Fairlie Wood, *Strange Battleground: The Official History of the Canadian Army in Korea* (1966); and Ian McGibbon, *New Zealand and the Korean War* (1992). These studies describe with admirable restraint the perils of fighting along side of the U.S. Army and below the U.S. Air Force, for they abound in tales of misdirected artillery and air strikes, open flanks and unannounced withdrawals, careless generals and cowardly staffs, demoralized troops, vicious allies, and wretched fire support and intelligence. The formation of the Commonwealth Division thus become more a matter of self-preservation than a deepened commitment.

Whatever their shortcomings as authors, public historians make possible other histories of warfare. They preserve documents and, today, tapes and disks. They conduct battlefield interviews and take photographs. They create cartographic records, now essential as "graphics" drive more battles than printed operations orders. They keep diaries and logs if present in a campaign. They insure that intelligence staffs preserve enemy sources of information. They often write voluminous unpublished studies and reports that lay the foundation for publishable books. They become institutional memory. The one thing public historians cannot do well is to push their work beyond the definitions of usability and appropriateness as determined by their bureaucratic

superiors. Public historians of warfare, therefore, are locked into organizational values that stress success, not failure, and focus on the conduct of battle, not the causes and consequences of war. Although the research and writing standards for public historians are much the same as for academic historians, the former must plow the straight furrow while the latter blow up the whole field.

THE POPULAR HISTORIANS AND THE KOREAN WAR

For all their limitations the scholarly books on war still remain the literary equivalent of the music of Aaron Copeland and Ralph Vaughn Williams—rich in national melodies, slightly dissonant, a mix of simple and complex themes, evocative. Popular military history is the equivalent of John Philip Sousa marches and the tunes of Gilbert and Sullivan, some very good, most forgettable and repetitive, and some horrible. The literature on the Korean War reflects this condition.

Discounting the shallow instant histories of the 1950s, the first serious popular histories proved more durable than one might have predicted: David Rees, *Korea: The Limited War* (1964) and T.R. Fehrenbach, *This Kind of War: A Study of Unpreparedness* (1963). Written by a British international journalist and a Texas reporter and history buff, these books remained in print for most of the next thirty years because they were well-written, communicated strong themes, and celebrated the wisdom of United Nations intervention. Rees' book echoed the views of the Western allies and fellow Europeanists: Korea was worth fighting for, but not too hard and not too long. Reissued by the U.S. Army in 1993, *This Kind of War* proved popular with serving soldiers, veterans, and Cold Warriors in general, in part because it stressed the price in lives of self-deceptive diplomacy and poor military readiness. Only slightly less successful in appeal and content, Robert Leckie, *Conflict: The History of the Korean War* (1962) rounded out the first wave of pro-intervention histories. The next popular histories carried on the theme of a nasty job well done by the U.S. Eighth Army: General Matthew B. Ridgway, *The Korean War* (1967) and General J. Lawton Collins, *War in Peacetime* (1969), both a refreshing escape from the Vietnam War travails.

After a decade of neglect, the Korean War returned as a literary phenomenon and returned with a degree of intensity that belies the characterization "forgotten." Three books stand out for their research, readable prose, and keen insight: Max Hastings, *The Korean War* (1987); Clay Blair, *The Forgotten War: America in Korea, 1950-1953* (1987); and John Toland, *In Mortal*

Combat: Korea, 195-1953 (1991). Books of lesser merit crowded the bookstores: Bevin Alexander, *Korea: The First War We Lost* (1986); Joseph C. Goulden, *Korea, The Untold Story of the War* (1982); four books by Edwin P. Hoyt; two volumes of oral history by Donald Knox and Alfred Coppel; James L. Stokesbury, *A Short History of the Korean War* (1988); and Richard Whelan, *Drawing the Line: The Korean War, 195-1953* (1990). No doubt there will be more popular histories as the war's fiftieth anniversary approaches. If the popular historians run to form, they will continue to remember the same things about the war and continue to forget much of the story.

The popular histories of the Korean War have some striking similarities that limit their usefulness. They focus almost exclusively on the war itself, and the conventional part (1950-1953) at that. They see the war through American eyes; only Hastings, an admirer of the British army, and Toland, an admirer of Asians, provide exceptions. With their sights on the U.S. Eighth Army, the authors ignore the enemy and neglect the allies. They write about the war as anti-Clauswitzians, separating the experience of battle from its purposes. Their war is the "face of battle" (mostly Caucasian), a hard march into the land of "the naked and the dead" (mostly American), an exploration of the "thin red line" between courage, despair, and madness. Discussions of strategy, planning, logistics, command and control, fire support integration, troop training, and all the professional issues that keep officers busy impress popular historians little. Blair and Hastings are the exceptions, which makes their books more interesting. Toland likes anecdotes more than operational issues, but at least he takes the Koreans and Chinese seriously. The other authors are basically story-tellers.

The common thread in the popular histories is their authors mix of military and literary history. They are the war's junior officers, NCOs, and war correspondents; they are spokesmen for the troops who fought the war. They can catch the thrill of victory and agony of death and defeat in combat, but they have difficulty seeing the war in political terms. Accepting their assumptions and interpretations is like letting infantry lieutenants and sergeants define a war's value; there is a point where personal involvement necessarily defines one's universe and values. The story-tellers cannot be dismissed because their research is thin; most of them use the official histories, although selectively. The major problem is the influence of modern journalism and pulp fiction. The story-tellers never met an interviewee they didn't like or piles of documents they wanted to read. Suspicious of military organizations and organization men, they fly like moths to the flame to charismatic generals. The South Korean army, for example, apparently had only two senior officers, Generals

Paik Sun Yup and Chung Il Kwon. General Matthew B. Ridgway cleansed the Eighth Army's Augean stable of command, but few American soldiers let alone civilians can tell you who brought the Eighth Army to true greatness in the campaign of 1951. The Koreans know General James Van Fleet better than most Americans; his statue, not Ridgway's, graces the grounds of the Korean Military Academy.

The popular historians miss almost everything that happened outside Eighth Army's tactical universe. They understand that the battle of Chipyeong-ni in February, 1951 proved that the Eighth Army could destroy Chinese divisions on cold nights and do so with awesome killing power. Chipyeong-ni is today's favorite staff ride, but one looks in vain for any account of the ROK 9th Division's two battles for White Horse Mountain in October and November, 1952, which proved that South Korean soldiers could hold any position against the most stubborn Chinese attacks provided that they had U.S. Army levels of artillery support. The ROK army's self-confidence, however, took a dive in July, 1953 when the Chinese People's Volunteer Force attacked and pummeled six ROK divisions in the Kumsong-Pukhan sector, a week-long offensive that persuaded Syngman Rhee to accept an armistice, however aggravating. The ROK army could not yet stand alone.

The popular historians understated the salience of the POW repatriation issue and the continuation of the war in 1952-1953. The survival stories of allied POWs are always arresting, even if oft-told tales. The more interesting issue is the struggle for the hearts and minds of the Korean and Chinese POWs, whose unwillingness to be repatriated turned United Nations Command compounds into battlegrounds for almost two years. For one thing the Rhee administration was in no hurry to process South Koreans impressed into the North Korean People's Army; the number of potential subversives looked too menacing. One relatively certain way to sort out the loyal and defecting POWs was religious conversion. Where psyops falter, call in evangelism. Presbyterian and Methodist missionaries, American and Korean, went behind the wire and reinforced the non-repatriates' determination to seek freedom and salvation. One will look in vain for this story in either the Henderson School books or the official histories, both camps apparently discomfited by religious conviction.

Syngman Rhee does not fare well with the popular historians, when they choose to deal with him. Rhee is the distant dictator, the aged exile who is too clever when he doesn't need to be and too given to political repression. No Woodrow Wilson, Rhee, nevertheless, faced problems of building support that could not be solved without extralegal recourse to American economic aid.

Corruption? By 1950s if not 1870s standards, the United States government had to worry about corruption but not too much if it wanted the ROK government and army to remain firm. Did Rhee fear he would lose U.S. aid? Yes — not least because he knew that Eighth Army had a plan to move against him (Operation Eveready) if he balked at an armistice. Everyday depended on ROK army defections, so Rhee naturally paid some attention to which generals commanded the crucial internal security formation like the Martial Law Command and the Counterintelligence Corps. Rhee saw no reason to hurry his own departure by bowing to American political sensibilities.

CONCLUSION

The history of the Korean War will continue to reflect the influence of Cold War politics and the revulsion for the Vietnam War until younger American academics seize the field from their ideological elders, a mix of revisionists and Henderson School critics. Like much writing about American interventionism, Korean War historiography reflects some obvious and unspoken assumptions that require rethinking: (1) the native politicians are easily manipulated and coopted; (2) economic influences are the principal cause of political behavior; (3) local American officials are naive and have little or no insight into native politics; (4) secular socialists are the only legitimate political leaders in a post-colonial nation; (5) American policy is driven by regional and global concerns that have no local relevance, and (6) the use of force by incumbent regimes shows their illegitimacy while insurgents are patriotic freedom fighters who can use any form of violence against anyone in their pursuit of national liberation and social justice.

Historians like to call the Korean conflict a “revolutionary war.” The definitions of revolution, however, vary widely. For diplomatic and public-military historians, the revolution is in American foreign policy. Revisionists deplore the Korean War’s “globalization” of containment, its impact on U.S. relations with China and Japan, its encouragement of McCarthyism, and its stimulus for the tripling of U.S. defense spending. Pro-containment champions admit the changes and applaud them except McCarthysim, since American rearmament and alliance building brought an end to the worst Stalinist imperialism. The Henderson School uses revolution to describe the frustrated socialist-democratic liberation movement of 1945, the reformist anti-Japanese popular uprising that produced the People’s Committees. The American-rightist Korean alliance crushed this authentic revolution, polarized left and right, and

produced a war that divided the Korean people into extremist warring societies.

The challenge for any future historian of the Korean War is to bring elements of these definitions of revolutionary conflict into some sort of synthesis since both have some validity. It is a daunting challenge, but one that other historians have when met writing about other wars.

NOTES

1. For examples of the contemporary concerns of academic historians, see Eric Foner, ed. for the American Historical Association, *The New American History* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Temple University Press, 1990) and David Thelen, et. al., eds., *The Practice of American History: A Special Issue of the Journal of American History* 81 (December, 1994).

In a sample of 824 American historians surveyed by the Organizations of American Historians in 1993, historians rated their ideological commitments (41%) and educational identity (38.7%) ahead of national allegiance (31%). Of twelve allegiances and/or identities, historians valued political party affiliation least. "What do American Historians Think," based on 1,047 respondents, provides a revealing picture of academic and public historians. Historians said the most influential book in their development was the Bible, followed by two books by Richard Hofstadter and two by Karl Marx. Twice as many historians see the civil rights movement as more significant than World War II in American history. Not one identified the Korean War as one of forty-five "bright spots" or "dark spots" in American history.

2. The challenges of writing the history of wars and military organizations may be sampled in several important essays by academic-public historians: Louis Morton, "The Historian and the Study of War," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 48 (March, 1962), 599-613; Peter Paret, "The History of War," *Daedalus* 100 (Spring, 1971), 376-396; Allan R. Millett, "American Military History: Struggling through the Wire," in ACTA No. 2, "Proceedings of the VIII Coloquy of the International Commission for Military History," 1975; Reginald C. Stuart, "War, Society and the 'New' Military History of the United States," *Canadian Review of American Studies* 8 (Spring, 1977), 1-10; Paul Kennedy, "The Fall and Rise of Military History," *Yale Journal of World Affairs* 1 (Fall, 1989), 12-19; Ronald H. Spector, "Military History and the Academic World," *Army History* 19 (Summer, 1991), 1-7; and the essays in David A. Charters, Marc Milner, and J. Brent Wilson, eds., *Military History and the Military Profession* (Westport, Ct.: Praeger, 1992).

Of course, the Korean War is not the historical monopoly of Anglo-American historians, and we are learning more from Chinese and Russian accounts and documents as those works find their way to the West in their original or in translation.

At the moment the Chinese perspective is in sharper focus than the Russian, but both are sufficiently detailed and document-based to leave little doubt about what and when the Chinese and Russians made critical interventionist decisions. Matters of motive and calculation could use more clarification, if only to illuminate the North Korean role. The works of South Korean scholars are legion, even in translation, and any Western scholar must know the books and articles of Kim Chum-kon, Kim Chull-buam, Lee Chae-jin, Yoo Tae-hoo, Kim Gye-dong, Suh Dae-suk, B.C. Koh, Ra Jong-il, and, specially, Ohn Chang-il and Kim Hak-joon. Among Japanese students of the war the leader is Ryo Hagiwara.

South Korean scholarship on the war, much of which depends on foreign documentation, has its own peculiarities, political and organizational, and should be evaluated in accordance with its own problems. These are the sharp division between military-sponsored operational studies and academic history, which is relentless in the search for causes of the war and avoids study of the war's conduct and the attendant problems of nation-building and military reform in the throes of war. For a review of international trends in Korean War research, see Kim Hak-joon, "International Trends in Korean War Studies," *Korea and World Affairs* 15 (Summer, 1990) 326-370.

3. Melvyn P. Leffler, "New Approaches, Old Interpretations, and Prospective Reconfigurations," *Diplomatic History* 19 (Spring, 1995), 173-196.
4. Rosemary Foot, "Making Known the Unknown War: Policy Analysis of the Korean Conflict in the Last Decade," *Diplomatic History* 15 (Summer, 1991) 411-431; William Stueck, "The Korean War as International History," *Diplomatic History* 10 (Fall, 1986), 291-309; Judith Munro-Leighton, "A Postrevisionist Scrutiny of America's Role in the Cold War in Asia, 1945-1950," *Journal of American-East Asian Relations* 1 (Spring, 1992) 73-98.
5. Jon Halliday, "What Happened in Korea? Rethinking Korean History, 1945-1953," *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* 5 (November, 1973), 36-44; Bruce Cumings, "Korean-American Relations: A Century of Contact and Thirty-Five Years of Intimacy," in Warren I. Cohen, *New Frontiers in American-East Asian Relations: Essays Presented to Dorothy Borg* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 237-282.
6. On the development of military-utilitarian history, see P.H. Kampheris, ed., *Military History Around the World*, deel 14, Mededelingen van de Sectie Militaire Geschiedenis, 's-Gravenhage, The Hague, The Netherlands, 1991.
7. Allan R. Millett, "A Reader's Guide to the Korean War: A Review Essay," *Joint Forces Journal* No. 7 (Spring, 1995), 119-126.

ANNUAL REPORT
of the
ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY – KOREA BRANCH
1995

The Korea Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society was established in 1900 by a group of foreign residents in Korea, who sought to encourage investigation of all aspects of Korean life, culture, customs, geography and literature in order to deepen their understanding of the country and its people and to make them better known to the rest of the world. The original nucleus was soon joined by many others, including a number of Korean scholars. Some of the members had great scholarly gifts and their names will forever be associated with Korean studies, while many others contributed the first, and often the only papers on many aspects of Korea, leaving a legacy in the *Transactions* that are still a primary source of information on Korea in many fields. It is only appropriate that at this Annual Meeting we remember the great contribution of our forbears, and remember that the primary objective of the Branch is still the encouragement of studies on Korea.

The Korea Branch is organized with a Council of twenty-six members, including the officers. To carry out its functions the Council is organized into five committees: Membership, Publications, Program, Tours, and Finance.

Membership: At present the RAS-Korea Branch has a total of 1,479 members. This includes sixty-seven life members, 559 overseas members and 848 regular members residing in Korea.

Programs: Programs involving lectures, slide presentations and performances were held regularly on the second and fourth Wednesdays of each month (except during the summer) at the Daewoo Foundation Building near Seoul Station. We are most grateful to the Foundation for allowing us the use of this centrally located space. The annual Garden Party, graciously hosted by Ambassador and Mrs. Thomas G. Harris at the British Embassy Residence, was most successful, with an enjoyable program of Korean *samulnori*, special

book sales, and an opportunity for members to become better acquainted with each other.

Tours: A full schedule of tours through the year took members throughout the country. A total of some 1,990 members and non-members participated in these tours, and these tours remain one of the most popular activities of the Society. The worsening traffic in and out of Seoul is a continuing concern, but alternatives to bussing do not seem to be practical at this time.

Publications: The Publications Committee had another successful year supervising book sales, reviewing manuscripts, and editing Volume 70 of the *Transactions* for publication. A revised Book List was prepared and distributed to all members and to various libraries and institutions interested in Korean studies.

Finances: I am pleased to report that the finances of the RAS-Korea Branch remained on an even keel during 1995. Although operating expenses are modest, the society depends totally upon the support you provide as members in paying annual dues, participating in tours and purchasing publications. Remember, your support continues to be critical to the financial well-being of the society.

I want to take this opportunity to express my thanks for the selfless efforts of the Council members and officers and of Mrs. Bae, who has been the mainstay of the R.A.S. office for the past twenty-eight years. Lastly, I would like to acknowledge once again the generosity of the Daewoo Foundation in making the auditorium available for our lecture meetings free of charge.

Respectfully submitted,

Suh, Ji-moon
President

1995 R.A.S. Lectures

Seoul Branch

- January 11 Tibet: A Journey to the Roof of the World
Mr. Michael F. O'Brien
- January 26 The World of Chong, Chi-young's Poetry
Mr. Daniel A. Kister
- February 8 Birds of Korea
Prof. Yoon, Moo-boo
- February 22 Culture's Impact on Business Performance
Prof. Yoon Suk-chul
- March 8 Korean Embroidery
Mr. Huh, Dong-hwa
- March 22 City Planning For Seoul: Historical, Cultural,
and Behavioral Issues
Dr. Tschangho John Kim
- April 12 Korean Farmers' Music and Dance
Mr. Gary Rector
- April 26 Buddhist Landscape Architecture of Southeast Asia:
A Comparison with the Traditions of Korea
Dr. Hong, Kwang-pyo
- May 10 Yi, Mun-yol's Novel *The Poet*: Two True life
Stories
Br. Anthony Teague
- May 24 Traditional Punjae (Bonsai) Art of Korea
Mr. Choi, Byung-chul
- June 14 Abodes of Shaman Spirits Throughout Korea
Ms. Maggie Dodds
- June 28 Dosan Ahn, Chang-ho: His Life and Impact on
the Korean Independence Movement
Mr. Philip Ahn Cuddy
- August 23 An Introduction of Korea's Newly Modified
Traditional Instruments
Ms. Suzanna M. Samstag

- September 13 A Critical Appraisal of the 'Sudden/Gradual' Debate in Korea: Songchol's 'Subitism' vs. Chinul's 'Gradualism'
Dr. Shim, Jae-ryong
- September 27 The *Sapsaree*: Korea's 'National Dog'
Dr. Ha, Ji-hong
- October 11 North Korea – 'The Land of Mystery'
Mr. John Alsbury
- October 25 An Overview of Korean Art Since 1945
Dr. Roe, Jae-ryung
- November 8 Birds of Korea
Ms. Gertrude K. Ferrar
- November 22 Paekche of Korea and the Origin of Yamato Japan
Dr. Hong, Wontack
- December 13 Following the Silk Road
Mr. Edward B. Adams

1995 R.A.S. Tours

<i>Date</i>	<i>Destination</i>	<i>Attendance</i>
January 14	In-wang San Hike	30
January 15	Buddhism Tour	17
January 21	Market Tour	19
January 28-30	Sorak San National Park	42
February 5	Tobongsan Mountain Hike	14
February 11	Exotic Shrine Tour	19
February 19	Yoju Tour	30
February 25-26	Inner Sorak Rhapsody Tour	14
Marcy 1	Independence Movement Day Tour	26
March 4	Kiln and Parka Crystal Factory Tour	17
March 5	Walking Tour of Choson Seoul Tour	40
March 11	Galleries of Insadong Tour	49
March 12	Sobaek-san National Park Tour	20
March 18	Suwon Tour	22
March 19	Kanghwa Island Tour	37
March 25	Paekche Tour - Puyo, Kongju	35
March 26	Songnisan Tour	23
April 1-2	Kyongju Tour	43
April 7-9	Chinhae Cherry Blossom Tour	72
April 16	Kyonggido Cherry Blossom Tour	45
April 22-24	Cheju-do Tour	31
April 30	Realm of the Immortals Tour	42
May 7	Chong Myo Tour	77
May 7	Buddha's Birthday Tour	127
May 13-14	Andong Tour	32
May 20	Wonju Tour	30
May 21	Tanyang Tour	37
May 23-27	Songni-san, Koje-do and Chiri-san Tour	21
June 3	R.A.S. Garden Party	250
June 4	Pyukje and Environs Tour	15
June 9-11	Hongdo and Huksan-do Tour	19
June 13	FILM SERIES	20
June 16-17	South Cholla "Land of Exile" Tour	26
June 17	Music and Dance Tour with Mr. Cho, Won-kyung	32

June 24-25	South Sea Island Tour	20
July 1	Island Hopping Tour	30
July 2	Songmo-do and Pomun-sa Tour	43
July 7-9	Chungmu and Koje Island Tour	25
July 16-17	Pyonsan Bando National Park Tour	23
July 23	Mallipo and Ch'ollipo Tour	24
August 12	Market Tour	19
August 13	In-wang San Hike	19
August 13	Tour of Fortune and Exotic Shrines Tour	20
August 26	Kiln and Parka Crystal Factory	12
August 27	Historic Parks in Seoul	13
September 2	Silk Tour	26
September 3	Ch'ongp'yong Boat Tour	30
September 3	Sokchonjae Ceremony	22
September 10	War History Tour	32
September 16	Arts and Crafts Tour	16
September 17	Kosokjong and Sanjong Lake Tour	36
September 22-24	Hongdo and Huksan-do Tour	25
September 30	Kangwha Island Tour	17
Sep. 30-Oct. 1	Kyongju Tour	26
October 3	Paekche Kingdom Tour	25
October 7-8	Chuwang-san National Park Tour	31
October 14-15	Sorak-san National Park Tour	45
October 14	Hanyak Tour	25
October 21-22	Cholla-do Tour	23
October 21	Sudok-sa Tour	40
October 27-29	Cheju-do Tour	19
October 29	Surak-san Hike	28
November 3-5	Chiri-san Tour	43
November 11-12	Maisan and Muju Tour	12
November 18	Kimchi/Kiln Tour	32
November 25-26	Inner Sorak Rhapsody Tour	9
December 2	Artists's Studio Tour	32
December 9	Shopping Spree Tour	14
December 16	Churches of Seoul Tour	13

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