

TRANSACTIONS



ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY
KOREA BRANCH

VOLUME 81
2006

TRANSACTIONS
of the
ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY – KOREA BRANCH

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Contents

Hui Neng in Korea: A Chapter in the Story of Korean Religion	<i>Daniel J. Adams</i>	1
Buddhist Ritual Music and Dance	<i>Allen Heyman</i>	23
Perilous Journeys: The Plight of North Koreans in China and Beyond	<i>Peter Beck, Gail Kim, and Donald MacIntyre</i>	33
A Glimpse of Life at the Gold Mines	<i>Robert Neff</i>	93
Sacred Aspects and Assets of Taebaek-san	<i>David A. Mason</i>	111
Annual Report		133
Members		141

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Transactions (ISSN 1229-0009)

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Transactions is published with the support of a grant from HSBC

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Hui Neng in Korea: A Chapter in the Story of Korean Religion

DANIEL J. ADAMS*

INTRODUCTION

In September of 1583 two Jesuit missionaries by the names of Michele Ruggieri and Matteo Ricci set sail in a Chinese junk from Macao to Canton in China's Kwangtung Province. From there they settled in the city of Chaoching where they were to remain until 1595 when they moved north to Nanking and Nanchang.¹ The two Jesuits shaved their heads and dressed in the simple robes of Buddhist monks and were immediately accepted as guests in the Nan-hua Buddhist temple. Ricci, who was primarily interested in the Confucian literati and had his sights set on beginning mission work in Beijing, found residence in the temple to be distasteful. He refused to bow before the Buddha images and he "looked down upon" Buddhism as being idolatrous and superstitious.² It was not long until he and Ruggieri moved to new quarters, and when they finally left Chaoching to move northward, they exchanged their Buddhist monks' robes for the robes of the Confucian scholars.

One of those Buddhist images in the Nan-hua Temple was in fact not an image at all, but the preserved mummified body of Hui Neng (637-713), the Sixth Patriarch of Ch'an Buddhism and the founder of the Southern School of Ch'an which stresses sudden enlightenment. At first enshrined in the Kuo-en Temple where Hui Neng died, the body was later covered with layers of black lacquer and moved to the Nan-hua Temple.³ Ricci was certainly one of the first Europeans, if not the first, to see the 870-year-old body of Hui Neng seated in a lotus position on a

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platform in its own special pavilion. Unfortunately, because of his prejudices against Buddhism, he did not realize the importance of what he had seen. Nor was he aware of the significance of Hui Neng for the development of Buddhism in China, Korea, and Japan.

Hui Neng has emerged as one of the pivotal personages in the history of Buddhist thought due to his colorful life and his Dharma lectures which have been collected into *The Platform Sutra*, the only Chinese-language scripture to be named as a sutra.⁴ In the history of early Buddhist thought and practice three names are prominent: Sakyamuni the historical Buddha, followed by a succession of twenty-eight Indian patriarchs; Bodhidharma, the first Chinese patriarch; and Hui Neng, the sixth Chinese patriarch. A disciple of Hui Neng, Shen-hui (670–762) mounted a vigorous campaign against Hui Neng's rivals and firmly established his master as the legitimate Sixth Patriarch. Thus "by the end of the eighth century Hui-neng was accepted as the Sixth Patriarch by all schools of Ch'an, and all present-day Ch'an derives ultimately from two of his putative heirs. . . ."⁵ Today Hui Neng's position in Buddhism in general and in Ch'an/Seon/Zen Buddhism in particular is firmly established.⁶

In recent years the general public has also become fascinated with Hui Neng. Following the desecration of Hui Neng's body during the Cultural Revolution, and the later opening of China once again to foreign influence and tourism, the body has been re-lacquered and restored to its proper position in the Nan-hua Temple. Both devout pilgrims and curious travelers flock to the temple and it has become an accepted stop on the tourist trail in Kwangtung Province. In the 1980s a film *The Story of Hui Neng* caused a brief sensation in Taiwan. Much of the film was in fact made in Korea and a number of scenes were shot at Haein Temple near Daegu. Hui Neng's rebuffing of a mountain temptress added spice to the film, but as devout Buddhists were quick to point out, this episode had no basis in any of the several accounts of Hui Neng's life. A flurry of interest in Hui Neng arose again with the publication of *Snow in August* by Gao Xingjian, winner of the 2000 Nobel Prize for Literature. Published in Taiwan in 2000 and in Hong Kong in 2001, the drama, based on the life of Hui Neng, was translated into English in 2003.⁷ *Snow in August* was directed by Gao Xingjian and staged as a full dramatic production in Taiwan, and premiered at the National Theater in

Taipei in December 2003 with performances in Marseilles, France in 2004.⁸ It appears, therefore, that Hui Neng's position in popular culture is also firmly established.

But why this interest in a Buddhist monk who spent the latter half of his life teaching at various temples in southern China? The answer lies, first of all, in a life that can only be described as unique and engaging.

THE STORY OF HUI NENG

The various accounts of Hui Neng's life are taken from the extant versions of *The Platform Sutra*, and while there are minor variations and even some conflicts, it is possible to arrive at a reasonable biography.⁹ Hui Neng was born in 638 in what is now Kwangtung Province, China. His father died when he was still a child and he and his mother lived in a district which included the city of Canton, now modern Guangzhou. The family lived in poverty and made a meager living by selling firewood in the city. According to the traditional accounts, Hui Neng was illiterate, since the family's poverty made it impossible for him to attend school.

When he was twenty-four years of age, Hui Neng was out selling wood when he heard someone reciting passages from the *Diamond Sutra*. Some accounts say that it was one of his customers that he heard; other accounts state that he was passing by a temple and heard the monks chanting. In any event, Hui Neng experienced sudden enlightenment. Realizing that he now needed to learn more about Buddhism and the practice of meditation, he inquired as to where he could go to learn more about the *Diamond Sutra*. He was directed to go to Huang-mei in modern Hubei Province where the Fifth Patriarch Hung-jen was teaching. Upon arrival at the temple Hui Neng was told that he was a barbarian from the south who could never attain Buddha-hood and that he had best return home. This was, of course, a way of testing his calling to the monastic life. Hui Neng continued to present himself to Hung-jen with the argument that while people may make such distinctions, such distinctions did not exist so far as the Buddha-nature was concerned. Finally he was admitted to the temple as a novice but given the task of pounding rice in the kitchen, one of lowest positions in the monastery. Again, this was a way of testing the depth of his monastic vocation.

Tradition holds that Hui Neng pounded rice for eight months and was largely ignored by the other monks. It is probable, however, that he also attended lectures in the main hall, meditated on the sutras, took part in the daily chanting, and perhaps even began to learn to read and write. As a novice, and as an illiterate southerner, he was definitely not among the monastic elite. This period of Hui Neng's monastic life is a frequent theme in paintings found on the exterior walls of Korean temples. Hui Neng is depicted with a huge stone strapped to his back, while he stands on one end of the wooden lever used to pound the rice. Sometimes the Fifth Patriarch, Hung-jen, is also shown, carefully observing Hui Neng from a side door where he cannot be seen. The implication is clear: this southerner bears careful watching, for he shows great promise in the monastic life.

As Hung-jen was growing old and the end of his life was obviously drawing near, he decided it was time to choose a successor and pass on to him the signs of the transmission of the patriarchate, the robe and the bowl. Among all of the monks there was one who appeared to be the obvious choice to become the Sixth Patriarch, Shen-hsiu. Hung-jen decided that the choice would be based upon the writing of a metrical poem called a *gatha*. All of the monks were invited to take part in the competition. However, only Shen-hsiu actually submitted a poem, as the other monks all deferred to him, assuming that he would automatically be selected. Hung-jen let it be known that he was searching for a poem that would summarize the main idea or "great meaning" of Ch'an.

The poem which Shen-hsiu submitted was as follows:

The body is the tree of enlightenment.
The mind is the stand of a bright mirror.
Wipe it constantly and with ever-watchful diligence,
To keep it uncontaminated by the worldly dust.¹⁰

As was the custom, the poem was written on the wall of the temple's meditation hall. When Hung-jen read it he was far from satisfied, but not wishing to embarrass Shen-hsiu he said nothing in front of the other monks. However, late at night he summoned Shen-hsiu to his room and informed him that the poem was unsatisfactory. Hung-jen requested that Shen-hsiu submit another poem.

Several days later Hui Neng heard another monk chanting Shensiu's poem, and he asked the monk to take him to the meditation hall wall where the poem had been written, and requested that he recite it again and explain it to him. Hui Neng then asked the monk to write another poem on the wall next to the original one. Hui Neng's poem read as follows:

Enlightenment is no tree,
Nor is the Bright Mirror a stand.
Since it is not a thing at all,
Where could it be contaminated by dust?¹¹

When the other monks read this poem they were deeply impressed, and it was not long until the word spread throughout the entire monastic community that this poem had been composed by Hui Neng. Realizing that they had underestimated the wisdom and insight of the illiterate novice from the south, a commotion soon ensued. Finally Hung-jen had Hui Neng's poem erased from the wall in order to restore calm. Meanwhile, Hui Neng continued to pound rice in the temple kitchen.

The Fifth Patriarch Hung-jen went to the kitchen and secretly told Hui Neng to come to see him late at night after all the other monks had gone to bed and were fast asleep. As they discussed the meaning of the poem, Hung-jen quoted these words from the *Diamond Sutra* to Hui Neng: "Keep your mind alive and free without abiding in anything or anywhere."¹² Upon hearing this, Hui Neng was completely enlightened and Hung-jen gave him the robe and the bowl, thus officially transmitting the patriarchate to Hui Neng and making him the Sixth Patriarch. He also composed the following *gatha* for Hui Neng:

Sow the seed widely among the sentient beings,
And it will come to fruition on fertile ground.
Without sentience no seed can grow;
Nor can there be life without nature.¹³

He then sent Hui Neng out in the dead of night with instructions to transmit the teaching to succeeding generations, although the patriarchate would cease with Hui Neng and there would be no Seventh Patriarch.

Scholars are uncertain as to whether or not Hui Neng's life was actually in danger due to an intense rivalry over the succession. Certainly there must have been jealousy since Hui Neng was not yet fully ordained. In any event, he spent the next few years of his life in anonymous obscurity. Tradition holds that he roamed the mountains with a group of hunters whom he eventually converted to vegetarianism. The reality is that he probably wandered to various mountain temples engaging in meditation and study, learning to read and write, and preparing himself for his future work. However, nothing definite is known concerning these years.

What is known is that in 676 he went to Canton to study under the Ch'an master Yin-Tsung at the Fa-hsing Temple. It was there, during a discussion on the *Nirvana Sutra*, that Hui Neng heard two monks debating the nature of a banner blowing in the wind. One monk said that the banner was moving; the other monk asserted that it was the wind that was moving. Entering the discussion, Hui Neng is reported to have said: "Neither the wind nor the banner moves; what moves is your minds."¹⁴ Upon hearing these words of deep insight, the other monks were amazed and wondered just who this wandering monk really was. Unable to conceal his true identity any longer, Hui Neng identified himself as the Sixth Patriarch, presented the robe and bowl which had been given to him by Hung-jen as signs of the transmission, and on the fifteenth day of the first month he had his head shaved by Yin-tsung and on the eighth day of the second month he formally joined the Buddhist monastic order. He was ordained by Chih-kuang and at the age of thirty-nine became a Buddhist priest. In the fourth month of 676 he began preaching and teaching at the Fa-hsing Temple.

Later in that year he moved to the Pao-lin Temple where he preached and taught for the next thirty-seven years, although in the tradition of Buddhist priests he visited many other temples where he delivered dharma lectures. Much of *The Platform Sutra* was delivered, for example, at Ta-fan Temple where, as monks still do, he presented his lectures while seated on an elevated platform in the front of the lecture hall. As he continued to teach, Hui Neng's fame increased and in 705 he was invited by the emperor to visit the capital, but he declined the invitation. However, in 707 the emperor did honor him by providing the funds to

remodel his temple and presented him with an imperial tablet. The emperor also gave Hui Neng a crystal bowl and a robe called a *mo na*. This *mo na* was a special Buddhist robe made in Korea. The fact that the emperor presented such a robe to Hui Neng served to illustrate the close relationship which existed between China and Korea at the time. In 712 Hui Neng returned to his native district, and in anticipation of his death he had the Kuo-en Temple remodeled and a pagoda erected. On the third day of the seventh month in 713, Hui Neng died at the age of seventy-three. With his death the institution of the patriarchate ceased and, in the words of one observer, "the genealogical tree of Zen put forth branches."¹⁵

Hui Neng is credited with founding the Southern School of Ch'an while his rival Shen-hsiu is recognized as the founder of the Northern School. How did these two approaches to Buddhist meditation differ? According to Sung Bae Park, the Northern School of Shen-hsiu focused on doctrinal faith and gradual enlightenment with the goal being "I can become a Buddha." The Southern School of Hui Neng, on the other hand, was centered on patriarchal faith and sudden enlightenment leading to the discovery that "I am a Buddha."¹⁶ Thus an illiterate Hui Neng could attain enlightenment upon hearing the *Diamond Sutra*, without having to spend years in doctrinal study of the written sutras. What was needed, however, was a master to guide Hui Neng in the proper way of meditation, and thus he sought out the Fifth Patriarch Hung-Jen.¹⁷ Although the patriarchate ceased with Hui Neng, what developed in its place were lineages, all of which could be traced back to Hui Neng and through him to Bodhidharma and to the Buddha himself. It was vitally important, therefore, that one's master could trace his lineage back to Hui Neng.¹⁸ Thus even today, Ch'an, Seon, and Zen masters take great pains to become associated with a recognized lineage.

The matter of establishing Hui Neng as the recognized Sixth Patriarch was not a simple affair, however, for the symbols of transmission had been given to him secretly by Hung-jen, and for some years following Hui Neng lived in complete anonymity. Thus there was time for Shen-hsiu to lay claim to the patriarchate. It fell to a disciple of Hui Neng, Shen-hui (670-762) to mount an attack upon Shen-hsiu and the Northern School of Ch'an. This was done with such vigor that Hui Neng emerged

with his position of the Sixth Patriarch firmly established. For good measure, Shen-hui accused P'u-chi, the heir of Shen-hsiu "of falsely claiming to be the Seventh Patriarch and of sending an emissary to deface Hui-neng's stele and sever the head from his mummified body."¹⁹ As we shall see, this was not the only time that an attempt was made to steal the head of Hui Neng. Shen-hsiu's lineage did not continue, however, and today he is virtually forgotten and "his legacy lay in establishing Hui-neng as the Sixth Patriarch and assuring the historical presence of the once little-known priest."²⁰

Shen-hui's task was accomplished primarily through *The Platform Sutra* which was compiled by a priest by the name of Fa-hai. Almost nothing is known about Fa-hai but he apparently collected the dharma lectures of Hui Neng, added a brief biography of Hui Neng, and provided a preface as well as an appendix. There are numerous extant manuscripts of *The Platform Sutra* but there are three primary manuscripts. The first is the Tun-haung Manuscript dated between 830 and 860, and so named because it was found by Aurel Stein in the famed Tun-haung Caves. The second is the Hui-hsin Manuscript dated at 967 which became the basis for two significant Japanese versions. The third is the 1291 version which was included in the Buddhist Canon during the Ming Dynasty and is therefore known as the Ming Canon Version. The fact that the Tun-haung Manuscript has 12,000 characters, the Hui-hsin Manuscript 14,000 characters, and the Ming Canon Version 21,000 characters strongly suggests that there has been considerable editing and adding to *The Platform Sutra* down through the years.²¹ *The Platform Sutra* appeared in China and Korea in some twenty-six editions during the Ming and Ch'ing Dynasties and a full Korean version appeared in 1316.²² *The Platform Sutra* undoubtedly contains much material that was in fact added by Shen-hui in order to bolster the argument that Hui Neng was in fact the legitimate Sixth Patriarch. Indeed, it appears that some of the points made in *The Platform Sutra* were placed there after the fact to deal with doctrinal disputes which developed in Ch'an following the death of Hui Neng. Some critical scholars go so far as to suggest that almost nothing of either Hui Neng's biography or of his teachings in *The Platform Sutra* is original at all.²³ However, this later critical study was unknown and therefore irrelevant to the Korean Buddhist monks who

traveled to T'ang Dynasty China to learn directly from the great Ch'an masters.

THE KOREAN CONNECTION

China in the T'ang Dynasty (618–907) was a center of Buddhist teaching and practice. This was also a period when literature and the arts flourished and a time when China maintained an openness toward other cultures. As a result monks from the Buddhist world were drawn to China. Thus "from Chinese records and from travelers' reports, it appears that Korean monks were indeed relatively familiar visitors in Chinese temples, along with Japanese and South Asians and Central Asians."²⁴

Specifically those Korean monks "traveled to China and made contact with schools of Buddhist philosophy influential there, and returned to Korea as their representatives."²⁵ The first Korean monk to represent the mature sudden enlightenment tradition of Hui Neng was Toui (d. 825). He left for China in 784 and became a disciple of Jizang (735–814) who was of the lineage of Mazu or Ma Tsu (d. 788). Mazu in turn was the second generation dharma descendant of Hui Neng.²⁶ Toui remained in China for thirty-seven years, returning to Korea in 821. However, his ideas were not readily accepted and Toui retired to Sorak Mountain where he spent the remainder of his life in seclusion.²⁷ It was one of Toui's followers, Hongchup, who was responsible for founding Silsang Temple on Chiri Mountain. This became the first of the so-called Nine Mountain Schools of Seon in Korea, all which traced their origin back to Hui Neng via the lineages of Hui Neng's disciples. With the establishment of the Nine Mountain Schools the Ch'an tradition—now Seon—was firmly established in Korea.²⁸

Virtually all of the famous Buddhist priests in Korea such as Chajang (608–686), Wonhyo (617–686), and Uisang (625–702) spent varying amounts of time in China studying, visiting famous temples, and becoming acquainted with new trends in Buddhist thought. Once the Ch'an tradition was established in Korea, priests in the Seon tradition such as T'aego (1301–1382) traveled to China where they either experienced enlightenment, had their enlightenment confirmed, or spent time studying and meditating under Chinese Ch'an masters. It was most important to return to Korea as a member of a recognized lineage.

Significantly, there was one famous Korean Buddhist priest who did not study in China, and that was Chinul (1158–1210). Yet even Chinul maintained a connection to Hui Neng, for he experienced three separate spiritual awakenings while reading Hui Neng's *The Platform Sutra*, Li Tongxuan's *Exposition of the Avatamsaka Sutra*, and *The Records of Dahui*.²⁹ Furthermore he founded the "Chogye School (named after the abode of the sixth patriarch of Zen, Caoqui in Chinese, Chogye in Korean) in order to reunify the various Son schools."³⁰ Today the temple most associated with Chinul, Songgwang Temple in South Cholla Province, is located on Mount Chogye, and the major Buddhist order in Korea, established in 1941, is the Chogye (Jogye) Order. Even though Chinul was not a member of a lineage formally established by one of Hui Neng's successors, he certainly could lay claim to be following in the spirit of Hui Neng.

It was conceivably possible for spurious claims to be made concerning one's lineage, and as there were numerous lineages all in competition for legitimacy there had to be a way of authenticating lineages. One such way was the collection and veneration of relics of the great Chinese Ch'an masters. If one could get hold of such a relic it would at least prove that one was at the temple where the great master had taught. Indeed, it might even show that one obtained the relic from one of the great master's own disciples. The possession of an authentic relic was one way to legitimize a lineage. According to accounts in *The Platform Sutra* numerous attempts were made to steal the robe of Hui Neng and several attempts were made to sever the head of Hui Neng from his mummified body. None of these attempts were successful. The robe was always recovered and temple guards foiled those who tried to steal the head. There were, however, several instances where clippings of hair were removed from the mummified head. These were taken to other temples and placed in special pagodas and venerated as relics of Hui Neng.

The Platform Sutra does record one celebrated attempt to steal the head of Hui Neng in an appendix by Ling-t'ao, the stupa keeper at the Pao-lin Temple.³¹ The mummified, lacquer-covered body of Hui Neng and the treasures associated with Hui Neng, namely the original robe of transmission, the Korean *mo na* robe and the crystal bowl presented by the emperor, and other ritual items were placed under the protection of

the stupa keeper. The treasures were placed inside the stupa and the mummified body was placed in a lotus position upon a raised platform. Mindful of a prediction made by Hui Neng that someone would attempt to steal his head, a cloth-covered iron collar was placed around the neck of the body and chained firmly to prevent such a theft. Temple guards were always on watch.

According to the stupa keeper's account an attempt to steal the head was made on 18 September 722. Awakened in the middle of the night by the sound of the iron chains being moved, the monks and temple guards rushed to the stupa in time to see a man dressed in mourning clothes running from the site. Upon examining the body of Hui Neng they discovered that the neck had been cut in an unsuccessful attempt to remove the head. Local government authorities were immediately informed and a warrant was taken out for the arrest of the culprit. Five days later the would-be thief was caught in a small village and brought before the authorities. His name was Chang Ching-man. He told the authorities that he was given twenty thousand cash by a Korean monk named Chin Ta-pei who was associated with the K'ai-yuan Temple in Hung-chou. This monk had planned to take the head of Hui Neng back to Korea so that it could be venerated in a Korean temple.

According to Chinese law, Chang should have been executed for the attempted theft, but one of Hui Neng's disciples pleaded for clemency on the basis that the motive for the crime was a good one—the veneration of a relic of Hui Neng—and that Buddhist compassion treats friend and enemy alike. As a result Chang was freed.

Clearly the Korean connection with Hui Neng was a significant one, and the desire to obtain a relic of Hui Neng for veneration in a Korean temple was so strong that at least one Korean monk was willing to resort to questionable means to fulfill that desire.

HUI NENG AND SSANGGYE TEMPLE

In 722 two Korean monks returned from China. One was named Taebi (undoubtedly the Chin Tabei who paid twenty thousand cash for the head of Hui Neng) and the other was named Sambop. According to a legendary account, they brought with them "the skull remains of the Sixth Patriarch of Zen Buddhism."³² In a dream they were instructed to build a

temple in a valley on Chiri Mountain where the arrowroot blossomed even in the winter season. They found such a place and in 724 founded Okch'on Temple.³³ Here they constructed a memorial for the relic of Hui Neng which they had brought with them from China.

In the year 840 this temple was greatly enlarged and its name was changed to Ssanggye Temple by the priest Chin'gam (d. 887). An old stone pagoda was moved from the site of the abandoned Mokab Temple to Ssanggye Temple and became the place where the relic of Hui Neng was enshrined. Known as the Yujo-jungsantap, it was placed in a hall called the Gumdang, or Golden Hall. This hall was remodeled in 1979 under the direction of the priest Kosan. In addition to the pagoda containing the relic of Hui Neng, a striking early twentieth-century portrait of Hui Neng was also placed in this hall. Recently, however, the portrait has been moved to the more secure location of the Ssanggye Temple Museum. The exterior walls of the Gumdang are adorned with a series of paintings depicting the major events in the life of Hui Neng.

The reason for all of this effort to bring a relic of Hui Neng to Korea was to firmly establish Korean Seon in the Ch'an lineage of Hui Neng. At least four elements were involved in this veneration of relics.³⁴ The first was the popularization of Ch'an or Seon. Coupled with this was a second element, the humanization of the sacred. By providing visible objects for veneration and worship, the common people were able to relate to something concrete. This led to the third element, the development of a sacred topography for pilgrimage to sacred sites. Mountains were considered to be sacred places by the Korean people, and the placing of a relic in a mountain temple served to enhance Ssanggye Temple as a pilgrimage site. Fourth and finally there was a deification of the ancient Ch'an masters such as Hui Neng. Already in China there were legends concerning Hui Neng's staff being used as a dowser to find wells and springs and his robe being used to renew dried up springs.³⁵ It was not long until stories began to be told of mysterious light emanating from the pagoda in the Gumdang. Devout pilgrims who placed their hand inside an opening in the back of the pagoda were able to feel the hair attached to the skull and miraculous healings were said to take place. Ssanggye Temple was not only a center of Seon Buddhist meditation,

but also a center of pilgrimage which drew a great variety of people to the temple.

Among those who were associated with Ssanggye Temple was Ch'oe Ch'i-won (b. 857), who is sometimes called the father of Korean literature. The inscription on the large memorial stele found in the temple courtyard was written by Ch'oe. Mysteriously, he disappeared on Chiri Mountain. Over the years other "mountain men" followed after him, and some of them also disappeared on the mountain. All, however, were attracted to the sacredness of the mountain and to its temples such as Ssanggye Temple.³⁶ There were even stories which placed the legendary original site of the utopian Chonghakdong in the vicinity of Ssanggye Temple. Surely the presence of a relic of the Sixth Patriarch served to add to the spiritual aura which surrounded Ssanggye Temple and its immediate environs.

The question for contemporary scholars, of course, is: Does the pagoda in the Gumdang at Ssanggye Temple actually contain the skull of Hui Neng? According to the account of the stupa keeper recorded in the appendix to *The Platform Sutra*, the answer is clearly "no." Indeed, a life-size photograph of the mummified body of Hui Neng kept on display in the Ssanggye Temple Museum would appear to support this answer, for it is obvious that the head is fully intact and firmly attached to the body. At the same time, however, it is highly probable that the pagoda contains a "skull relic," that is, some part of Hui Neng that would normally be attached to the skull or the head, such as a lock of hair or perhaps even a patch of skin with the hair still attached. Chinese records note that bits of hair were taken from the mummified body from time to time to be used as relics. It is most likely that when it was obvious that it would be impossible to remove the head from the body, the thief simply grabbed a few locks of hair and these were given to Taebi and Sambop to take back to Korea.

As for the "hair attached to the skull" which devout pilgrims feel when they place their hand inside the opening in the back of the pagoda, it is obvious that this is not literally the hair of Hui Neng. The actual relic would have been placed in a reliquary and sealed inside the pagoda where it would be out of public view and kept safe. This is the case with

relics in other Buddhist temples in Korea and there is no reason to assume that things would be different at Ssanggye Temple.

While it has been suggested that Taebi and Sambop were legendary figures, there have also been questions raised concerning the historicity of Hui Neng. Indeed, some scholars have asserted that so little is known about Hui Neng, and so little of what is in *The Platform Sutra* was actually spoken by Hui Neng, that almost everything about Hui Neng is a fabrication designed wholly for the purpose of establishing him as the Sixth Patriarch and thus establishing the basis for a lineage.³⁷ Perhaps the entire truth of the matter will never be known, but what is known is that Hui Neng has been established as the Sixth Patriarch and the Ch'an, Seon/Zen lineages in existence today originate from this source or are, as in the case of Chinul, in some way related to this source. Scholars may engage in a critical debate as to just *how* this was accomplished, but it is difficult to argue against the fact that it *has* been accomplished.

There is no doubt, therefore, that devout pilgrims, Buddhist scholars, and the merely curious will continue to come to Ssanggye Temple to visit the Gumdang. It is located within a walled inner courtyard of the temple where several Seon meditation halls are also found. At the top of a stone stairway, nestled against the mountainside, is the Gumdang. Inside the small stone pagoda is the "skull relic" of the Sixth Patriarch which serves as mute testimony that Hui Neng, or at least a part of him, is indeed *in* Korea.

HUI NENG IN KOREA TODAY

During a visit to Ssanggye Temple in January of 2007 the writer was unable to visit the Gumdang because of the winter meditation session. The walled enclosure was closed to all visitors so as to provide an environment in which the monks could practice Seon meditation undisturbed. In the evening, following a light supper, the monks had a period of free time during which they were allowed to take walks down to the nearby village. There were many small groups of between five to ten monks taking their evening walks. It was obvious that monks had come from temples all over Korea in order to practice meditation at Ssanggye Temple. While there may have been questions concerning the historical existence of Hui Neng and Taebi and Sambop, and perhaps even questions

about the "skull relic" inside the pagoda in the Gumdang, there was no question that the spirit of Hui Neng is very much alive in Korea today.

This is due in part to the belief that the Korean Seon tradition is carried on through established lineages that can be traced back to Hui Neng. The Ven. Song Chol (1912-1993), Patriarch of the Chogye Order and celebrated hermit at Haein Temple on Kaya Mountain, was especially insistent on this point. When asked: "Is there anyone you have a special respect for?" he replied as follows:

There are many outstanding figures throughout world history, but I would have to say that the ones I respect the most are first, the Buddha, and the Sixth Patriarch Hui-neng. Based on his own experiences, the Buddha addressed the issue of the true self and how to go about realizing it. And both the Buddha and Hui-neng gave the most profound and clear explanations on three important things: the Buddha nature of sentient beings, the fact that this world is a paradise, and the fact that present reality is absolute.³⁸

In the same series of interviews he also asserted that the Buddha and Hui Neng held to a similar position on the middle way. He said: "The Middle Way goes back to the Buddha's first sermon to the five ascetics at the Deer Park where he introduced the concept of non-suffering, non-joy. The Sixth Patriarch of Ch'an, Hui-neng, also made an important statement with his 'Think no good, think no evil.'"³⁹ Commenting on the assertion that the present world is a paradise, Song Chol referred again to Hui Neng, this time in a dharma lecture: "They say that paradise is in the west. So the Sixth Patriarch Hui Neng asked where the people in the west went if people in the east chanted and went to paradise in the west.... Paradise is right here, right now, in all directions."⁴⁰ This is, of course, an echo of Hui Neng's celebrated comment concerning the wind, the banner, and the mind.

One can see in these statements not only an implied assertion of an association with a lineage going back to Hui Neng, but also a statement of the belief in sudden enlightenment—the realization of the nature of a reality which already exists. This is not a reality which must be sought after following many years of concentrated study; it is a reality that can only be realized through a sudden awareness. In contemporary Seon understanding and practice the Ven. Song Chol stood firmly within the

lineage and tradition of Hui Neng and thus assured that the spirit of Hui Neng would remain alive within Korean Buddhism.

This has brought to the fore a longstanding dispute within the Korean Seon community which centered around the teachings of Chinul, who did not study in China and thus lacked an “authentic” transmission through a Chinese Ch’an master *via an established lineage*. The dispute was further aggravated by Chinul’s emphasis upon studying Seon doctrines, thus leaning toward the more gradual enlightenment position advocated by Hui Neng’s chief rival Shen-hsiu. Still another element which contributed to the dispute was the position of Korean Ch’an masters in the pre-modern era and the degree to which they maintained their Korean distinctiveness in a context largely influenced by Chinese Ch’an masters.

Some scholars are of the opinion that there never was a single line of transmission and that in reality there were numerous lineages which developed from both Hui Neng and Shen-hsiu.⁴¹ Others point out that Koreans who went to China to study under Ch’an masters always “worked to maintain their own independent sense of self-identity” so that an authentic Korean Buddhist tradition was able to develop.⁴² Still others assert that Chinul actually taught that sudden enlightenment and gradual practice go together so that true practice is possible only after one has attained enlightenment.⁴³ Thus “although Chinul criticized Hui Neng, he did so without contradicting him.”⁴⁴ The fact is that in contemporary Korean Buddhist practice the two emphases upon sudden enlightenment and gradual study of the doctrines go together. Thus the majority of Korean monks spend some time at each of the Three Jewel Temples—Haein Temple, Songgwang Temple, and Tongdo Temple—in addition to practicing under Seon masters at other temples such as Ssanggye Temple.

Whichever position is taken concerning this ongoing dispute, it cannot be denied that Hui Neng is one of the most significant personages in Korean Seon Buddhism. To favor sudden enlightenment and transmission through a Chinese lineage is to follow in the way of Hui Neng. To favor gradual enlightenment and transmission through a distinctly Korean lineage is to follow in the way of Chinul, yet at the same time respecting the spirit of Hui Neng. Either way an encounter with Hui Neng cannot be avoided. Thus the presence of Hui Neng continues to be felt in Korea today.

CONCLUSION

When dealing with a person such as Hui Neng and a text such as *The Platform Sutra* it is impossible to avoid controversy over that which is “real” and historically happened, and that which is “imaginary” and has no verified historical basis. This is especially true concerning the story of the attempted theft of Hui Neng’s skull and the subsequent placing of a “skull relic” of the master at Ssanggye Temple on Chiri Mountain.

In considering Hui Neng and *The Platform Sutra* we can identify three distinct yet interdependent traditions. The first is the legendary tradition. It is this tradition that appealed to the early Korean monks who went to China to study in the T’ang, and it is this tradition which they brought back to Korea. Relics, both authentic and inauthentic, are very much a part of this tradition. Transmission from a master to his disciples is also a part of this tradition. And a good engaging story is very much a part of this tradition.

The second tradition is the critical tradition. This is the tradition of the scholars who are seeking to uncover what “really happened.” This tradition seeks to get behind the legends, the relics, and the appeals to questionable lineages. How did Hui Neng actually become the Sixth Patriarch? How was *The Platform Sutra* actually written, and who actually wrote it? Why were other lineages suppressed? And what really lies encased inside that pagoda in the Gumdang at Ssanggye Temple? This tradition seeks to get behind the story and uncover the facts.

Thirdly, there is the received tradition. Of course everyone is aware that a good part of what we know about Hui Neng is probably pure legend or even outright fabrication. The fact that there are three manuscripts of *The Platform Sutra* each of a different length is evidence enough of questionable authorship. Nor would one deny that Chunil was a great Korean Seon master even without being part of a Chinese lineage. As for the “skull relic” at Ssanggye Temple, no one is going to even think of desecrating the pagoda by opening it up to answer the question once and for all. Why? Because, in a very real sense, none of this matters. What matters is the received tradition. Hui Neng was the Sixth Patriarch whose line of transmission and lineages brought to Korea a new way of Buddhist understanding and practice—Seon. The theft of the “skull relic” and its repository at Ssanggye Temple cemented this relationship be-

tween the Ch'an of Hui Neng and the Seon of Korea. The spirit of Hui Neng continues to energize Korean Buddhism even as that spirit is reinterpreted within a uniquely Korean context. As the legendary and the critical traditions interact and sometimes even come into conflict, the received tradition will continue to inspire, educate, and perhaps even enlighten those who take it seriously.

Truly the presence of Hui Neng in Korea is a fascinating and significant chapter in the story of Korean religion, a story that is still very much in the process of being told.

NOTES

1. Douglas Lancashire and Peter Hu Kuo-chen, SJ, "Translators' Introduction," Matteo Ricci, SJ, *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven (T'ien-chu Shih-i)*, trans. Douglas Lancashire and Peter Hu Kuo-chen, SJ, ed. Edward J. Malatesta, SJ (Taipei/Paris/Hong Kong: Ricci Institute, 1985), 5–8.
2. Bernard Faure, *Chan Insights and Oversights: An Epistemological Critique of the Chan Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 22–23.
3. Keith Stevens, "Two Groups of Chinese Deities Rarely Seen on Chinese Altars," [<http://64.233.187.104/custom?q=cache:nJjsnreYgnMJ:sunzi1.lib.hku.hk/hljo.vie...>] (11/16/2005).
4. Philip Yampolsky, "Hui-Neng," *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol. 6, ed. Mircea Eliade (New York: Macmillan and London: Collier-Macmillan, 1987), 495–96. The term sutra is usually "confined to works that are attributed to a Buddha." (p. 495)
5. *Ibid.*, 495. The name Hui Neng is transliterated from the Chinese in various forms: Hui Neng, Hui-Neng, Hui-neng, and Huineng. From Korean it is sometimes written as Hye-neng. In Japanese the name is rendered Eno or Yeno. Two other names for Hui Neng in the Chinese are Caoqi, referring to the place where he lived, and Liu Tsu or Lu Tsu meaning "workman Lu," referring to his humble origins as a wood cutter.
6. The term *Chan* is the Chinese modification of the Sanskrit term *dhyana* which means "meditation." It is rendered as *Chan* or *Ch'an* in the Chinese; *Son* or *Seon* in the Korean; and *Zen* in the Japanese. The terms are often used interchangeably. See Ernest Wood, *Zen Dictionary* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1957, 1977), 25–26.
7. Gao Xingjian, *Snow in August*, trans. Gilbert C. F. Fong (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2003).
8. Chang Meng-jui, "Made From Scratch: The Premiere of 'Total Theater,'" and Chang Meng-jui, "Behind the Scenes with Council for Cultural Affairs

- Chairperson Tchen Yu-chiou," *Sinorama*, January 2003, 100–07.
9. This summary of Hui Neng's life is adapted from the author's master's thesis which in turn is based upon Chinese and English translation editions of *The Platform Scripture*. See Daniel J. Adams, "The 'Great Meaning' of Hui-Neng: A Buddhist Hermeneutic," unpublished M.A. thesis, Soochow University, Taipei, Taiwan, 1979, 47–58.
 10. There are of course numerous English translations of this poem. This translation is taken from John C. H. Wu, *The Golden Age of Zen* (Taipei: National War College/Committee on the Compilation of the Chinese Library, 1967), 60.
 11. *Ibid.*, 62. See also Michael Pye, "Comparative Hermeneutics in Religion," in *The Cardinal Meaning—Essays in Comparative Hermeneutics: Buddhist and Christian*, eds. Michael Pye and Robert Morgan (The Hague and Paris: Mouton, 1973), 45–47, where the "cardinal meaning" and the "great meaning" are discussed with reference to Hui Neng's understanding of the essence of Ch'an teaching and practice.
 12. *Ibid.*, 62–63.
 13. *Ibid.*, 63.
 14. Wing-tsit Chan, "Introduction and Notes," *The Platform Scripture* (Asian Institute Translations, No. 3), trans. Wing-tsit Chan (New York: St. John's University Press, 1963), 10.
 15. Alan W. Watts, *The Way of Zen* (New York: Vintage Books, 1957), 94.
 16. Sung Bae Park, *Buddhist Faith and Sudden Enlightenment* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983), 20–23.
 17. See D. T. Suzuki, *The Zen Doctrine of No-Mind: The Significance of the Sutra of Hui-neng (Wei-lang)*, ed. Christmas Humphreys (York Beach, Maine: Samuel Weiser, Inc., 1969).
 18. See, for example, Charles Luk (Lu K'uan Yu), trans. & ed., *The Transmission of the Mind Outside the Teaching* (New York: Grove Press, 1974). This book is a collection of biographical sketches and summaries of the teachings of the first six generations of the Nan-Yo lineage of Hui Neng.
 19. Yampolsky, "Hui Neng," *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol. 6, 495.
 20. *Ibid.*
 21. Carl Bielefeldt and Lewis Lancaster, "T'an Ching (Platform Scripture)," *Philosophy East and West* 25, no. 2 (1975): 197–212. There are four editions of *The Platform Scripture* currently available in English. The first two are translated from the Tun-huang Manuscript: *The Platform Scripture* (Asian Institute Translations, No. 3), trans. Wing-tsit Chan (New York: St. John's University Press, 1963) and *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch: The Text of the Tun-huang Manuscript*, trans. with notes and intro. Philip B. Yampolsky (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967). Both these translations include the full Chinese text. The other two are translated from the 1291 Ming Canon Version and do not include the Chinese text: *The Diamond Sutra and the Sutra of Hui-Neng*, trans. A. F. Price and

- Wong Mou-Lam (Boston: Shambhala, 1990) and *The Sutra of Hui-Neng: Grand Master of Zen With Hui-Neng's Commentary on the Diamond Sutra*, trans. Thomas Cleary (Boston and London: Shambhala, 1998).
22. Yampolsky, *Platform Sutra*, 104, fn. 58 and 59.
 23. See John Jorgensen, *Inventing Hui-neng, the Sixth Patriarch: Hagiography and Biography in Early Ch'an* (Sinica Leidensia, No. 68) (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2005).
 24. J. C. Cleary, "T'aego's World," *A Buddha from Korea: The Zen Teaching of T'aego*, trans. with commentary J. C. Cleary (Boston and Shaftsbury, UK: Shambhala, 1988), 37. It should be noted that recent studies are showing that travel in ancient times was much more common than previously thought. See *The Hye Ch'o Diary: Memoir of the Pilgrimage to the Five Regions of India*, trans. and ed. Yang Han-Sung, Jan Yun-Hua, Iida Shotara and Laurence W. Preston (Berkeley, CA: Asian Humanities Press and Seoul: Po Chin Chai, n.d.); Tabish-Kjair, Martin Leer, Justin D. Edwards and Hanna Ziadeh, *Other Routes: 1500 years of African and Asian Travel Writing* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2005); and Kim Tae Joon, *Korean Travel Literature*, trans. Lee Kyong-hee (Seoul: Ewha Woman's University Press, 2006).
 25. Cleary, "T'aego's World," 29.
 26. Luk, *The Transmission of the Mind*, 31, 38–49.
 27. See Stephen Batchelor, "Introduction to the Korean Zen Tradition," *Kusan Sunim, The Way of Korean Zen*, trans. Martine Fages, ed. Stephen Batchelor (New York and Tokyo: Weatherhill, 1985), 13.
 28. Duk-Whang Kim, *A History of Religions in Korea* (Seoul: Daeji Moonhwa-sa, 1988), 125, 129; Chae Taeg-su, "The Unified Shilla Period: The Golden Age of Buddhism," *The History and Culture of Buddhism in Korea*, ed. Korean Buddhist Research Institute (Seoul: Dongguk University Press, 1993), 112–15.
 29. Batchelor, "Introduction to the Korean Zen Tradition," 18.
 30. Cleary, "T'aego's World," 42.
 31. See Price and Wong, *The Diamond Sutra and The Sutra of Hui-neng*, 155–56 and Yampolsky, *Platform Sutra*, 86–87.
 32. Robert Nilsen, *South Korea Handbook*, second edition (Chico, CA: Moon Publications, 1997), 515. It should be noted that this account is legendary. T'oui's lengthy stay in China from 784 to 821 has more of a historical basis. Even so, it is entirely possible that Taebi and Sambop were historical figures and did in fact attempt to bring back relics of Hui Neng to Korea.
 33. The date for the founding of Okch'on Temple varies, 722, 723, and 724 being given in various publications. The most recent publications of Ssanggye Temple give the founding date as 724.
 34. See Faure, *Chan Insights and Oversights*, 173.
 35. *Ibid.*, 172.
 36. Jongheon Jin, "The Transforming Sacredness of Mt. Chirisan from an Uto-

- pian Shelter into a Modern National Park: Focused on the Escapist Lives of 'Mountain Men,'" *Journal of the Korean Geographical Society* 40, no. 2 (2005): 177–82, where Jin discusses the "mountain men" of Chiri Mountain.
37. See Jorgensen, *Inventing Hui-neng*; Yampolsky, "Introduction," *Platform Sutra*; and Faure, *Chan Insights and Oversights*. Critical studies of the Ch'an/Seon/Zen tradition are in their infancy. However, if similar studies in the Christian tradition are any indication, once "the dust settles" the vast majority of believers will enter into a "post-liberal" phase and focus their attention on the received narratives, purported fabrications and all. Religious belief and devotion will continue. People will still come to the Gumdang at Ssanggye Temple to venerate the "skull relic" of Hui Neng.
 38. Ven. Song-chol, *Echoes from Mt. Kaya: Selections on Korean Buddhism by Ven. Song-chol Patriarch of the Korean Chogye Buddhist Order*, ed. Ven. Won-tek, trans. Brian Barry (Seoul: Lotus Lantern International Buddhist Center, 1988), 145.
 39. *Ibid.*, 149.
 40. Ven. Song Chol, *Opening the Eye: Dharma Messages by Ven. Song Chol, Korean Chogye Zen Master and Patriarch*, trans. Brian Barry (Paju, Korea: Gimm-young Books, 2002), 71.
 41. See Dan Lusthaus, "Critical Buddhism and Returning to the Sources," *Pruning the Bodhi Tree: The Storm Over Critical Buddhism*, eds. Jamie Hubbard and Paul L. Swanson (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997), 41–42; Lewis Lancaster, "The Role and Significance of Korean Son in the Study of East Asian Buddhism," [http://kr/buddhism.org/zen/koan/Lewis_Lancaster.htm] (11/17/2005).
 42. Robert E. Buswell, Jr., "Is There a 'Korean Buddhism' in the Pre-Nationalist Age?" in *Buddhism and Civilization in the 21st Century*, ed. Korean Buddhist Research Institute (Seoul: Dongguk University Press, 1966), 624.
 43. See Park, *Buddhist Faith and Sudden Enlightenment*, 105. It is interesting to compare this dispute between sudden enlightenment and gradual enlightenment to a similar dispute in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century American Christianity. The revivalists emphasized a sudden conversion experience while Horace Bushnell (1802–1876) of Yale University advocated a gradual experience of Christian nurture. It is apparent that the sudden-gradual dichotomy is not unique to the Ch'an/Seon/Zen Buddhist tradition.
 44. *Ibid.*, 106.

Buddhist Ritual Music and Dance

ALLEN HEYMAN

Buddhism is believed to have entered Korea in about 371 A.D. from north China. In the years following its introduction, ritual music and dance played a vital role in intensifying religious experience in Buddhist ceremonies. These ceremonies, such as the *Yöngsan-je*, which are highly colorful, elaborate, and costly (at one time some required as many as four or five days to perform in their entirety), are held largely to prepare the devotee for entrance into *Nirvana*, or Paradise, or the "Pure Land" as it is referred to in Korea, after death by purification of the past life. The *Yöngsan-je* is specifically held as a memorial tribute in which devotees pray for the peaceful passage of the deceased person's soul into paradise and is designed to lead human beings to the "Pure Land" through the re-enactment of Buddha's "sermon on the mount," so to speak. The "mount" in this case is *Yöngsan*, a sacred mountain in India known as *Gridhra-kuta* located northeast of *Rajagrha*, capital of *Magadha* in central India, which is said to be shaped like the head of a vulture, and is famous for its vultures and its caverns inhabited by ascetics. It is where *Pisuna* (*Mara*), in the shape of a vulture, hindered the meditations of *Ananda*.

Among other large-scale Buddhist ceremonies in Korea are the *Kakbae-je*, which is held in praise of the Ten Kings or Gods of Hell who sit in judgment of departed souls, and the *Suryuk-je* (the "Land and Water Ceremony"), which is held to propitiate the spirits of the land and water deities and to pray for the souls of those who have met death by accidental drowning. The word *je* means "ceremony," and is the equivalent of *upasadra* in Sanskrit.

Over the years, however, due largely to the rising expenditures involved in the execution of these rites, large-scale Buddhist ceremonies in Korea have been increasingly on the wane—so much so in fact that

many of the monks and nuns, particularly the novices, are being denied the practice and training needed to carry out these lengthy proceedings. Consequently, many portions of these ceremonies are gradually being forgotten, and, along with them, the accompanying songs and dances. Today, there are only four aging monks, all of whom have been designated "Human Cultural Treasures" by the Korean government, who are capable of conducting the Yöngsan-je in its entirety.

In addition, these large-scale ceremonies with their accompanying sacred songs and dances are largely to be seen only at the temples where the sect of married monks, known as *taech'osŭng*, who belong to the T'aego-jong order, officiate. Celibate monks, known as *pigusŭng*, who belong largely to the Chogye-jong order and constitute the majority in Korea, have done away with all dances, accompanying musical instruments, and practically all the sacred songs in order to disassociate themselves from Shamanism, and largely employ only recitative chants instead. As Shamanism itself assimilated with Buddhism in the course of transmission throughout Korea's long history, its ritual dances and songs adopted some of the Buddhist elements, although only superficially and for purely decorative purposes, in order to appeal more to the general populace.

The Buddhism of Northeast Asia, comprising Tibet, China, Korea, and Japan, is called *Mahayana* ("Greater Vehicle") Buddhism, whereas that of Southeast Asia is called *Hinayana* ("Lesser Vehicle") Buddhism. Mahayana Buddhism has been a major influence in East Asian countries, but Korea is believed to be the only one today in which Buddhist ritual dance is still practiced. In the case of Tibet, however, though Buddhist ritual dances are still preserved, as was evidenced by a performance given in Korea in 1992 by a group of Tibetan monks who presently reside in Ladakh, India, they are of a different nature than those performed in Korea; that is, they employ several types of mask dances, which, today, are not to be found in Korean Buddhist sacred dances. On the other hand, Korean mask dance dramas are believed to be of Central Asian origin, and, at the time of their import during the Silla period, they were performed as Buddhist ritual dance dramas. It is thus possible that Tibetan and Korean masques share a common origin, but more research is still required to fully bear this out.

The song form used in the Korean Buddhist ceremony, both by itself and for the accompaniment of the dances, is known as *pömp'ae* (Sanskrit: *brahma-bhan*; Chinese: *fanbei*; Japanese: *pömbai*). The *pömp'ae* of Hinayana and Mahayana are sung differently. These songs, sung in praise of Buddha, serve to calm the mind within by repressing the world without. They originated in India, the birthplace of Buddhism, were brought into China, where they are said to have subsequently been developed during the 3rd century A.D., and were later transmitted to Korea and Japan. Although Buddhism is believed to have entered Korea in about 371, various sources list the emergence of *pömp'ae* in Korea to be as late as 645 (other sources state that it was brought into Korea during the Silla period from Tang Dynasty China by Zen Master Chin-gam, who lived from 774 to 850). By the early part of the 9th century, however, the musical style of these songs had been altered to adapt them to the Korean idiom, and the dances are believed to have undergone a similar alteration from their Indian prototype some 650 years ago during the latter part of the Koryö period.

The Korean *pömp'ae* comprises two basic styles of singing: *chissori* and *hossori*. The latter, meaning "simple chant," makes up the great majority of the repertory. Its texts are usually quatrains of Chinese verses in lines of five or seven syllables. The *chissori*, meaning "elaborate chant," has the most extraordinary melismas and a tone that ranges from a deep basso profundo all the way up to falsetto singing. It is not confined to any limitation of time, and can be prolonged or abridged in accordance with the requirements of the ceremony.

In Korea, the *pömp'ae* texts employed in the accompaniment to the dance are written in Chinese characters and are based on Chinese verse meter, the only exception being the *Ch'önsugyöng* ("Dharani of the Great Compassionate One"), which is written and sung in the original Sanskrit. *Dharani* are magical formulas, mystic forms of prayer, or spells of Tantric order, written in Sanskrit. They were found in China as early as the 3rd century A.D. and formed a portion of the Dharani-pitaka Sutra.

The accompanying instrumental music employed in the ceremony, collectively referred to as *chorach'i*, is performed on instruments that were formerly used in royal military processional music during the Chosön Dynasty, as are the distinctive yellow robes and stovepipe-shaped

hats worn by the musicians. The only instruments that the monks themselves play in the singing of the pŏmp'ae and in chanting are the large gong, round drum, and a wooden slitgong, or temple block, known as the *mokt'ak*. However, in smaller-scale ceremonies where the musicians are not present, the conical oboe, the only melodic instrument of the ensemble, is played by the monks themselves, but the clarion, shell trumpet, or conch, and small cymbals are not used.

The Yŏngsan-je begins with the *shiryŏn*, a ritual in which the temple area is purified. This is carried out by all participants—monks, nuns, musicians, and devotees—who parade around the temple area with the musicians taking the lead, followed by monks bearing various standards and the yon, an ornately decorated palanquin believed to contain the spirit of the deceased. The devotees, with hands folded together in prayer, constitute the remainder of the procession. The music played is that of Tae Ch'wi-t'a, mentioned previously.

As the procession slowly makes its way back to the immediate temple area facing the main hall, a closed circle is formed in the center of which one or two, or sometimes four, monks or nuns perform the *chak-bŏp* (literally "Creating the Dharma"), or, as it is more commonly known, the "Butterfly Dance." Of all Buddhist sacred dances, this might well be considered the most representative, the most leading in importance, and the most noted for its beauty of form and movement. It is the ultimate in grace, subtlety, and restraint, emulating the ethereal movements of the butterfly, from whence it derives its name.

The dancers are dressed in a long flowing white robe with extremely broad sleeves that hang from the shoulder to the floor along the entire length of the arm which resemble the wings of a butterfly. A bright red mantle, known as the *kasa*, is worn across the chest and over one shoulder; across the other are long strips of material in different colors that are representative of the *Ŏ-haeng* ("Five Colors") cosmology, mentioned previously, which is actually Taoist in origin, one example of the admixture of Taoism and Buddhism in Korea. On their heads, the dancers wear tall pointed hoods made of hemp cloth bearing sacred Sanskrit letters, and in each hand they usually hold a lotus flower made of paper.

To the beating of the large gong and drum, and the singing of the hosori pŏmp'ae entitled *Toryangge* (the "Gatha of Bodhimandala," the

gatha being a song, a metrical narrative, or hymn of moral purport, generally composed of thirty-two characters, and the Bodhimandala a place for teaching, learning, or practicing religion), sung as the circle of monks and devotees slowly begins to revolve around the confines of the temple courtyard, the dancers execute the movements in a slow, stately manner in an unmetred, free rhythmic style that is, if executed in the correct manner, totally dependent on the words of the song, which are translated as follows:

The Bodhimandala is pure and clean with no defilement.
Triratna [the "Triple Treasure" or "Three Precious Ones,"
namely Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha] and Devas descend
to this place.

Now, as I recite these wonderfully true words,
May you protect me with Your great mercy.

At the start of the dance, the heel of the left foot is raised slightly, touching the right foot between the instep and the ankle joint. At the same time, the knees are bent, as in a balletic plier, while the upright posture of the body is maintained. In no other type of Korean traditional dance can this posture be found, and if one were asked the main difference between the Buddhist dance and other forms of dance in Korea, he could easily point to this figuration. It is the position that is assumed at the start, the position to which the dancer returns after each series of movements, and the position which brings the dance to a close, not only in the Butterfly Dance, but in all sacred Buddhist dances, the only possible exception being that of the Drum Dance (but, even here, though the dancer doesn't return to this position after each series of movements, it is the one that he assumes at the start).

The Butterfly Dance conveys different meanings through the use of symbols. Some movements and figures symbolize abstract Buddhist concepts, such as Compassion (gathering and then parting the hands), Conversion to Buddhism (bending the body like a bow and then straightening it), and Perfection (going round and round, making a circle).

One of the most strikingly beautiful and impressive figures is found in a variation of the dance where the performer sinks slowly to the ground in a gentle swaying motion, causing the outstretched arms to

move up and down very slightly in alternation. It brings to mind the picture of a butterfly alighted on a flower, its wings swaying in the soft breeze—an aesthetic interaction between nature and the dance that one so often finds in Asia.

In another variation, the dancers once again sink slowly to the ground, first in a squatting and then gradually to a sitting position, their backs to each other, and execute rapid changes in position by lifting themselves on their haunches and turning. The great difficulty entailed in performing this feat may be realized when one considers the length and bulk of the costumes and the fact that the arms are held continually in an outstretched position.

The Butterfly Dance has fourteen variants, but all of them are based on eleven essential dance movements, six of which are commonly performed at present-day rituals.

The Butterfly Dance is accompanied by the large gong and conical oboe, which plays a melody called *Yōmbul* (“Buddhist Invocation”). This is composed of an introduction and two parts, and has no melodic relationship whatsoever to the *pōmp’ae* (the “Gatha of Bodhimandala”) that is sung at the same time. If one questions the monks about this, they simply say, “It is the relatedness of the unrelated,” or “It is the inter-relationship of unrelated things,” which, of course, lies at the root of Zen Buddhist concept.

Another most unusual and interesting dance that employs two dancers dressed in the butterfly costume is the *T’aju*, the “Dance of the Eight-fold Path.” It is performed prior to the offering of food to the Buddha as a sort of “grace” in the final section of the *Yōngsan-je* called the *Shik-tang Chak-bōp*, the so-called “Sacred Communal Meal,” in which both monks and devotees alike participate. Each dancer carries what might be taken for a croquet stick, a long thin wooden-tipped mallet decorated with tightly wound, brightly colored strips of paper—the same five colors, in fact, that are worn by the dancer. In the center of the dance area is an eight-sided block of wood called the *P’alchōngdo* (the “Eight-fold Path”), painted white and bearing large black letters in Chinese that symbolize the teachings of the Buddha. On top of the wooden block at the center is painted the letter *Shim* (“Heart” or “Mind,” more specifically the “Buddha Mind”), and around it along the eight sides are such

words as "Righteous Opinion," "Righteous Judgment," "Righteous Thought," and "Righteous Life." The dancers circle the block slowly in a swaying motion, stopping at intervals to strike the top of it with their mallets. The eight sides of the block represent the eight kinds of righteousness into which one should become enlightened.

Upon completion of the Butterfly Dance, two or four monks or nuns perform the Cymbal Dance (called *Para Ch'um* in Korean) to the accompaniment of the pŏmp'ae entitled *Chŏnsugyŏng* (the "Dharani of the Great Compassionate One"). As mentioned previously, this is sung entirely in Sanskrit. In the dance, a large cymbal is carried in each hand and twirled adroitly back and forth over the head. The dancers are dressed in the grey-colored frock and red mantle normally worn by monks; that is, of course, if they haven't performed the Butterfly Dance previously, in which case they would still be dressed in the butterfly costume, but without the hood. This dance is performed in a faster tempo than that of the Butterfly Dance, and a continuous triple meter rhythm is played on the round drum and gong throughout. The accompanying instrumental music, a very short piece that is repeated over and over, bears the title of *Ch'ŏnsu Para*. Like the Yŏmbul, it is also played on the conical oboe and bears no melodic relationship to the pŏmp'ae that is being sung. There are six varieties of this dance in all.

It is said that the purpose of the dance is to cleanse all evil from the heart and mind, and to purify both the place of worship and the soul of the departed as well. It is also said that this dance originally celebrated the triumphal entry of Buddha into Tosol Castle after his enlightenment.

In addition to the T'aju, another dance that is executed prior to the "Sacred Communal Meal" is the *Pŏp-ko* ("Drum Dance"), which is performed before a large round temple drum set on a pedestal, with drumheads on both sides that measure about two feet in diameter, by a single dancer carrying a drumstick in each hand and dressed in the grey-colored frock and red mantle normally worn by monks; that is, of course, if he hasn't performed the T'aju previously, in which case he would still be dressed in the butterfly costume, but without the hood.

Of all traditional dances in Korea, this is one of the most exacting, and requires extreme physical endurance to execute. Before the start of the dance, rapid rhythms are played on the center and rim of the drum,

giving off a thunderous sound that can be heard far in the distance. During the performance of the dance itself, a second monk stands at the opposite side of the drum beating out a steady 2/4 rhythm with a single drumstick or mallet that is gradually accelerated until a very rapid speed is attained. Another monk can be seen to the rear of the drum, standing before a wooden fish suspended from a wooden frame or a sheet of white paper on which the figure of a fish is painted in black ink. With two sticks, decorated like those used in the T'aju, he beats on the fish in continual alternating motion in time with the dance. This is referred to as the *Mogŏ Ch'um* (the "Dance of the Wooden Fish"). The music accompanying the dance is played on the conical oboe and is basically the same as that played during the Cymbal Dance. Here, however, it is gradually accelerated to a very rapid tempo in accordance with that of the dance. The dance becomes most difficult when the drum is played, both in the center and on the rim, from a backbend position, a technique that calls for both skill and dexterity.

It should be mentioned here that the folk version of this dance, called the *Sŭng-mu* ("Buddhist Monk Dance"), mentioned previously, also has a section where the performer executes rapid rhythms on the drum. This is wrongly interpreted by some dancers, however, to be a phenomenon whereby a monk, restricted by an ascetic life of celibacy and abstinence, is able to vent his frustrations by pounding away on a drum. This might be acceptable from a modern psychological standpoint, but, in reality, it is rather more of wishful thinking on the part of the interpreter than anything else. For any monk or nun to do so would be regarded as an extreme aberration. In the temple, both the large drum and the wooden fish are kept in a special pavilion. When the acolytes beat the drum and fish up and down three times, the elder monks come to the table to take their meal. When all the monks are seated, the acolytes beat the drum and fish up and down five times. Herein lies the significance of the drum playing in the sacred Buddhist drum dance, from which the folk version is taken.

The most representative, as well as the most interesting, of all *chissori pŏmp'ae* is that which is called *Kŏryŏng-san*, the "Vulture Spirit Peak." It is sung during the *Yŏngsan-je* when a large scroll painting of the Buddha and his disciples is unfurled and hoisted onto two tall poles in the

temple courtyard. Though it is classified as a *chissori pŏmp'ae*, it actually opens in the *hossori* style with a piece called *Songja*, the words of which refer to the arrival of the Sakyamuni Buddha at Yŏngsan Mountain, mentioned previously. The second part, called *San-hwarak*, meaning "Scattered Flowers Falling from Heaven," consists of nine syllables: *Na-Mu-Yŏng-San Hoe-Sang-Pul-Bo Sal*, which mean, "I devote myself entirely to all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas assembled on the Vulture Spirit Peak." These syllables are repeated twice in the form of a melodic recitative called *Kŏ-ch'ae-bi*, also in *hossori* style. Then, after the large gong has been struck several times, the *chissori* begins, in which the same nine syllables are sung, but so slowly, along with many vowel changes, that they cannot be recognized. The singing of these nine syllables in *chissori* style takes about forty-five minutes to perform, and the melismatic effect is essentially ecstatic, to say the least, ranging in tone from a deep basso profundo all the way up to a falsetto. The sliding tones sometimes convey an effect that is likened to the soft howling of the wind. This *chissori pŏmp'ae*, one of the most unique vocal art mediums of the world, is the source from which the chamber music-style suite, *Yongsan Hoesang*, was created.

Perilous Journeys: The Plight of North Koreans in China and Beyond

PETER BECK, GAIL KIM AND DONALD MACINTYRE

I. INTRODUCTION¹

North Korea's economic collapse and famine in the 1990s and subsequent food shortages have prompted scores of thousands to escape their country's hardships and seek refuge in China and beyond, contributing to a humanitarian challenge that is playing out almost invisibly as the world focuses on North Korea's nuclear program. The international community has failed to find an effective means of dealing with this situation. Despite billions of dollars in humanitarian assistance over the past decade and increasing awareness of human rights violations, conditions for the vast majority of citizens in North Korea remain dire, while conditions for those who reach China are only marginally better.

In China, the border crossers live in hiding from crackdowns and forcible repatriations by China and neighbouring countries, vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. If repatriated to the North, they face harsh punishment, possibly execution. That North Koreans in China are virtually invisible makes it impossible to give an accurate assessment of their numbers. Only a little over 10,000 have made the perilous journey to safety in South Korea, or in a small number of cases, to Japan, Europe or the U.S. However, based on the assessments of several NGOs and first-hand interviews with border crossers and Korean-Chinese in the border area, the total is likely to be something up to 100,000.

The plight of these North Koreans has emerged as a source of tensions, not only between the two Koreas, but also between China and its neighbours, South Korea and the U.S., and has even become a sticking

point between the U.S. and China. North-South talks froze for more than a year after South Korea airlifted hundreds of North Koreans out of Vietnam in 2004. China's neighbours generally do not forcibly return North Koreans to China or North Korea, instead allowing them to move on to third countries. A growing chorus in the U.S. criticises South Korea for remaining silent on the issue, even though Seoul quietly takes in the lion's share of asylum seekers while Washington has accepted only a handful. President Bush raised the issue when he met with Chinese President Hu Jintao at the White House in April 2006.

China and South Korea have held back, even during the Security Council debate over post-test sanctions, from applying as much pressure as they might to persuade Pyongyang to reverse its dangerous nuclear policy, in part because they fear that the steady stream of North Koreans flowing into China and beyond would become a torrent if the North's economy were to collapse under the weight of tough measures. While there is marginally more hope Beijing will change its ways than Pyongyang, concerned governments can and must do far more to improve the situation of the border crossers.

Even without a strong response to the 9 October 2006 nuclear test that targets the North's economy, the internal situation could soon get much worse. The perfect storm may be brewing for a return to famine in the North. In 2005, Pyongyang reintroduced the same public distribution system for food that collapsed in the 1990s and rejected international humanitarian assistance, demanding instead unmonitored development help. Funding for remaining aid programs is difficult to secure, and summer floods have damaged crops and infrastructure.

Hunger and the lack of economic opportunity, rather than political oppression, are the most important factors in shaping a North Korean's decision to leave "the worker's paradise." A lack of information, the fear of being caught by Chinese or North Korean security agents and financial limitations are more significant barriers than any actual wall or tight security at the border. China compensates for the virtual absence of border guards with a relentless search for North Koreans in hiding. In October 2006, Chinese authorities began to build a fence along the frontier and conducted neighbourhood sweeps to find and arrest the border crossers.

Despite these formidable obstacles, the willingness among North Koreans to risk their lives to escape is growing stronger, and arrivals in the South hit a record in 2006. The most important pull factor shaping the decision to leave is the presence of family members in China and, increasingly, South Korea. The nearly 10,000 defectors in the South are able to send cash and information to help their loved ones escape. To a lesser but significant extent, information is beginning to spread in the North through smuggled South Korean videos, American and South Korean radio broadcasts, and word of mouth—all exposing North Koreans to new ideas and aspirations.

Most North Koreans do not arrive in China with the intention of seeking official asylum, but because Beijing is making it ever more difficult for them to stay, a growing number are forced to travel thousands of kilometres and undertake dangerous border crossings in search of refuge in Mongolia or Southeast Asia. A loose network of makeshift shelters focused on humanitarian aid has evolved into a politically-charged but fragile underground railroad on which some North Koreans can buy safe passage to Seoul in a matter of days, while others suffer years of violence and exploitation. The mass arrests of 175 asylum seekers in Bangkok in August 2006 and a further 86 on 24 October provide vivid examples of host country hospitality being stretched to the limits.

The vast majority of North Koreans who have made it to safety resettle in South Korea. In most instances, this is a choice motivated by language, culture and the promise of being reunited with family members. In a growing number of cases, the overly burdensome procedures for being granted asylum anywhere else is the deciding factor. With the exception of Germany, the governments that have pressed most vigorously for improving North Korean human rights, namely the U.S., the European Union member states and Japan, have taken in only a handful of asylum seekers.

This article is believed to be the first to look comprehensively at the hidden, often shifting networks through which North Koreans seek safety and better lives. Some life-saving and others violent and exploitive, they largely determine whom North Koreans meet, where they live, how much danger they are exposed to and what options they have. Examining the formation and development of these networks and the poli-

cies of related countries provides the basis for understanding the situation that North Koreans face today. This in turn helps identify specific areas in which new policies of protection can be advanced. If they are to minimise the exploitation of the most vulnerable and enhance the much-needed aid this network delivers, concerned governments must commit to a sustainable solution.

Building on more than 50 interviews with North Koreans in China and Southeast Asia in 2006 and over 50 more in South Korea, this article examines the factors leading to cross-border migrations and why the networks were forced underground. It then focuses on the activities of network operators and North Koreans in China and proceeds to trace the long (often more than 10,000 km.), uncertain journey out of China into transit and resettlement countries through interviews with all the key players, including host governments, missionaries, brokers and diplomatic missions from Ulaan Bataar to Rangoon and in all the countries where North Koreans are found. The article concludes with discussion of ways to improve the situation for refugees and asylum seekers. To protect individuals and the fragile underground railway, many details, particularly about escape routes and particular governments and groups, have not been included.

None of the policies proposed in this article would create unmanageable burdens for any government. Unless North Korea's economy collapses completely, the numbers of its citizens crossing international borders will continue to be restricted by many factors, not least Pyongyang's tight controls on internal movement and the financial cost of securing an escape route. However, it is time to back up strong words and resolutions about the plight of North Koreans with actions, both because humanity demands it and because if the international community cannot quickly get a handle on this situation, it will find it harder to forge an operational consensus on the nuclear issue.

A handful of North Koreans have legal, documented permission to visit China, but the vast majority are there illegally. The lack of protection of North Koreans in China has forced them into hiding, leading to smuggling, trafficking and ad hoc diplomacy with the most vulnerable falling through the cracks. China, which has bilateral agreements with the North concerning "escaped criminals" and "border affairs," views the

border crossers as economic migrants subject to repatriation.² The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) considers them “persons of concern,”³ while international human rights and humanitarian groups and the media commonly refer to North Koreans as “refugees.”

There are legal debates over the interpretation of the 1951 Convention on Refugees but we believe many if not most North Koreans in China have compelling cases to be recognised as refugees or “refugees *sur place*,” because the North’s usually harsh treatment of border crossers amounts to persecution.⁴ However, they often do not have the opportunity to avail themselves of international protection. Regardless of their official status, all North Koreans in China and other transit states deserve such protection from forcible repatriation and subsequent persecution. China does not yet have a domestic legal framework that addresses the needs of asylum seekers⁵ but it and other transit countries can and should, nonetheless, follow through on their international legal obligations to respect the principle of non-refoulement, which prohibits such returns.⁶

This article refers to North Koreans in China collectively as “border crossers,” although many may fairly be called refugees or asylum seekers as well. For the sake of family members still in the North and because of their own vulnerability in China, some are willing to sneak back home despite continued or expected persecution upon return. Others are essentially trapped in China, unable or unwilling to go home or seek asylum in a third country. North Koreans who have embarked on the journey out of China and into transit countries are called “asylum seekers”—the term used by the UNHCR to describe people in search of safety in a foreign country—because of their determination to request international protection. Asylum seekers “may be in need of international protection and of concern to UNHCR” even if they are not able to or do not apply for recognition as refugees.⁷ The term “refugee” is used to refer to individual North Koreans who have been accorded official refugee status and protection. For North Koreans who have availed themselves of their South Korean citizenship and resettled there, this article employs the term “defectors.”

II. LEAVING THE "WORKER'S PARADISE"

The denial of political and economic rights in North Korea is entrenched in the country's social architecture. A three-tiered caste system structures society, effectively suppressing rights for those of the lower "wavering" and "hostile" classes. Those who leave the country, even if only for food or to earn money, can face forced labour if caught. Eyewitness accounts and satellite images leave no doubt that prison camps and public executions are realities.⁸ International outcry and condemnation have been as ineffective as the North's constitution in improving, let alone protecting, the human rights of North Koreans.

North Korea's social controls and indoctrination have proven amazingly effective. Before 1990, there were only a handful of defections to South Korea and some clandestine cross-border remittances or trade with relatives in China. Little information flowed in or out of the country. It was not until the economic collapse and ensuing famine of the 1990s that a wave of North Koreans moved into China. That economic collapse and persistent difficulties are directly linked to the policy decisions of the regime in Pyongyang. Nevertheless, the vast majority of North Koreans who cross into China appear to be driven by economic necessity rather than direct political oppression.

A. THE BORDER REGION

The border between China and North Korea is 1,416 km., marked primarily by the Yalu and Tumen Rivers.⁹ The 790 km. Yalu portion is wide and deep, essentially un-crossable without a boat. In some areas, however, it becomes both narrow and shallow enough to wade across with ease. The Tumen, which runs north of the Yalu for 546 km., is no more than knee-deep at certain points and can be crossed on foot. North Korea's border with Russia is only seventeen km., dominated by the strong currents of the Tumen River delta. Most of the region's rain falls in the summer months, with floods accompanying the rainy season. In the winter, the rivers freeze over for three to four months, and temperatures drop well below freezing.

Fourteen official border crossings at twelve points connect China and North Korea. North Korea reinforced border guards on its side with troops in 2004.¹⁰ A North Korean who lived near the border claimed the

number of guards increased from two every 500 metres to four.¹¹ On the Chinese side, press reports suggested that more numerous soldiers replaced border guards in 2003.¹² However, on several visits we observed little or no visible military presence on either side of the border.¹³ Traffic is fairly light on the bridges that link to China's Yanbian Autonomous Korean Prefecture, where the largest concentration of ethnic Korean-Chinese nationals live.¹⁴ Occasionally, trucks loaded with rice or fertiliser can be seen crossing.¹⁵

Despite the seemingly light security at the border, Chinese authorities take the flow of North Koreans very seriously. Beijing does not want a steady stream of border crossers to become a flood, causing economic havoc in the region and possibly stoking latent Korean nationalism there.¹⁶ In addition to crackdowns, a new barbed-wire fence was seen being built along the Yalu in Dandong after summer floods damaged crops and infrastructure in North Korea.¹⁷ Signs posted on the Chinese side read: "It is forbidden to financially help, harbour, or aid in the settlement of people from the neighbouring country who have crossed the border illegally."¹⁸

Chinese residents of this region are not unfamiliar with cross-border migrations triggered by food shortages. Mao's Great Leap Forward campaign, begun in 1957, led to a famine estimated to have caused 16 to 40 million deaths. Unauthorized migrations to North Korea in search of food were common and inspired the "Escaped Criminals Reciprocal Extradition Treaty" in 1960, which, along with the 1986 "Border Area Affairs Agreement," continues to guide official Chinese policy, even though the situation has been reversed.¹⁹ The classification of North Korean border crossers as illegal economic migrants subjects them to repatriation under these bilateral agreements and denies them international protection or access by the UNHCR.

A fair amount of authorised cross-border travel continues, but Chinese visitors—including officials—must have documented invitations from North Korea, all of which are subject to approval by the North Korean government. Until recently, officials were exempted from further visa requirements, while tourists and businessmen were generally required to apply for visas at North Korean embassies or consulates. The few exceptions involve short visits to the special economic zone of Ra-

jin-Sonbong (Rason), for which copies of official Chinese identification cards suffice. In 2005, North Korea tightened its policies, blocking entry for all tourists for two weeks in August, closing a cross-border port in Dandong, Liaoning Province in September, and requiring applicants to submit short biographies for business visas starting in November.²⁰

The border region has been home to both large and small-scale efforts at economic development. Although plans in 2002 for developing a special economic zone along the western border in Shinuiju stalled, as many as 200 North Korean trade bureaus operate in Dandong, the Chinese city opposite Shinuiju.²¹ China's three northeastern provinces, where the majority of ethnic Korean-Chinese live, have been targeted for increased investment and revitalisation.²² North Korean trading companies are active there as well, exporting rice and importing iron ore.²³ Chinese investment in infrastructure along the border area has also increased: a railway connecting several cities including Yanji, Dandong, and Dalian is to be completed by 2010, and there are plans for a new Friendship Bridge south of Shinuiju.²⁴ In October 2006, Chinese authorities announced the opening of a second "greenway" to facilitate overland trade with the North Korean border town of Hoeryeong. The first had opened in March, linking up with the special economic zone in Rason.²⁵

A significant consequence of this Sino-North Korean contact has been the increased flow of information, not least via pre-paid Chinese cell phones. The phones, which sell in China for \$50–\$100, are necessary for doing business along the border but also give separated families and guides on the underground railroad a way to keep in touch and pass along information.²⁶ Despite the black-market status of these phones, an estimated 20,000 North Koreans had access to them in early 2005.²⁷ Owners allow others to use their phones for a modest fee. One asylum seeker who borrowed a cell phone from a border-town resident said, however, that ownership or use can be punished by long sentences to labour camps (*kyohwaso*).²⁸

B. THE PRESSURE TO LEAVE

The collapse of the economy has meant that the North Korean people live in conditions of extreme deprivation. More devastating has been the draconian program of social control pursued by the Kim Jong-il regime

even as the food situation reached crisis levels. Classification of citizens into “core,” “wavering,” and “hostile” classes continued, with members of the core class able to access some food through the public distribution system (PDS) until as late as 1996, while the vast majority of the population had to resort to coping strategies such as foraging and bartering personal belongings—both activities prohibited under the penal code. Certificates required for travel away from one’s residence were difficult for ordinary citizens to obtain and almost impossible to secure for international travel. Still, family members often separated, hoping to find food in other cities and improve individual chances of survival.²⁹ Those found outside their home counties were subject to detention in “9–27 camps,” named for their inaugural date of 27 September 1997.³⁰ Although the camps, overwhelmed from the start, were eventually closed, North Korea’s internally displaced are still a pressing part of this problem.³¹ Children who leave home because their families can no longer provide for them are among the most vulnerable victims.³²

In the face of such oppressive legal restrictions and disintegrating social controls, a nascent alternative network of bribes and clandestine coping strategies grew and became more sophisticated. Taking payments for turning a blind eye, authorities came to tolerate a certain measure of black-market trade and extra-legal domestic travel. Those who could not afford to bribe the authorities were punished most commonly by fines and confiscation of goods, or verbal and physical abuse, but such punishments did not halt market activity or unauthorised travel.³³ This change from below, combined with dire economic need, encouraged more and more North Koreans to find their way into China despite the threat of arrest and severe punishment.

C. CROSSING OVER

From 1997 to 1999, during the worst of the famine and the height of the “first wave” of relief activity, the border was fairly porous, and sympathy on the Chinese side of the border was high. Chinese officials were largely unconcerned, and it became almost a common practice to bribe North Korean border guards. The going rate was about \$13, although some parts of the border were more expensive. North Koreans could cross the border on their own and did so mostly with the intention of ac-

quiring provisions or perhaps working for cash, then returning to their families in the North. Some border crossers did not have any particular contacts or plans and relied on the generosity of strangers. One who entered China with three other women in the late 1990s simply "approached one of the houses ... and told [the owner] about [their] situation."³⁴

Christian churches in China were particularly active in supporting the early cross-border survival strategy. An organisation based in Yanji supported "house churches" along the border, providing food, clothes, and basic medical kits. Hundreds of border crossers passed through each of fifteen to twenty house churches in this one network alone. Many would come in the middle of the night, pick up provisions and return to North Korea before daybreak. Others would stay in the border area for a few days, while still others would move further into China toward Yanji.³⁵ Another pastor remembers supplying several shelters along the border with thousands of dollars worth of winter clothes in the late 1990s. The situation was "loose back then," allowing aid workers and North Koreans in border areas to move around with relative ease. Some donated goods were even diverted to the marketplace.³⁶

Surveys conducted along the border in 1998 found the North Koreans in China to be "a diverse, highly mobile, and largely hidden population."³⁷ Most were in their 20s and 30s and had entered China in search of food or work. Aid workers estimate that over two thirds eventually returned home.³⁸ Residents from North Hamgyong Province were almost 80 per cent of those surveyed.³⁹ Not only is this province nearest the border, across the Tumen River from Chinese cities with large ethnic Korean populations, but it had considerable heavy industry. As state-owned enterprises closed, unemployment grew, and food shortages prevented the distribution of daily rations. With little arable land for cultivation or foraging, residents of North Hamgyong had few alternatives for coping.⁴⁰ In the past few years, North Koreans as far from the border as Pyongyang and beyond have made their way to China, an indication of continuing hardship as well as more established escape routes.

Since 1999, more women and children and more single individuals with no stable family unit to return to in North Korea have made the crossing. Surveys along the border in 1999 found roughly equal numbers of men and women but women now outnumber men three to one.⁴¹ Men,

who are more likely to be married or divorced, tend to go home with provisions for their families, while single women can access the “bride trade” in the border region.⁴² Women who are married but not employed are also more likely to leave their homes since they will not be missed at work and have no direct access to the public distribution system. These women sometimes work as cross-border traders, selling cigarettes and other goods from China on North Korea’s black market to help provide for their families. Women are also given more lenient punishments if caught and repatriated, so long as they seem to have been in China only to find food or work.⁴³

Estimates of the number of North Koreans in China during the peak famine years range from 10,000 to 300,000.⁴⁴ At least half included in the higher end figure stayed for less than three months and over 70 per cent stayed for less than six months. When viewed in context, this estimate does not indicate an exodus of hundreds of thousands, but rather underscores the fluidity of the early cross-border network.

III. GOING UNDERGROUND

Significant changes in the dynamics of border crossings were underway by 2000. The worst of the famine had passed, and North Korea’s grain production was improving. North Korean and Chinese officials may have seen cross-border movement as a useful safety valve and tolerated the short-term migration as long as it was “politically safe”—that is, for as long as North Koreans sought just food and other provisions. But the influx of asylum seekers had also drawn NGOs, brokers, and the international media into the picture. Some North Koreans crossed with more direct help from missionaries and NGOs, and a growing number were settling permanently despite their illegal status and vulnerability to arrest and/or repatriation. Others were using China as a transit to third countries in hopes of greater economic freedom and physical security. From 2000, both North Korea and China gradually decided that the benefits of a lax border policy were no longer greater than the negative consequences.

A. CRACKDOWNS

There is a consensus among missionaries, aid workers, and NGOs that Beijing has steadily increased the pressure on North Korean asylum

seekers and those helping them.⁴⁵ It implemented a system of rewards for turning in North Koreans and fines for supporting them. Aid workers quoted rewards as high as \$400 and fines as high as \$3,600 but recent reports cite rewards of \$630.⁴⁶ According to the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, at least 6,000 North Koreans were repatriated in 2000, a marked rise from earlier years.⁴⁷ A 100-day campaign of raids and repatriation was begun in December 2002, resulting in the repatriation of 3,200 North Koreans and the detention of 1,300 others in the Chinese border towns of Tumen and Longjing.⁴⁸ In October 2003, the Chinese government was running half a dozen detention facilities inside military bases along the border with North Korea and repatriating up to 200 to 300 North Koreans every week.⁴⁹ Since 2000, China has increasingly targeted the NGOs and aid workers who help North Koreans.⁵⁰

B. CHANGES IN THE CHINESE BORDER AREA

In the midst of the crackdowns, China's main area for receiving border crossers has undergone several important changes. The Yanbian Autonomous Korean Prefecture was a major source of support and a staging area for many NGOs. There is sympathy toward North Koreans that can be attributed to ethnic solidarity (many North Koreans, especially from northern areas, have at least one relative in China) as well as memories of North Korean aid during the Great Leap famine. Since the early 2000s, however, Yanbian has played a reduced role for North Koreans. Chinese crackdowns have been effective. Fearing fines or arrest, some employers and lodgers abruptly began turning out North Koreans. The increased presence of police has forced asylum seekers to retreat to rural areas or constantly change apartments in urban centres.⁵¹

Prior to the crackdowns, homeless North Korean children (*kkotjebi*) could be seen on street corners and sometimes in tourist centres begging for money and food.⁵² The *kkotjebi* and other North Korean asylum seekers no longer have a visible presence in China. Also, despite their rising economic status, the Korean-Chinese (*Chosunjok*) are not wealthy, and the provincial economy is generally sluggish. North Koreans still receive direct help from more financially stable relatives or find employment in Korean small businesses. However, there have been several testimonies of exploitive working conditions, especially for North Ko-

rean women, and donor fatigue has set in.⁵³ Border crossers have also been associated with assaults and robberies in the Chinese media.⁵⁴ In September 2006, reports emerged that Chinese authorities had undertaken a new crackdown on North Koreans residing illegally in China, sweeping through neighbourhoods at sunrise unannounced to check the residency papers of each household.⁵⁵

Changing economic opportunities for ethnic Korean-Chinese nationals present another twist for border crossers seeking aid from the Korean community in China. Seeking a higher standard of living, Korean-Chinese are moving out of Yanbian to urban centres such as Beijing, Shanghai, and Shenzhen, where South Korean companies have taken root. Low birth rates and migration to South Korea have also contributed to the fall in Yanbian's Korean population.⁵⁶ In 2000, ethnic Koreans in Jilin Province numbered 842,000, 39 per cent of the population.⁵⁷ By the end of 2005, the percentage had dropped to 33 per cent.⁵⁸ If it drops below 30 per cent, Yanbian can lose its status as an autonomous prefecture. Anticipating this, the government there has drafted legislation that would dismantle the prefecture's county lines and regroup Tumen, Yanji, and Longjing cities into one region. The smaller region would have an ethnic Korean majority and could be eligible to form an autonomous government.⁵⁹

Losing autonomous prefectural status could result in tighter social controls for churches, one of the bases of support for North Koreans in need of shelter or provisions. Indeed, churches seem to have already downsized activities, although there is no straightforward correlation here. One missionary estimates that there are 200–300 ethnic Korean churches in Yanbian, but few are still involved in supporting Northerners.⁶⁰ Some missionaries do not want the risks to compromise their programs for Chinese nationals. Others are accountable to donors who are indifferent to the refugee issue.

C. CHANGING PUSH-PULL FACTORS

The network's move underground has also resulted in new pull factors. North Koreans, particularly those in border areas, have had more exposure to China and contact with relatives in China and South Korea. South Korean television programs and movies have also penetrated the North

as smuggled videos and DVDs, inspiring dreams of moving south.⁶¹ Recent defectors estimate that more than half of all North Koreans have watched banned South Korean entertainment.⁶² Several defectors also report having listened to short wave radio broadcasts by Voice of America and Radio Free Asia, which only air for a few hours per day.⁶³ Still others report being impressed by propaganda leaflets, not so much because of the usually over-the-top messages, but because of the quality of the paper.⁶⁴ People talk secretly of South Korea, and most know that its standard of living is much higher. A woman had heard from a friend in South Korea that work there is hard and people unfriendly but that conditions are better than in China.⁶⁵ North Koreans who have already reached South Korea may also be in a financial position to support the escape of their relatives.

The role of relatives in South Korea is critical because they inject money into the network, funding a "niche market" of relatively safe but expensive defections. This means that some North Koreans, many of whom have relatives already in China or in South Korea or have themselves crossed the border before, go to China not as a last-resort survival strategy, but in search of a higher standard of living. Indeed, as Sino-North Korean contacts increase, economic difficulties persist and more information about the outside world filters in, relatively better off and better educated North Koreans are taking advantage of the underground railroad's growing sophistication and its connections to South Korea and the West. Such paid defections have driven the price of bribes up, presenting new barriers to crossing for those who cannot afford the payments.

The underlying push factor, however, is still hunger and poverty. Even though North Korea's economy has improved slightly, the benefits reach only a small minority. Economic reforms were introduced in 2002 in the context of a growing network of black markets and cross-border traffic.⁶⁶ The introduction of market mechanisms, especially through monetisation, was first met with some optimism abroad but has stalled from a serious lack of infrastructure and resources and has yet to be matched by necessary structural reforms. Meanwhile, prices have skyrocketed, alongside unemployment and lagging wages, so that an ordinary worker's purchasing power for rice has dropped 30-fold.⁶⁷

The regime linked the October 2005 retreat from trading in grains to improved harvests. While grain production did improve in 2005, the harvest still fell short of estimated annual food needs by one to two million tons.⁶⁸ There was some government distribution activity late in the year but it was spotty at best, and many did not receive rations at all.⁶⁹ Ultimately, living standards may have improved slightly for those who have some access to foreign currency, but many more are still hard pressed to meet basic needs. Even those in relatively secure circumstances lead austere lives, and the capital has not been spared. In Pyongyang, according to recent defectors, people did not have enough to eat in the spring of 2006. The government had to set up offices to distribute survival-sized rations to those on the verge of starvation.⁷⁰

The re-imposition of the public distribution system in late 2005, combined with the curtailment in international humanitarian relief efforts and the July 2006 floods, could be the perfect storm presaging return to famine and a new exodus to China.⁷¹ North Korea's estimate of hundreds killed or missing in the floods is supported by a senior South Korean official who follows the situation closely but contested by the South Korean NGO Good Friends, which places the number between 10,000 and nearly 55,000.⁷² The floods also caused damage to farmland, transportation infrastructure, and homes and buildings. After visiting the region in July, the World Food Programme (WFP) estimated 50,000–60,000 people had been left homeless and 90,000 tons of cereals lost from the harvest.⁷³

Given the chronic food shortages, the North's initial refusal of aid was cause for alarm but South Korea's Red Cross began distributing Seoul's pledge of \$260 million in flood aid in late August 2006.⁷⁴ The WFP, which was forced to cut its North Korea program by two thirds when Pyongyang imposed restrictions on monitoring in 2005, has mobilised 150 metric tons of extra food aid but will require access to recipients.⁷⁵

North Korea's 9 October 2006 nuclear test will adversely impact international humanitarian assistance to its population. South Korea immediately delayed a shipment of flood aid.⁷⁶ Relief agencies such as the WFP and the Red Cross nevertheless appealed for donations, expressing concern about finances that were already strained. The WFP has received

only 10 per cent of the \$102 million it needs for its current North Korea program, which targets 1.9 million people.⁷⁷ Its North Korea country representative, Jean-Pierre de Margerie, announced that 2006 has already seen a fall in international aid, including a drop from China of 60 per cent.⁷⁸ The European Union said it will continue to distribute the \$12.6 million in aid it pledged for 2006, although this is only half its 2005 contribution.⁷⁹ With food shortages threatening to return to famine levels, migrating to different cities or to China will be one of the coping strategies used by hungry North Koreans with the means to undertake such journeys. The international community, especially South Korea, the U.S., and the EU, should quietly engage with China now to help it protect those who make it across the border.

Political motivations for leaving the North are still unusual but a growing trend. People who, through time spent in China or contacts abroad, realise that a higher standard of living could be achieved outside the country, come to resent not only their economic situation but also the restrictions and punishments they face when trying to better their lives, and the government officials they see as responsible. Leaving the country is seen not as a criminal or treasonous move, but as an act of survival and even courage.⁸⁰ In China, defectors express increasingly frank criticism of and hostility toward the regime.⁸¹ Over the past several years, there has been a growing realisation that the cause of North Koreans' hardships is not the U.S. or the weather.

IV. NEW PATTERNS, NEW NETWORKS

Forced underground and faced with changing circumstances, networks for asylum seekers have become more sophisticated and diverse even as the number of individuals involved has declined. Rather than a notable improvement of circumstances inside North Korea, this fall in participants is likely a result of the networks' move underground. Some continue to cross into China on their own, but increasingly, North Koreans seek to secure money and contacts before leaving. Financial constraints and fear keep the number of border crossers in check.

In 2003, the UNHCR estimated that 100,000 North Koreans remained in China.⁸² Private NGOs conducting surveys the following year concurred.⁸³ More conservative estimates for the same period are around

30,000–50,000.⁸⁴ Figures have generally fallen over the past three years. Good Friends, whose 1999 survey set the high-end estimate of 300,000 North Koreans in China, now puts the figure at 150,000, a third of whom are children of North Korean women and Chinese men.⁸⁵ The NGO U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants has also lowered its estimates from 100,000 refugees in 2003–2004 to 50,000 in 2005.⁸⁶ The U.S. Department of State estimates 10,000–30,000 asylum seekers remain hidden in northeastern China.⁸⁷ In the spring of 2006, High Commissioner Antonio Guterres said 300,000 North Koreans were living in China, but that “the number of North Koreans in China in need of international protection is limited, maybe reaching 50,000.”⁸⁸ Of the several North Koreans he met during his March 2006 visit, “only one was in the category of refugee *sur place*.”⁸⁹

Given the combination of crackdowns, slightly improved conditions in North Korea and the high cost of leaving, it is likely that fewer North Koreans are leaving today than during the peak famine years. At the same time, more and more are reaching third countries, with a record number for 2006. The constant threat of exploitation, arrest, and/or repatriation forces North Koreans in China to be invisible, precluding a reliable estimate. However, based on extensive interviews with asylum seekers and ethnic Korean Chinese, lower estimates in the tens of thousands seem most plausible.

A. TEMPORARY BORDER CROSSERS

A sizable number of North Koreans still cross into China for temporary stays, hoping to meet relatives, earn money, find food or medical treatment or acquire goods to sell at home. Their main goal is to amass cash and provisions to take back to family members in the North. North Koreans can receive official permission to visit relatives in China but the process is riddled with corruption and difficult to negotiate.⁹⁰ An invitation from the relatives is taken to a contact in the State Security Agency, along with \$125.⁹¹ Applicants may wait for months before receiving a travel permit that grants them a one-month stay in China. Although many have relatives there, few can afford to pay the fees and bribes demanded by the State Security Agency. Those who can secure permission are sometimes allowed to extend their stay and usually return to North

Korea with food, medicine, clothing and some cash. Although the number of families helped by such supplies is limited by the number of travel permits granted and how much security agents confiscate for themselves, this form of assistance is significant for two reasons. First, it takes much-needed goods as well as information into North Korea; secondly, it gives North Koreans legal protection throughout their journey.

Many more make the crossing without permission, risking arrest and imprisonment. Brokers who arrange for passage from inside North Korea to China charge up to \$1,250 and either escort their clients across the border or simply relay information about where and when it is safe to cross.⁹² Some asylum seekers find their own way through North Korea's barely functioning transportation system.⁹³ At the border, they sometimes avoid detection, relying on luck, their knowledge of the area, or tips and favours from family members associated with the border guards. In 2005 North Korean border guards collected bribes of \$25–\$38 per head for crossing the Tumen River.⁹⁴ A South Korean missionary cites the current rate as closer to \$50, as do several defectors.⁹⁵ By comparison, the rate was \$13 in the late 1990s.⁹⁶ Women may offer sexual favours in lieu of money.⁹⁷ North Koreans trying to cross into China without money will sometimes promise to pay a guard upon their return. Because the Chinese guards patrol by car, it is easier to avoid detection there, and there are few accounts of "entry bribes."

However, moving from different parts of the border to a safe place further inside China can be difficult and dangerous. One elderly woman walked for ten days to reach a town where she could hide.⁹⁸ Those who meet brokers at the border and travel under their guidance are still vulnerable to the border guards who patrol the area. In some cases, brokers turn out to be traffickers.⁹⁹

Even during short stays, North Koreans in China live in constant fear of deportation. Most women enter into some kind of relationship with a Chinese or ethnic Korean man to gain a measure of protection. A minority survive on their own, working as waitresses in restaurants. Long-time observers in northeast China say a majority of North Korean women in China have suffered some form of abuse, the most egregious cases involving systematic rape and prostitution. Men sometimes work on farms or factories but are more vulnerable to arrest and repatriation. On days

when he could find a job, one man living in Yanji would work all day for \$2.50.¹⁰⁰

Information about surviving in China and trying to reach third countries circulates through word of mouth and media outlets. Young North Koreans who venture into Chinese internet cafes armed with a few key words can quickly access a wealth of information about NGOs that support North Korean human rights and asylum seekers, sometimes making contacts to arrange for passage to South Korea.¹⁰¹ But, ever vulnerable to repatriation and exploitation, North Koreans are wary of doing anything that could lead to arrest or trafficking.

Moreover, since NGOs have scaled back their activities, there is very little help for North Koreans living in China. Two active NGOs currently handle about 40 border crossers each. One group tries to blend North Koreans into urban areas, placing them in rented apartments and moving them periodically. NGOs may also arrange for Korean-Chinese in rural areas to house North Koreans in groups of two or three. Medical care seems to be available to those who can afford it but not many North Koreans or NGOs can.¹⁰²

Forged documents can be important for getting around China. The crudest forged identification cards cost as little as \$10–\$25 but are easily spotted. Prices rise dramatically for cards with identification numbers actually included in the Chinese household registration system (*hukou*). Depending on quality, they start at around \$1,260.

B. TRAFFICKERS AND RURAL BRIDES

Marriage between Chinese or Korean-Chinese men and North Korean women as a method of survival has evolved from isolated cases of introduction or referral to outright trafficking in persons. The demand for trafficked brides—a consequence of the one-child policy and preference for sons, combined with uneven development that has pulled young women into the industrial work force—is highest among older or disabled men in rural areas. In 2002, reports linked North Korean runners to Korean-Chinese operating as traffickers. Runners kept in touch with traffickers across the border via Chinese cell phones and received \$63 for each woman they led to the border. The women, regardless of their marital status, were sold for \$380–\$1,260.¹⁰³ Other reports corroborate

this sum, citing broker fees from \$120–\$1,200 per woman, with brides in their late twenties typically costing \$380–\$630.¹⁰⁴ More recently, Chinese men have secured “introductions” to North Korean women, most of whom entered China since 2004, for \$880–\$1,890. Chinese brides, by comparison, are sold for \$3,780–\$6,300.¹⁰⁵ In some cases, a woman knows she is being sold into marriage, although she may not realise how harsh the conditions in China are. In other cases, women are lured across the border by marriage brokers posing as merchants. They are persuaded to pursue cross-border trade, and once on the Chinese side, they are completely vulnerable to extortion.¹⁰⁶ Traffickers have also posed as brokers, accepting payment to guide a woman out of China only to sell her as a bride.

With this so-called bride trade dating back to the early years of crossings, there is now a sizable group of North Korean women who have been married to Chinese nationals for nearly ten years. Despite the long-term, settled nature of their circumstances, these women face considerable barriers to securing legal Chinese residency. The state does not recognise their marriages, and the children they have are ineligible for registration on the *hukou* despite their father’s Chinese nationality. The stateless children have no legal protections and will not be able to pursue their education beyond middle school. Local officials sometimes accept bribes of \$125–\$378 to place these children on family registries. North Korean mothers can also be registered but most families can barely afford to register the children. Moreover, even if a woman or child is listed on the registry, neighbours and local officials who know of the mother’s background are a threat to her security.

Rural locations provide relative safety from raids, but the authorities do appear in response to crime or reports of illegal immigrants. Sometimes, residents receive advance notice of “raids,” giving them a huge amount of leverage over their North Korean neighbours.¹⁰⁷ Being in favour with the authorities, or at least being able to afford bribes, can be crucial to the safety of North Korean women and their families.

Because the families that these women marry into are concentrated in farming, economic opportunities are limited. For those who are still in touch with home, sending money to their families can be a source of strain on their relationships with husbands and in-laws. Runners who deliver

cash collect either a flat fee of \$63 or 20–30 per cent of the remittance.¹⁰⁸ Another reported source of strain is the fear that wives will relocate to South Korea, abandoning their Chinese husbands and children.¹⁰⁹

All North Koreans in China are at risk of extortion but women are especially vulnerable. Husbands may be abusive, and many keep their purchased brides under virtual house arrest lest she run away or be discovered by authorities. A broker may sell a woman into marriage and instruct her to run away once he has received payment only to catch and sell her again, sometimes repeating the scheme several times.¹¹⁰ Many women fall prey to prostitution or are forced to work in places of entertainment.

For all their hardships and pain, women who enter into “stable” marriages are far better off than the many who are drawn into prostitution or trafficking rings. Three women who recently left China even had Han Chinese husbands who arranged for their passage to South Korea. Each paid only \$250—about a tenth of the average cost—and was linked to the smuggling network by a long chain of her husband’s relatives and friends. They spoke fluent Chinese and said their husbands sent them away to escape crackdowns triggered by the approach of the 2008 Olympics. One woman said she definitely wanted to see her husband again, and the others agreed, though less emphatically.¹¹¹ All three have children who are still in China, speak Chinese and attend Chinese schools. One has been officially registered as his father’s son at a cost of \$125. A broker, who has been part of the network for nearly ten years, noted that men who send their wives out of China do so not out of sentiment or morality, but in order to secure Korean citizenship through official international marriages. The scheme, he says, is not new and is most effective when children are involved.¹¹²

C. THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

Some North Koreans in China enjoy relative safety, but all are vulnerable to sudden arrest and possible repatriation. Many say that if they had some measure of legal protection, they would opt to stay. Given the harsh policies of the Chinese government, however, most have no choice but to seek refuge elsewhere. The majority quickly learn that it is possible to reach South Korea, and an increasing number are also aware of pos-

sibilities to settle in the U.S. or other Western countries. However, many lack concrete information and reliable contacts. The vast majority simply do not have the money to pay a broker. Unwilling and unable to return to North Korea, they are essentially stuck in China. The most hopeful either have the support of NGOs or relatives in South Korea. Some NGOs ask North Koreans to repay them once they are in the South but with low wages and unstable working conditions, it is nearly impossible for a North Korean to save enough to hire a broker on his or her own.

When North Koreans in China first started to seek passage to South Korea, network operators supplied them with fake passports and plane tickets. But at \$10,000 a head, the scheme was cost prohibitive. The high barrier encouraged North Koreans and activists to pursue other routes to safety, including foreign mission sit-ins and requests for asylum or transfer in third countries.

NGOs started to drop out of the smuggling network as China began to crack down on asylum seekers and arrest their helpers in the late 1990s. Financial constraints also squeezed them out, as church groups who initially provided funds apparently grew wary of South Korean government audits.¹¹³ Some NGOs have reduced their scope to in-China operations, shying away from transfers to South Korea or third countries. Others have turned to promoting change inside North Korea through aid, economic development and information sharing.

Around 2002, North Korean defectors already in Seoul started to fill the gap. For those short of job skills and struggling to find and keep work in South Korea, brokering was profitable, though dangerous. Many had access to contacts inside North Korea and China. Moreover, they had taken the underground railway themselves and could communicate effectively with North Koreans trying to leave home or get out of China. Most of the North Korean "brokers" do a few operations on an ad hoc basis, usually to help family members or friends; only a handful are full-time professionals.¹¹⁴ Since Seoul cut cash subsidies by two thirds at the end of 2004, defector-brokers have also been dropping out of the network.

A small number of NGOs with diverse backgrounds and agendas continue to move people on the underground railway. One, run by a former aid worker, specialises in helping asylum seekers with information about human rights abuses. Another focuses on securing safe passage out

of the North for South Korean POWs. Durihana and Helping Hands Korea are among the Christian groups that both shelter North Koreans in China and move them to third countries.¹¹⁵ A Japan-based NGO helps Korean-Japanese return to Japan. Citizens' Alliance for North Korean Human Rights, based in Seoul, focuses on protecting young asylum seekers and brings a handful to South Korea each year.¹¹⁶ It is not uncommon for NGOs to hire brokers when moving people out of North Korea or China.¹¹⁷ Most of these NGOs have only a handful of paid staff and operate on a shoestring budget but often have North Korean defectors on their payrolls.

Organisations differ in their access and attitudes toward the media. Some shy away from the public eye and insist North Koreans are safest when operations are kept as quiet as possible. Others welcome the attention and use it as a tool to increase awareness, support and legitimacy, not least for influencing government policies. One activist credits media coverage with forcing China and South Korea to engage on the issue of North Korean asylum seekers.¹¹⁸ Press coverage and international attention may or may not have been the driving force behind China and South Korea's efforts at quiet diplomacy, but when this channel is operating, it offers the safest and most desirable route.

While there is value in increasing public awareness about the plight of vulnerable populations, there is almost always a backlash to such campaigns. Concerned about stability and order, China tends to crack down after major events on North Koreans in hiding, sending warning signals lest others be encouraged to follow their example.¹¹⁹ When strains cause quiet diplomacy to go public, countries scale down drastically their role in the network, partly to preserve relationships with North Korea, China and South Korea, but also because they do not want to be known as a target country for illegal migrants or floods of asylum seekers. This happened after the Vietnam airlift in 2004. But quiet diplomacy has had important successes.

1. Shortcut: Over the Wall or Through the Front Door

A significant number of North Koreans reach freedom directly from China, either through scaling the wall of a diplomatic mission or, as the barbed wire has gotten thicker, by walking through the front door using

forged documents. In June 2001, a family of seven, who became known as "Gil-su's Family," entered the UNHCR office in Beijing, demanding refugee status and entreating the international community to aid North Koreans in China.¹²⁰ They were released to Seoul via third countries for "humanitarian" reasons. The next year saw a string of foreign mission incursions, starting in March when 25 asylum seekers entered the Spanish embassy in Beijing. Asylum seekers subsequently forced their way into South Korean, Japanese, German, and Canadian missions or schools.¹²¹

Such incursions have also occurred in Southeast Asia. Targets have included the French and Swedish embassies in Hanoi in December 2004, the U.S. embassy in Vientiane in January 2005 and the Thai embassy in Hanoi in July 2005.¹²² They took a new twist in May 2006 when four North Koreans whose transfer to South Korea was pending left the South Korean consulate in Shenyang by scaling a wall to enter the adjacent U.S. consulate after hearing that the U.S. had resettled six countrymen.¹²³ Three were given passage to the U.S.; one was rejected for having ties to North Korea's State Security Agency but no valuable information for U.S. intelligence.¹²⁴

Journalist Jasper Becker alleges the Chinese have punished embassies in Beijing that have given refuge by not allowing the asylum seekers to leave for five or six months.¹²⁵ He says in the first years of the famine, Beijing did not have a fixed policy on the issue, and ties with North Korea were strained. Only in 1999 and 2000 did it organise police action against North Koreans on a large scale. It was a top-down policy before it became a local police effort, which is what impelled NGOs to attract international attention and apply pressure by encouraging incursions. In response, Becker says, China started arresting the people behind the actions and made it more difficult for them to work along the border. At least some NGOs, however, say there was always Chinese pressure, and it is unfair to blame the embassy incursions.

The incursions have been criticised by some observers as exploitive and counter-productive. Detractors decry the fees paid and profits made by opportunistic (usually Japanese) broadcasting stations, saying the victims are the North Koreans remaining in China, whose hiding places are often disclosed during exit interviews.¹²⁶ While it is difficult to attribute specific crackdowns to the incursions, North Korea has certainly taken no-

tice. In March 2006, it issued warrants for the arrest of four Japanese NGO workers suspected of participating in planned defections.¹²⁷

Many more embassy incursions go unreported in China and Southeast Asia, with the governments involved quietly working out a mutually acceptable solution.¹²⁸ Foreign missions are usually willing to cooperate with Chinese authorities to improve embassy security to avoid future "invasions," so network operators use illegal documents to get North Koreans through the front door, at which point they can declare their purpose.¹²⁹ In virtually all such cases, Chinese authorities eventually allow the North Koreans to leave the country, usually for South Korea.

2. Difficult Passage

According to NGOs and guides who claim to have purely humanitarian motivations, getting someone from the border area in the northeast to Southeast Asia costs at least \$2,000–\$3,000. Some defector groups based in South Korea have charged as much as \$5,000–\$6,000, offering better security for the higher cost.¹³⁰ A South Korean NGO claims that for \$10,000, a potential defector can receive fake documents that are so good the individual can go from his home in the North to Seoul in as few as five days.¹³¹ Brokers with higher fees and supposedly "strong connections" say that a weak network will lead to clients in China getting caught and sent back to North Korea in seven out of ten cases. Around 2005, brokers started asking for money up front, possibly in response to Seoul's new policies regarding resettlement funds, which reduced lump sum cash payments.¹³² Often, family members who have already arrived in South Korea work two or more jobs to guarantee the payment.

A South Korean broker describes his operations: South Koreans with family members in the North contact him. He gets an address from them and passes it to his Chinese partners, who have contacts in North Korea. It is rare for somebody in the North to change their permanent residence, and if they do the relatives will know about it, so using that address, the family member is located. If he or she lives close to China, the broker stays in touch directly, using a Chinese cell phone. To avoid detection, an exact time is set for the call, and cell phones are switched off before and after the conversation. If the family member is far from the border, Korean-Chinese partners who can freely enter the North without drawing

much attention meet the target and give instructions. If a family member of the client has a criminal record or the authorities know the client's family has fled to another country, there is always the danger of being watched by the North Korean police. Still, continuous surveillance is rare, and the partners are usually able to make contact. A broker said:

In most cases, the family member living in North Korea is not certain where his family members are. He assumes that they are living in China. So when they are approached by the broker's Chinese partners, they are told that his family lives in China. Then they are given details about how much his mother or brother or sister misses him and how much they want him to join the family in China. Some of the North Koreans who are approached are hesitant at first, but most of them eventually agree to escape because they believe they can make more money in China and come back to North Korea later in better shape. Once a North Korean is out of his country, he changes his mind easily. He is shocked that there is so much freedom compared to his country even in places like Yanji, and after he talks to his family in South Korea on the phone, his mind is set. He wants to go to South Korea.¹³³

Brokers typically move groups of three to ten at a time. Once the broker has enough clients to form a group, he gathers them from their hiding places to a bus terminal or other meeting place. The group is comprised of strangers from different parts of the country, who have lived in different parts of China for varying periods. They are passed from one guide to another, each responsible for a specific leg of the trip: Yanbian to Beijing, for example, or Beijing to Yunnan Province in the south. The guides, ethnic Koreans or locals, are essentially field agents hired by the main broker.¹³⁴

There are two main routes out of China. The first is the northern route overland to Mongolia or Russia; the second is the southern route overland and/or by river to Southeast Asia.¹³⁵ Land routes to Southeast Asia generally lead to either Vietnam or Laos; Burma is less common. From Yunnan Province in southern China, guides take asylum seekers to the border. Some pass through checkpoints staffed by border guards who are bribed; others take the risk of trying to circumvent the checkpoints altogether. Still others separate from their drivers and lead clients across the mountainous border on foot. While the mountains that separate China

and Laos can take a full day and night to cross, the path is well known and safe but for the physical strain.¹³⁶ In February 2006, a Korean Broadcasting System film crew accompanied defectors from the China-North Korea border to Bangkok.¹³⁷

The physical demands of mountain crossings and the cost of bribing Laotian officials have led to the pioneering of a water route along the Mekong River. Normally, the one-and-a-half to two-day passage on a cargo boat from southern China to the Golden Triangle costs up to \$40 a day. The fine for leaving Guan Lei with one illegal immigrant is \$2,520. Boat captains, who are paid modest salaries, rather than wealthier ship owners, are charged with responsibility for transporting illegal immigrants. There have been no cases in which this fine has actually been collected. North Koreans are usually dropped off on the Laotian side of the river.¹³⁸

D. FORCED REPATRIATION

According to reports from NGOs and network operators, North Korea has tightened the border, targeting brokers and defectors. Smuggled video footage of public executions in 2005 involved charges of trafficking in people and illegal border crossing.¹³⁹ In February 2006, 300 people were arrested in the northern border town Hoeryong for planning to defect or having connections in South Korea or China.¹⁴⁰ In May, 217 North Korean agents posing as asylum seekers were rumoured to have been deployed to China as part of a broad information gathering operation.¹⁴¹

China continues to arrest and repatriate North Koreans without referral to the UNHCR, despite international scrutiny and direct pleas from the U.S. State Department urging compliance with UN conventions.¹⁴² It also targets the missionaries, aid workers and brokers involved in sheltering or transporting North Koreans. Observers in China and South Korea attribute current crackdowns near Shenyang to a "clean up" campaign in preparation for the 2008 Olympics.¹⁴³ North Koreans who had lived in China for several years cited pre-Olympic measures as a motivating factor for their recent flight to South Korea.¹⁴⁴

Based on our interviews with aid workers, an estimated 150–300 North Koreans are repatriated from China every week.¹⁴⁵ The large num-

bers of border crossers have caused the North Korean government to ease sentences and change the penal code. The 1999 version distinguished between "unlawful border crossing" and crossing "with the intent to overturn the Republic."¹⁴⁶ The 2004 revision further distinguishes between "crossing" and "frequent crossings." According to the latter version, "frequent crossing" of the border without permission is a criminal act punishable by up to two years in labour camps (three years in the 1999 version). Acts of treason, such as "surrendering, changing allegiance, [and] handing over confidential information," are punishable by five to ten years of hard labour, or ten years to life in more serious cases.¹⁴⁷ Despite some changes in the law, however, the political and sometimes arbitrary use of imprisonment, torture and capital punishment continues. Punishments tend to depend on the age, gender and experiences of repatriated North Koreans.¹⁴⁸

Women and children have received sentences as light as two weeks in a detention centre, but longer sentences of several months in labour camps are also common. The consequences of repatriation are most severe for pregnant women, who suffer forced abortions under poor medical conditions, and those who confess to meeting with South Koreans or missionaries.¹⁴⁹ Summary executions and long sentences of hard labour are still enforced, though authorities are wary of prisoners falling ill and dying on their watch.¹⁵⁰ Those who seem close to death are released, often only to die the next week. Many prisoners take advantage of the opportunity to escape when transferring from labour training camps to provincial detention centres or go back to China after they are released. As many as 40 per cent of those repatriated to North Korea re-enter China.¹⁵¹

V. LEAVING CHINA

Since Beijing began to round up and return North Koreans in the border region, forcing them to go underground, a growing number have decided to move to other countries. The vast majority of North Koreans arriving in China come seeking a respite from the hardships back home and have no intention of resettling in the South. However, forced repatriation and the ensuing harsh punishments have led a growing number to decide to seek asylum in a third country. This section examines the policies of China's neighbours toward North Koreans and the journeys that are long

and dangerous, particularly because of the border crossing and the cat-and-mouse game that must be played with China's Public Security police. As a general rule, the farther a North Korean gets from the China-North Korea border, the less likely he will be forcibly repatriated.

A. THE NORTHERN ROUTE

1. Mongolia

Despite often extreme temperatures and little ground cover, escape through Mongolia has been an option since the late 1990s, with hundreds making the journey each year. Mongolia enjoys good relations with both Koreas, but harbours a deep mistrust of China and is firmly committed to not returning North Koreans.¹⁵² Unlike Seoul, which has repeatedly denied the Dalai Lama a visa in deference to Beijing, Ulaan Bataar has hosted the Nobel Peace Prize laureate several times, most recently in August 2006. When he was in Mongolia four years before, Beijing shut down the only railway line into the country for several days for "technical reasons."

In dealing with North Korea, Mongolia points to its own Stalinist past and recent transition to a market-oriented democracy, and tries to act as a "not Western" and non-threatening "transition consultant."¹⁵³ After closing its embassy in 1997 for financial reasons, North Korea re-opened it in November of 2004, at Mongolian expense. The two countries engage in cultural dialogue as well as technical assistance and training. Mongolia also has hundreds of North Koreans working in its mines and on construction projects. Several Mongolian officials suggested they would be willing to expand the guest worker program.¹⁵⁴

Mongolia typically quietly passes North Koreans on to the South. When China and North Korea began cracking down on asylum seekers in 1999, NGO workers hoping to expedite them out of China considered Mongolia as a potential "safe haven," an idea picked up by the international media. An official refugee camp would have to be run through the UNHCR, but despite official declarations of intent, the UNHCR has no office in Mongolia. Neither South Korea nor the U.S. pushed for the camp, and the Mongolian government confirmed it had no such plans.¹⁵⁵ Prime Minister Nambaryn Enkhbayar said: "Mongolia does not want to offend anyone. We are a small country. We are also not a direct neighbour

to the two Koreas.”¹⁵⁶ However, in an interview with *The New York Times*, Foreign Minister Munh-Orgil reiterated the policy of receiving North Koreans and allowing them passage to South Korea: “They cannot be pushed back into Chinese territory, no matter who they are.”¹⁵⁷ Mongolians seem personally sympathetic to North Koreans. In response to September 2003 press reports concerning 26 asylum seekers facing deportation, citizens said they were opposed to the move.¹⁵⁸

Today, Mongolia is considered one of the more dangerous routes out of China. According to network operators, Chinese security extends up to 50 km. on either side of the train line that defectors ride into the country.¹⁵⁹ Mongolian and Korean officials are unable to offer any aid until North Koreans have crossed the border. A South Korean Christian organisation, Mujigae (Rainbow) Coalition, has been allotted a large plot on which it is building a 430-square metre two-story building, which will be the site of a “welfare town” providing social services to refugees currently in Mongolia, including 400–600 North Koreans.¹⁶⁰ Officials are concerned about a rising tide of North Korean asylum seekers, however. In 2003, 100 North Koreans travelled from Mongolia to South Korea, and the number has increased considerably since.¹⁶¹

2. Russia¹⁶²

While more North Koreans take the northern route to Mongolia, a smaller group goes to Russia. In 1998, the estimate was 200–300, but it increased to 2,000 by 2004.¹⁶³ Since then, the number of North Koreans seeking to leave through Russia has fallen by more than half.¹⁶⁴ Russia is a signatory to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, and refugee protection has been incorporated into national law. The UNHCR Moscow office was established in 1993, but many asylum seekers never reach it. Instead, local authorities confront and detain North Koreans. The vast majority enter Russia legally as loggers or construction workers, but some come illegally through China. Direct crossing from North Korea is uncommon because the border is formed by the wide mouth of the Tumen River. One NGO is known to still use the “Siberian” route, from China or across the North Korean border with Russia, then north to Yukutsk and east to Vladivostok or Khabarovsk or west to Moscow, where asylum is sought at the UNHCR office.

In October 2004, shortly after passage of the North Korean Human Rights Act in the U.S., a North Korean construction worker applied for asylum at the American consulate in Vladivostok. He was later resettled in South Korea. Asylum bids have been made at the South Korean consulate as well, with cooperation by South Korean officials varying from case to case. Russian authorities exercise a rather arbitrary policy, sometimes sending North Koreans directly home or returning them to China, at other times turning a blind eye or quietly facilitating transfer to South Korea.¹⁶⁵ The then-governor of Primorye, Sergei Darkin, once offered to accept as many as 200,000 asylum seekers to counter the region's "No people, no development" problem.¹⁶⁶

B. THE SOUTHERN ROUTE

The southern route to Southeast Asia has emerged as the most frequently used over the last several years. Most governments in the region are in the delicate position of not wanting to become magnets for North Koreans while at the same time trying to maintain friendly relations with the two Koreas. Burma, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam all enjoy (or, in the case of Burma, will soon have) diplomatic relations with both. While several have closer political or personal ties to the North (the former king of Cambodia spent the 2006 winter in Pyongyang), burgeoning economic ties with the South overshadow political loyalties. Public declarations of solidarity are countered by private admissions that the North is a burden. Still, reaching safety by passing through China's immediate neighbours is risky. While actual repatriations may be rare due to the expense and bureaucratic hassle, Burma, Laos and Vietnam are less than welcoming. The first has been known to jail North Koreans for up to a year under horrible conditions, while the other two have border guards who will try to hold asylum seekers for ransom. The most common route is through the mountainous jungle passes of the Golden Triangle, an area known for drug smuggling and lawlessness.

1. Vietnam

As the continuing embassy incursions in Hanoi described above suggest, Vietnam at first glance looks as intolerant toward North Korean asylum seekers as China. One of the five at least nominally communist countries

remaining, it has maintained close relations with the North and an official policy of repatriating North Korean citizens. However, a closer look suggests that relations are more endured than enjoyed. Trade is almost non-existent, while Seoul has emerged as a leading commerce and investment partner. Moreover, Vietnamese officials have found their Northern counterparts so burdensome that if they are to travel at Hanoi's expense, North Korean officials must now do so by train, thus severely curtailing visits.¹⁶⁷ As the Vietnamese economy becomes more open, there are growing reasons for Hanoi to side quietly with Seoul on the refugee issue (and Washington, judging from the enthusiastic reception Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld received during a May 2006 visit) rather than Pyongyang.

Until 468 were flown to South Korea in July 2004, Vietnam was the preferred Southeast Asian escape route for North Korean asylum seekers due to its less mountainous terrain. Since then, Vietnam has tried to tighten its border controls. Accounts of the circumstances leading up to the mass airlift vary. One NGO worker says Seoul was preparing for a change in defector settlement policy in 2003. Speculation about cuts in resettlement funds encouraged brokers to move people out before this went into effect, contributing to a backlog in Vietnam.¹⁶⁸ Others say the number of North Koreans going to the Vietnam safe houses increased rapidly because network operators knew they had been set up. The four largest were run by South Koreans living in Vietnam.

According to a South Korean businessman familiar with the Vietnam operations, brokers working for profit ignored the consequences of "dumping" defectors across the border and paid the high cost of losing the route.¹⁶⁹ Safe houses were overcrowded, sparking disputes over the well-being of the North Koreans. As numbers increased, the South Korean government sought to process defectors more quickly but it was overwhelmed. The safe house operators had to shut down, were jailed, then barred from Vietnam for five years. South Korea promised them protection, resettlement funds and official recognition for their deeds, but has not followed through. Nevertheless, Vietnam's place on the railway has not been eradicated. The country is still used for transit, but increasingly asylum seekers are taking difficult routes through Burma and Laos.

2. Burma (Myanmar)

Some North Koreans leave China through Burma each year. Those who are caught by Burmese authorities face trial and up to a year in jail but Burma has not repatriated any to China.¹⁷⁰ The government has come under pressure by North Korea to re-establish diplomatic ties, which were severed in the wake of the bombing of South Korean officials in Rangoon in 1983. Burma "made the final decision" to do so in April, prompting suspicion that the two sides are eager to trade weapons for energy, and announced the move at the Fourteenth Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement in Havana in September 2006.¹⁷¹ Yet South Korea remains an active investor in Burma and has the largest foreign community in Rangoon.

Burma is also used as a transit country. In order to circumvent checkpoints further down the Mekong River, North Koreans cross the Sino-Burmese border into a region of Shan State controlled by the United Wa State Army (UWSA), an armed insurgency group responsible for drug production and trafficking.¹⁷² UWSA also controls several piers along the Mekong, using them to smuggle banned goods to neighbouring countries. Asylum seekers follow the same course, stowing away on Chinese cargo ships and staying clear of the unpredictable fighting among insurgency groups and the Burmese military further inland. The ships carry the North Koreans down the river to Laos or Burma's southern border. There, footpaths and roads run from the Mekong to a stream marking the Thai border. It can easily be crossed on foot, conveniently leaving North Koreans in the vicinity of the local immigration centre.

3. Laos

In almost all cases, Laos, where crushing poverty prevents effective border policing, is simply a transit country. Vientiane has experienced few embassy incursions because Thailand is just a river crossing away. While the government remains in a political and economic time warp, diplomats suggest it is quietly cooperative on refugee issues.¹⁷³ Official passage to and from Laos requires a passport but North Koreans can easily sneak across the border.¹⁷⁴ Laos declared in March 2006 that it would enhance security near the border to prevent defectors from coming over, and a network operator active in Southeast Asia has noticed the effect in

the northern regions.¹⁷⁵ However, he says, crackdowns do not necessarily mean the North Koreans are in danger of repatriation, because there are many opportunities to negotiate the release of a client. A businessman who lives and works in the Golden Triangle area affirms that bribery and malfeasance are common. Although Laos is communist, its officials are not under tight central control, and the state's lack of resources render it less influential than the local mafia.¹⁷⁶

While there have not been any sudden spikes in bribes, the amount demanded can be arbitrary. The price to buy someone out of Laos has averaged \$300–\$500. If after negotiations, which can sometimes take weeks, the price is still too high, guides may let authorities send the North Koreans back to China since they can usually be bought out from the Chinese guards along the border for less. If a client is moved all the way through the repatriation process, guides can even contact someone in North Korea to help the client escape from North Korean interrogation.¹⁷⁷ Instead of quietly paying for their release, other operators have raised flags about Laos' alleged repatriation of North Koreans. A South Korean missionary appealed to the international community via the media for the release of nineteen North Koreans in two separate cases.¹⁷⁸

Once the mountainous border with China is crossed, asylum seekers cross the country, perhaps staying a night in a local contact's house. The jungle paths along the Mekong River, which serves as the border with Thailand, are well-worn and safe. Once North Koreans reach an unguarded crossing point, they board a ferry or small boat (essentially a water taxi) and cross to Thai territory. This normally costs about \$3 and is typically the last transaction a guide manages for his client.¹⁷⁹ Once North Koreans set foot in Thailand, they are on their own. This is the designated point of separation for two reasons. First, Thailand has a reputation for not repatriating North Koreans and for facilitating their transfer to South Korea, so the asylum seeker is "safe." Secondly, Thailand is also known to have tightened its policies on the smuggling network, making brokers wary of arrest and prosecution.

4. Thailand

While the authorities are less than thrilled to receive the lion's share of North Koreans arriving in Southeast Asia, they have ruled out repatria-

tion due to the number of countries and physical distance between Thailand and North Korea, humanitarian priorities and diplomatic concerns. At the same time, Thailand does not want to continue sustaining the cost—diplomatic and financial—of holding and transferring the asylum seekers.¹⁸⁰ Moreover, it considers porous borders in a region known for trafficking in drugs, goods, and people to be a national security concern.¹⁸¹ In sum, Thailand does not want to be a transit state for North Koreans but is committed to finding a humanitarian solution. Officials have given North Koreans increasing attention in the past year or two, distinguishing them from conventional migrants or refugees.¹⁸² The September 19, 2006 military coup is unlikely to change matters, if for no other reason than that the junta has many higher priority issues to attend to.

Officials are trying a range of measures to send the message that illegal entry is a crime that will not be tolerated. Provincial authorities are working to raise awareness of the issue and warn ferry, bus and taxi drivers that they face fines if found assisting North Koreans.¹⁸³ Since the second quarter of 2006, the border patrol has followed National Security Council instructions to “push back” North Koreans as they enter Thailand. However, crackdowns in one area simply move the crossing further down the river.¹⁸⁴ Thailand has asked Laos, Burma, and China for support but officials complain that the promised cooperation has been slow to materialise.

With neighbours who are more than content that Bangkok is in the hot seat, Thailand lacks the help needed to hold back the flow. When North Koreans first started arriving in cargo ships, for example, police tried to send them back to China on those ships. However, the captains protested vehemently, denying wrongdoing and saying that if they returned to China with their human cargo, they would face heavy fines. Lacking conclusive evidence against the captains, Thai officials had to let them go and arrest the North Koreans left in Thailand.¹⁸⁵

Requests for more vigilance on the Chinese side have had little effect. Security is high at the ports themselves, but North Koreans are able to circumvent the checkpoints with the help of brokers and guides. The network operators have strong bases in China and Laos as well as established contacts in Thailand.¹⁸⁶ As a result, a bus driver at Chiang Rai’s main bus terminal sees groups of North Asians with no travel documents

pass through as often as two or three times a month.¹⁸⁷ Further from the border, checkpoints along the roads are fairly effective; several North Koreans have been arrested on the way to Bangkok at a major checkpoint in Payao, a city in southern Chiang Rai Province. However, when we visited the area in the summer of 2006, not all cars were stopped at all checkpoints, and the level of inspection varied. We estimate that roughly half the North Koreans entering Thailand reach Bangkok undetected.

North Koreans who are arrested are charged with illegal entry, an indictment that in effect initiates the process through which they are passed on to South Korea. Police say many North Koreans seem to know this, and far from resisting arrest, turn themselves in.¹⁸⁸ Cases are heard by the Chiang Rai immigration court, which normally hands down a fine of \$53 or five days in jail for illegal entry.¹⁸⁹ For reasons cited above, North Koreans are not deported like most other illegal entrants and await transfer to the capital. The process moves fairly quickly—one or two weeks—to this point. Due to the cost of moving detainees 900 km. to Bangkok, however, transfers may be delayed for up to a month. Since the start of official records in 2003, 354 North Koreans have been arrested by Chiang Rai authorities, 186 in 2006. Everyone requested transfer to South Korea.¹⁹⁰

A factor that may work in Thailand's favour is the cooling of sympathy in the South Korean expatriate community in northern Thailand. Resident South Koreans, often small business owners or missionaries, are frequently called upon to interpret for North Koreans at police stations and immigration courts.¹⁹¹ Five to seven years ago, when Northerners started to surface in Thailand, the Korean community—including embassy officials—helped them unconditionally. As the flow increased, the embassy's capacity and will to deal with individual cases decreased, and community sentiment followed suit.¹⁹² Aided by networks of brokers and/or NGO guides in China, recent border crossers appear well fed, well dressed, and well connected, in stark contrast to both the North Koreans encountered in the past and the 150,000 Burmese refugees currently in Thailand.¹⁹³

The change has not been lost on local Korean business owners or Thai officials, who say groups typically carry as much as \$53 in cash.¹⁹⁴ Both are increasingly aware of the role of intermediaries, and North Ko-

reans are now seen more as smuggled migrants than refugees. Local residents are increasingly loath to help because that would in effect mean finishing a broker's work, at great risk.

The Thai crackdown on network operators has resulted in at least two arrests in 2006, but none at high levels of the network. In April, a U.S. student in Chiang Rai was arrested for helping North Koreans travel to Bangkok by car; in June, a South Korean woman was caught at the Laos border with cash in several currencies and identification cards of North Koreans.¹⁹⁵ Police suspect that Koreans with knowledge of the area and Thai and Korean language skills may take advantage of well-organised and profitable smuggling networks. Businessmen have been warned by Thai and South Korean authorities that if they are found helping North Koreans to enter Thailand, they will be deported and divested of their local businesses and other assets.¹⁹⁶ Some are under close watch by officials and are taking precautions themselves.¹⁹⁷

Once in Bangkok, diplomatic channels are more accessible, and it is usually at this stage that foreign governments and the UNHCR get involved. The release and repatriation of foreigners held in Thailand is negotiated between governments through the foreign ministry but the UNHCR has long had a strong presence in the country.¹⁹⁸ From its desk at the immigration detention centre in Bangkok it monitors the situation, registers asylum seekers, collects their written testimony and gives Thailand transparency and accountability in addition to some diplomatic breathing room when deflecting North Korea's requests for the repatriation of its citizens. Because of their access to South Korean protection and citizenship, however, the UNHCR does not normally recognise North Koreans as refugees.¹⁹⁹ Instead, all North Koreans detained by Thai authorities and most held in safe houses are granted "person of concern" status. The UNHCR also works with at least one South Korean NGO to facilitate transfers to third countries.²⁰⁰ Recently, it contributed \$10,000 to the Mae Sai Immigration Detention Centre in Chiang Rai, which handles the largest volume of North Koreans, to help defray the cost of transferring them to Bangkok.²⁰¹

The UNHCR is not always viewed favourably. With Thai policy already grounded in humanitarian principles that bar repatriation, some local officials in northern Thailand question the purpose and necessity of

its involvement. They also decry the UNHCR (and South Korean) practice of “preferential treatment” of North Koreans, saying that in some cases, officials will expedite cases for three people from a party of four and leave one waiting in detention. High-level officials are willing to cooperate but have also intimated that such attention on Thailand is misdirected: much more could and should be done at the source of the migrations.²⁰²

In Bangkok, church groups are also active in facilitating transfers to South Korea. Network operators instruct North Koreans to find their way to them if they can avoid arrest. During the three months it takes to process a request for resettlement in South Korea, the asylum seekers are under the supervision of church workers. They live in groups in apartments and are well cared for, with access to the most expensive health care facilities in Bangkok. Most participate in daily church programs and go on weekly grocery shopping trips, but are advised not to venture out alone—they are, after all, not supposed to be there, as the arrest of 175 North Koreans from a house in Bangkok on 22 August 2006 made painfully clear.²⁰³ Most of those arrested were women, and only sixteen had UNHCR documents identifying them as persons of concern.

Responding to tips from local residents, police stumbled onto the largest arrest of North Koreans to date in Thailand. Bangkok’s North District Court sentenced 136 of them to 30 days in jail with one-year suspended sentences and fined each \$160 for illegally entering and staying in the kingdom without permission.²⁰⁴ None was able to pay the fine, so the court ordered them held at a general detention centre in Pratumthani Province, about 50 km. from Bangkok. It did not take action against those with UNHCR documents or children.²⁰⁵

Officials were “unhappy” with the media attention, preferring this issue to be resolved or managed discreetly. One remarked: “Quite frankly, it seemed that the circumstance surrounding this arrest pointed to the fact that they [North Koreans] rather want attention. In fact they would rather be arrested, so they would be brought into the official channel of processing, which is better facilitated than going on their own.”²⁰⁶ Officials told us that contrary to press reports suggesting the Thai welcome mat was wearing thin, the arrest was at least in part an over-reaction by local police. Most of the North Koreans will apply to go

to South Korea, which is cooperating with Thailand to resolve the situation.²⁰⁷ Assistant Secretary of State Ellen Sauerbrey confirmed during a visit to Thailand that Washington will also cooperate in resettling the few who indicated interest in going to the U.S.²⁰⁸ The arrests prompted a joint motion in the European Parliament for a "Resolution on North Korean Asylum Seekers, in Particular in Thailand," calling for cooperation in resettling North Koreans.²⁰⁹

The incident brought the total number of North Koreans arrested in Thailand in 2006 to 400, compared to 80 in 2005. The figure is likely to continue to rise. On 18 September, seven more turned themselves in to police.²¹⁰ In a recent visit to Thailand, UN High Commissioner for Refugees Antonio Guterres downplayed the sudden spike, saying "it's true that numbers of people coming into Thailand [are] increasing. But I don't think it's dramatic compared to other parts of the world..."²¹¹ Thailand, however, is growing more anxious, and activists and aid workers may be hardest hit. With a constant inflow of North Koreans and already crowded detention centres in Bangkok, the church groups' handling of additional asylum seekers provided some welcome help to a system testing its limits. But now police plan to investigate the house owners and look for those who helped the North Koreans reach Bangkok. They face jail terms or fines for aiding and harbouring the illegal immigrants.²¹²

The final leg of the journey has several steps. Once a request has been made to the South Korean embassy for resettlement, North Koreans undergo a background check and an interview with the UNHCR and South Korean officials. The entire process generally takes two or three months, though children, the infirm or people with valuable intelligence can be transferred to South Korea in as little as two weeks.

VI. FINDING A NEW HOME

A. SOUTH KOREA

The vast majority (95 per cent) of North Korean defectors resettle in South Korea, which quietly accepts them but avoids encouraging them despite the fact that the constitution acknowledges their right to citizenship. The number of North Koreans entering South Korea has increased dramatically from the handful arriving in the early to mid-1990s, aver-

aging more than 1,000 since 2003. Before last year's record, the peak was in 2004, when the airlift from Vietnam raised the year's total to 1,894.²¹³ As of December 2006, there were about 9,428 North Korean defectors living in South Korea.²¹⁴

While South Korea accepts all North Korean defectors, it is wary of the issue's impact on relations with the North as well as other host countries. Maintaining stability and preparing the North for a "soft landing" and less costly reunification are also major concerns for Seoul.²¹⁵ Following the 2004 airlift from Vietnam, the then-unification minister, Chung Dong-young, urged NGOs to "refrain from inducing and promoting defection of North Korean residents, which neither correspond with our government's policy nor have positive impacts on inter-Korean relations." He also expressed "regrets" over North Korea's "misunderstanding" and characterisation of the airlift as kidnapping.²¹⁶ On the same day, Foreign Minister Ban Ki-moon said: "It is very inappropriate for NGOs to shift responsibility on to the government when issues of roaming defectors and pre-meditated defection attempts do not go well." A spokesperson said Minister Ban added: "It is difficult for the government's staff of Foreign Affairs to take utmost responsibility on all defectors entering neighbouring countries after roaming about China."²¹⁷

At the NSC meeting on 12 August 2004, the government agreed to constrain NGO-led entry of defectors to South Korea. "The reason the number of defectors entering South Korea is increasing is because planned defection works," said the then-unification ministry vice minister, Lee Bong-jo, in December.²¹⁸ Controversially, the government then implemented a new scheme for resettlement funds paid to defectors starting in 2005, which was received as a thinly veiled effort to curb the flow of cash to brokers, thus effectively keeping North Koreans in China.²¹⁹ The new policies also include screening for those who have lived in third countries for over ten years or have committed serious crimes. Seoul claimed, however, that it wants only to keep out Chinese nationals posing as North Koreans and reaffirmed its commitment to deal with all cases in keeping with humanitarian principles.²²⁰ Despite these acts of contrition, North-South talks went into a one-year deep freeze.

The new resettlement package administered by the ministry of unifi-

cation consists of less cash distributed in smaller amounts over time. In addition to the significant reduction in the first instalment (from \$13,000 to \$3,000), total support has been lowered from \$36,000 to \$20,000 (for a one-person household). Defectors can, however, earn an additional \$15,000 by completing education and job training.²²¹

Adjusting to life in the South is anything but easy for most defectors; some even seek resettlement in a third country.²²² Upon arrival, defectors are debriefed and go through a three-month orientation program at Hanawon, the centre established in 1999 for North Korean defectors. A second branch for women was set up in 2002, and a health clinic was added in 2004.²²³ Defectors take courses on South Korean culture and receive training in basic computer and vocational skills. Many need cash to fund family members' escapes or are already in debt to brokers for their own journeys.

Seoul tells defectors they do not have to pay back money promised to brokers. Defectors are led out of Hanawon by a back exit to avoid the brokers waiting at the gates to collect their fees.²²⁴ Although about 20 per cent never pay the brokers, the rest repay an average debt of \$6,000 seven to eight months after arriving in Seoul.²²⁵ Some brokers arrange to take control of the bank accounts defectors set up to receive government resettlement funds and subsidies.²²⁶ Despite occasional press coverage of the issue, public awareness about the difficulties of resettlement is low.²²⁷ As a result, defectors must combat stereotypes and discrimination. Unemployment rates among them are high, and children have trouble keeping up in school.²²⁸ Nevertheless, over 90 per cent of female asylum seekers in China say they want to go to South Korea, contributing to an estimated 10,000 North Koreans who want to leave China for South Korea.²²⁹

B. UNITED STATES

In the spring of 2006, resettling in the U.S. went from being an elusive dream to a real option for North Korean asylum seekers. The North Korean Human Rights Act was signed into law in October 2004 with the unanimous backing of Congress.²³⁰ It calls attention to the need for the U.S. to make more serious efforts to resettle North Koreans and to promote human rights for North Koreans by increasing the flow of informa-

tion to the country, giving more aid to refugees and improving transparency of humanitarian aid, and authorises \$24 million for each fiscal year through 2008.²³¹ In order to facilitate opportunities for North Koreans, Section 302 of the Act provides that they will not be barred from eligibility for refugee status or asylum in the U.S. because of their right to citizenship in South Korea.

The Act has been ineffective, however, in creating opportunities for more than a handful of North Koreans to resettle in the U.S. Fewer than twenty have been designated as refugees or granted asylum.²³² Early in 2006, ten lawmakers from both parties sent a letter to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, expressing concern that the authorized \$24 million was not included in the most recent budget request and that employees at U.S. embassies in China, Vietnam, and Thailand were refusing to help North Korean asylum seekers.²³³ Secretary Rice told the House International Relations Committee in February: "We are reviewing our policies on refugees, reviewing them with DHS [Department of Homeland Security], reviewing them with the FBI, to see if we can find a way to participate in the refugee activities as well."²³⁴ Her statement was soon followed by media reports that the U.S. "is expected to accept up to 200 North Korean asylum-seekers this year," though a surprised official said the number was likely to be no more than twenty.²³⁵

NGOs and senators advocating North Korean human rights had a series of triumphs in 2006, centred around North Korea Freedom Week activities they have organised annually since 2004. President Bush met with defectors and the family members of abductees, describing his time with them as "one of the most moving meetings" of his presidency.²³⁶ The following week, six North Koreans were officially recognised as refugees and transferred from Southeast Asia to the U.S. under the North Korean Human Rights Act. This prompted a series of requests for asylum in the U.S., including the May 2006 incursions in Shenyang. Reports of "thirteen or fourteen" North Koreans requesting asylum at U.S. embassies in several countries have been confirmed by South Korea's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and there has been another incursion at the Shenyang consulate, indicating growing interest in the U.S. as a destination country.²³⁷

South Korea's response to the transfer of the first six refugees to the

U.S. was quiet.²³⁸ However, Washington has upset Seoul in its treatment of North Koreans who enter the U.S. illegally from neighbouring countries or overstay legal visas. Several have requested asylum despite having secured South Korean citizenship. In a case that surfaced soon after the Act became law, the Seattle Immigration Court cited extended residence in South Korea and a "lack of evidence of his political suppression" as reasons to deny refugee status.²³⁹ Several subsequent cases were likewise turned down, but in April 2006, a Los Angeles Immigration Court granted political asylum to a former North Korean military officer who had illegally entered the U.S. with his family via Mexico in 2004. The family had been resettled in South Korea in 1998 and claimed it faced discrimination there.

Although arguments concerning conditions in North Korea strongly influenced the case, many in South Korea were upset by the ruling.²⁴⁰ A government official told the press it was "unbelievable how he is claiming discrimination after getting all that support [over \$100,000] from the nation's taxes."²⁴¹ The minister of unification denounced it as "nonsense."²⁴² In August, asylum was granted for a second time to a North Korean who had settled in South Korea, prompting protest by Seoul.²⁴³ Most recently, work permits were issued to a North Korean family asking for protection from South Korea.²⁴⁴ The U.S. tried to separate these issues from the North Korean Human Rights Act as isolated rulings by immigration courts, but similar cases are pending and the U.S. and South Korea are still at odds.

There have been some recent efforts at coordination in the region but differences between the U.S. and South Korean approach to the refugee issue are likely to persist, as will security concerns.²⁴⁵ The door remains open for "as many as can find their way," but there is little help before that point.²⁴⁶

C. EUROPE

Some hundreds of North Koreans have reached safety in Europe but most governments decline to provide details about the numbers accepted, means of arrival or screening procedures. Germany has accepted the lion's share, while the UK has taken roughly 20 of 100 applicants.²⁴⁷ The Netherlands, Belgium, Switzerland, Sweden, and others have each ac-

cepted a handful.²⁴⁸

Germany provides a small window on the process. Of the 1,900 North Korean nationals residing in Germany, nearly 300 have applied for asylum, though fewer than ten did so in 2005.²⁴⁹ Refugee status is extremely difficult to obtain. Only North Koreans with a military background can be considered. As a result, fewer than ten have been granted refugee status. Normally, when an asylum application is denied, the applicant is deported back to the home country, but not to a country where the deportee's life would be in danger. In such a case, failed applicants can receive temporary but renewable permission to stay for three years or until the situation in the home country becomes safe for return.²⁵⁰ North Koreans' means of getting to Europe remains subject to conjecture, but one story has it that a family received South Korean passports, flew to Europe and then threw away the passports.

D. JAPAN

Japan²⁵¹ has quietly admitted about 100 North Koreans.²⁵² Until 2003, it did not accept North Korean asylum seekers but changed its policy after the arrest of two Japanese aid workers. It now accepts North Koreans who left Japan in the exodus of ethnic Koreans in the late 1950s. Some 100,000 left at that time; including descendants, the category may number 300,000 today. With the help of an NGO, Japanese-North Koreans send documents confirming their departure from Japan to the ministry of foreign affairs. When an application is accepted, the ministry sends an order to embassy officials in Beijing, who negotiate the asylum seeker's departure. Tokyo has never said how many North Koreans it has accepted. A South Korean newspaper in March 2005 reported that between 140 and 150 had been accepted by the end of 2004, but stressed that Japan accepts only those who can prove their ties to the country.²⁵³

VII. CONCLUSION

The primary responsibility for the humanitarian issues discussed in this article lies, of course, with North Korea. It could resolve those problems and many others by respecting fully the human rights and fundamental freedoms of its citizens. Given the nature of the regime and its concern for internal security, it is unrealistic to expect such a dramatic change.

That is why we have limited our recommendations to Pyongyang to explore at least small steps of travel liberalisation, including some increase in the numbers of those permitted to travel legally to China, more family visits and special provisions for those living near the border, as well as relaxation of the draconian punishments that are meted out to those who make unauthorised attempts to cross the border. These are measures that could be taken relatively easily without affecting the basic nature of the system.

China is otherwise the key to improving the human rights of North Korean refugees and asylum seekers. However, given its own widely criticised human rights record and the high priority it places on maintaining stability (internally and externally), as well as its close ties with North Korea, it is difficult to be optimistic about a more enlightened Chinese policy in the foreseeable future. Beijing has increasingly not only targeted and forcibly repatriated asylum seekers but also arrested their helpers. It allows other states a fair degree of latitude in dealing with North Koreans who manage to enter diplomatic missions, only to put up another layer of barbed wire to discourage future incursions.

China should be nudged to move in the right direction by suggesting modest steps, particularly in light of the fact that as the 2008 Olympics near, all eyes will be on its behaviour.²⁵⁴ Allowing North Korean women who have married Chinese nationals and their children to remain and granting them provisional residency would be in the interests of its own citizens, given the shortage of wives for Chinese farmers. As effective protection mechanisms are put in place, cracking down on the most exploitive venues where North Korean women work, such as karaoke bars, is another action that would increase the security of the most vulnerable while boosting China's image.

A. SEEKING ASYLUM

All North Koreans in China and other transit countries must be protected from forcible repatriation and subsequent persecution in the North. As a signatory to the 1951 Convention on Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, China has an international law obligation to respect the principle of non-refoulement and protect asylum seekers in its territory even though a domestic legal framework to address such cases is not yet in place.²⁵⁵

Further, China should abide by its 1995 Agreement with the UNHCR, which aims to ensure cooperation and reiterates the Refugee Convention's injunction and authorisation for any party to the Convention to invoke binding arbitration before the International Court of Justice in disputes over its interpretation and application (Article 38).²⁵⁶ Despite this agreement, the UNHCR, which ultimately relies on the "goodwill" of host governments, officially has been denied access to North Koreans in China.

Even as many NGOs and governments have decried China's disregard for international law, the UNHCR has taken a cautious stance on North Koreans in China, acknowledging them only as "persons of concern" and seeking engagement with Chinese officials who view the border crossers as economic migrants and repatriate them.²⁵⁷ The High Commissioner was optimistic about future progress after "open and frank" discussions on "everything" during his March 2006 visit to Beijing. China is said to be working with the UNHCR to build legal institutions for a national asylum system but it is time for Beijing to put words into action.²⁵⁸

Even if China does not allow North Koreans to seek official asylum on its territory, it should at least stop all forcible repatriation. The UNHCR should press China to fulfill its obligations regarding this matter. At least until Beijing accepts these obligations, neighbouring countries should not turn North Koreans crossing from China back to Chinese authorities, but instead contact either South Korea or the UNHCR. South Korea, the U.S., Japan and all other governments willing to accept North Korean asylum seekers should demand access to China, Burma, Laos and Vietnam. Having been most vocal about North Korean human rights, the U.S. and the EU should recognise and accept for resettlement many more refugees. Even South Korea should play a more active (but understandably quiet) role to help North Korean asylum seekers trapped in China and beyond.

South Korea and the UNHCR should work with all concerned governments, especially Mongolia, Russia, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Burma, and Thailand, to implement a standard procedure, with a time limit of no longer than four months, for moving North Koreans out of transit countries and into long-term settlement.²⁵⁹ The U.S. and the EU,

each with long experience in refugee resettlement programs, should acknowledge that South Korea has taken in the lion's share and offer training and assistance for its resettlement programs.²⁶⁰ Defectors would especially benefit from expansion of the extent and time frame of such programs, perhaps handled by professional resettlement agencies.²⁶¹

Women's and mental health issues should receive particular attention in all countries where North Koreans are detained or resettled. NGOs and church groups working in third countries should also be brought into the process. Given an agreed timetable for moving the asylum seekers into resettlement, these groups should receive increased support and be allowed to house North Koreans who have registered with the UNHCR and are waiting for final transfer. Thailand provides a useful model. Neighbours are all too eager to pass the buck. Starting with South Korea, governments should renew their commitment to answering the humanitarian needs of North Koreans in hiding and on the run.

B. CREATING BREATHING ROOM IN CHINA

Chinese authorities should shift their focus from keeping North Koreans out of China to protecting them once they have entered. Greater resources need to be devoted to preventing human trafficking. China has signed the Convention on the Elimination of Violence against Women and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children and child prostitution and now needs to crack down on exploitive workplaces and prostitution. It should increase rewards for reporting human traffickers and stop rewarding those who turn in North Koreans. Vulnerable women should be moved out of China and into resettlement programs that address their specific needs. China and receiving countries would benefit from coordination and support by international agencies such as UNICEF, the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime.

Women who are married to Chinese citizens and their children should be given provisional residency until a more robust domestic legal framework for resettling asylum seekers and stateless persons is erected. The basic rights of children—including to education—should be honoured as outlined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which China signed in 1990. China and its neighbours should make medical

care more accessible and stop arresting NGO workers for trying to help North Koreans. Beijing should also encourage North Korea to allow more frequent legal visits by its citizens to relatives in China.

The plight of North Koreans seeking refuge in China from the deprivations they face back home is likely to get much worse until greater pressure is placed on China to adjust its practices. Without a more sustained effort to persuade Beijing to do the right thing by those who have been the loudest on North Korean human rights, namely the U.S., the EU and Japan, North Koreans will continue to suffer in virtual invisibility. Concerned governments must also back up their words and resolutions with a greater commitment to recognise and accept North Korean refugees. It is time for the international community to put its money where its mouth is.

NOTES

1. This article is a revised version of Crisis Group Asia Report No. 122, *Perilous Journeys: The Plight of North Koreans in China and Beyond*, October 26, 2006.
2. North Korea and China signed an "Escaped Criminals Reciprocal Extradition Treaty" in 1960, and a "Border Area Affairs Agreement" in 1986.
3. This is "a generic term used to describe all persons whose protection and assistance needs are of interest to UNHCR." Persons of concern include but are not necessarily limited to asylum seekers, refugees, stateless persons, the internally displaced and returnees. See "UNHCR/Inter-Parliamentary Union Handbook for Parliamentarians No. 2, Refugee Protection: A Guide to International Refugee Law." 2001, Annex 2, "Glossary of Key Protection-related Terms," 131, available at <http://www.unhcr.org/publ/PUBL/3d4aba564.pdf>.
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5. The 300,000 Vietnamese refugees resettled in China after 1979 are accorded rights similar to Chinese nationals but they do not yet have citizenship or permanent status.
6. The principle of non-refoulement set out in Article 33 of the 1951 Conven-

tion on Refugees, "Prohibition of Expulsion or Return ("Refoulement")," is fundamental to protecting refugees and is considered binding customary international law even for non-parties to the Convention or its Protocol. The principle applies to asylum seekers and refugees "irrespective of whether or not they have been formally recognised" ("Non-Refoulement," Executive Committee of the UNHCR 28, no. 6 (1977)). It includes "not returning asylum-seekers or refugees to a place where their life or liberty would be at risk; not preventing asylum seekers or refugees—even if they are being smuggled or trafficked—from seeking safety in a country, as there is a chance of them being returned to a country where their life or liberty would be at risk; and not denying access to their territory to people fleeing persecution and who have arrived at their border (access to asylum)." See "UNHCR and International Protection: A Protection Induction Programme," 2006, available at <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/publ/opedoc.htm?tbl=PUBL&id=44b4bbcd2>. For further discussion of the principle of non-refoulement and China's related international law obligations, see Appendix C, "Refugee Law and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees" in Crisis Group Asia Report No. 122, October 2006.

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A Glimpse of Life at the Gold Mines

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From the late 1890s through 1939, many of Korea's richest gold mines were owned and operated by the West. The earliest and chief among the gold mines was the American-owned Oriental Consolidated Mining Company (OCMC). The original concession was granted in 1896 and sold to a Japanese syndicate in 1939. It was the last Western gold mine to operate in Korea prior to World War II.

There were several other Western-owned gold mines scattered mainly in northern Korea, including the Seoul Mining Co., the French Mines at Taeyudong, the Italian Mines, Korea Syndikat (German Mines), and the German mines at Tangokae. Many of the smaller mines were not very successful and after only a few years were abandoned or sold to the Japanese.

The largest concentrations of miners and their families were at the OCMC at Unsan, and to a lesser degree the French mines at Taeyudong. Here small communities were established with their own clubs, telegraph offices, libraries and even a school. To go into any great detail on these mines would require hundreds of pages, so for this article we will instead concentrate on the early housing, provisions, and general working conditions of the single miners at the OCMC.

The OCMC was located in northern Korea, but it was not the farthest north. There were other mines that held that distinction, such as the French mines at Taeyudong, the copper mines at Kapsan, and some of the smaller mines scattered here and there. These most northern mines suffered heavily from the effects of weather, especially the severe winters in which the weather quickly dropped to far below zero Fahrenheit.

[T]o my recollection the coldest I ever remember it getting when I was out there [at OCMC] was forty-four degrees below zero. It is true that

around the first of December the temperature went down to around five above to five below Fahrenheit during the day and colder at night, and it stayed that way until I presume around the middle of March when spring came. With the spring came the dust storms and many people have probably heard of the term yellow sky and I can remember seeing the yellow sky as a child. Every spring the winds would bring the dust from the Gobi Desert in Manchuria down over where we lived and for days at a time the sun would be obscured and at times it was just a faint glow in the sky and the fine dust permeated everything.¹

In addition to the cold of winter, the miners were forced to deal with the choking yellow dust storms in the spring and the ceaseless torrential rains during the early summers. It was thus imperative that their housing was adequate, especially when they had families.

HOUSING

One of the largest groups of miners in Korea was from Whitley County, Indiana, the home of Leigh Smith Hunt, the owner of the original concession. Needing men that he could depend on, he naturally turned to his hometown neighbors. In early 1901 he returned to the United States and with his brothers' assistance recruited a number of young men from all walks of life to work for the mines.

When the first group of Whitley County miners arrived in March 1901 they found the OCMC's first mine, Chittabable, surrounded by a small community of wooden buildings that served as the miners' quarters, a small club, the mill, and a host of storage sheds. The second and newer mine, Tabowie, also had a mill set up, but the infrastructure was still being built, including much of the miners' housing.² Most of the Indianan miners seemed to be satisfied with their housing.

According to Prof. Donald Clark, the miners initially lived in mud-walled dwellings, with make-shift furniture made out of old crates and cut-up kerosene drums. The winters seemed especially harsh because of their poor dwellings.³ While this may have been true in many of the smaller camps, especially in the beginning, it seems in contrast to many of the accounts given by the miners in the early 1900s. There were also wooden buildings, including one building which had ten or twelve rooms⁴ that W. H. Ragsdale, an American, his Chinese wife, and crew of

Korean and Chinese carpenters and blacksmith had built in Pukchin (the main camp) in the summer of 1896.⁵ Surely these were still in use.

Conditions did vary from camp to camp, especially in the early years. The smaller mines were often nothing more than a couple of shacks thrown together, barely insulated, and inadequately heated, but the larger mines, especially the British, were much better.

By 1900, the English mining concession (Gwendoline), which was located near the American concession, already had extremely nice buildings made from brick manufactured at the site, with galvanized iron for roofing. These buildings included housing for the foreign staff, a medical office, storehouses, stables, and a telegraph office. "The manager's house was a large and unnecessarily commodious one," and it and the other buildings and infrastructure cost the company a great deal of its profit.⁶

The English continued to improve their living conditions at the mines. In April 1904, a visiting American missionary noted that: "All the mine buildings looked like shacks on the outside but were well equipped on the inside. They were warm with big, pot-bellied stoves and the best factory made furniture from Manchester. The rugs came from Manchuria, however, and were thick and warm, made from camels' hair and wool. The servants were clean and alert, the food well prepared and served."⁷

Although there were quarters for the men at the OCMC's mines, many of the miners chose to build their own houses or buy them. One American miner, McCargar, wrote to his parents about not having a stove in 1899, yet still managing to keep his home warm. In January 1902 the news he sent back to the United States was about the large two-room home that he had built, complete with kitchen, glass windows and large doors.⁸ Many of the miners who planned on getting married and bringing back their spouses to the mining sites also purchased homes or had them built.

Newton Fletcher, a member of the second or third group of Whitley County miners, proved his worth to the OCMC rather early and consequently was promoted quickly. By 1905 he was the assistant superintendent of the company's mines at Maibong. Due to his position he was given a house of his own, but in March 1905 his home burned to the ground, destroying all of his property and personal effects.⁹ Five years later he escorted his new bride to Korea, probably to the rebuilt home.¹⁰

He was not the only miner to have suffered the loss of a home. Tom Arthur lost much more: his brother and his home. In July 1915 the northern part of Korea was plagued with exceptionally heavy rains for several days. John Arthur died when his house was crushed by a massive mudslide.¹¹

During the early 1900s there were many mines and mining concessions given out. At most of these mining sites the miners were forced to buy and utilize Korean housing until they could construct their own housing. At the Suan mines, C.F. Chase in November 1906 wrote about the improvements that he and his fellow miners had made to their housing:

I have had my room papered and the floor made new. Thoresen has bought a new house, the one that is next to the Charcoal Contractors, and he is expecting a new wife [so] he is fixing it up quite nice. Our house, Thoresen's and the girls' have been whitened, so the lot looks fine.

The office is quite swell. I had a new wood floor put down with paper between, and with the rope matting that you sent it is quite warm, all the windows have wooden shutters up at night, on the inside, only place I could place them, the Assay Office I have battened and the cracks papered up so with the fires going can keep warm.¹²

In the later years, most of the miners' homes at the larger mining sites such as the OCMC were very modern—sometimes even rivaling their homes in the United States. They were provided with electricity from the OCMC's hydroelectric dams, and “the water for household [use] came from a reservoir up in the mountains [that] was brought down to the mining camp and there it was pumped through a system of water mains to the various houses in the community.”¹³ However, because of the dangers of water-borne diseases, the drinking water for the community was taken from the community well and boiled.¹⁴

For some of the miners' Japanese wives, it was a culture shock to leave Korea and return to rural America where the facilities were often not on par with the mines.

Furnishings and goods needed for the miners' homes and everyday life either came from the OCMC's company store—which was very expensive—or were bought through mail-order catalogs. Twice a year the miners made their purchases from such companies as Montgomery

Wards and had them shipped to the mines.¹⁵ The Korean postal service brought mail about every ten days;¹⁶ larger and heavier items were brought to the mines by the company's buckboard wagons or pack ponies. In addition, the OCMC later had excellent workshops that "could do any kind of work from making a bolt to building a battleship."¹⁷

There is no doubt that the first couple of years at any of the mining sites were difficult, but soon most of these miners lived relatively well, foreign and Korean alike. The OCMC's largest mines were at Taracol and Tabowie, two miles apart. By 1909 the distance between them was described as having developed into one big city in which "one travels through streets and by houses the whole way. When the Company first started operations, there were just a hundred or two Korean houses; now, there are several thousand. This can be understood when one remembers that besides employing eighty white men who direct and supervise, it also employs over 10,000 Koreans, Chinese and Japanese."¹⁸

Korean miners who lived upon the concession and near the main mines were generally safe from being squeezed too severely by the Korean nobility, and because of this they allegedly took more pride in their homes and their community. All the Korean houses in the vicinity of the mine reportedly possessed clocks and umbrellas. The given reason was that the Korean miners were expected to be punctual, rain or shine.¹⁹

PROVISIONS

Food was a major supply problem for most of the Western mines in Korea. Because most were in remote locations, supplies of all kinds had to be brought in on the backs of men, mules, oxen and ponies. In the summer time this was difficult, in the winter nearly impossible. Political instability, bandits, disease, and natural disasters all compounded the difficulties.

The early years (prior to 1900) at the Unsan mines were the worst:

Bruce said he would never forget the hunger they suffered before they could get their gardens growing. There were no meat markets and the natives were hostile. So they lived on Korean food, and millet mush. Their only meat was Australian canned mutton, supplemented with smoked herring and Russian candy. They had one tiny Korean egg on Sundays only. This was hardly an epicurean pleasure where there was no variation for months and months on end.²⁰

However, by the time the first Whitley County miners arrived in March 1901, things had greatly improved. The OCMC's infrastructure of buildings and rest stations between the river port at Anjou and the mines had been established, the instability caused by the Boxer Rebellion in China had been taken care of, and supplies were stockpiled.

The first group of Whitley County miners arrived at Tabowie mine—the richest and second mine of the OCMC—at 2:30 in the afternoon. They were cold and exhausted, and the superintendent, Mr. Barrier, immediately housed them and fed them a hot meal. The meal was one of the first indications of how things were at the mines—relatively good.

We have plenty of good American food here. Today's bill of fare was as follows: Breakfast—Millet, (like oatmeal; native, not like ours at home) cornbread, two fried eggs, bacon, boiled potatoes with skins on, corn cakes and syrup. Dinner—Tiffen beef soup, boiled potatoes and beef, wax beans, rice and stewed peaches. Supper—Onion soup, boiled potatoes, fried beefsteak, stewed sweet corn, parsnips and apple pie. At all meals there is plenty of jam, butter, tea, coffee, sugar, milk, and a dozen seasons; but we've had graham and corn bread, as they have run short of flour. The diet is changed some each meal. I can hardly remember from one meal to the next what we had, but I know I eat hearty and enjoy what we have.²¹

While the Whitley County miners were living fairly well and eating very well at the OCMC, the miners at the English mining concession near Unsan, known as Gwendoline, were living almost entirely on canned vegetables and mutton. The only fresh food that they were able to obtain was from the occasional cow they bought and slaughtered, or the meager vegetables they purchased in the market. However, when the new mine manager, Edward T. McCarthy, arrived, he was determined to improve the lot of his miners.

During the first spring he was at the mines he undertook to make the mines more self-sufficient. Vegetable gardens were planted and tended by three Chinese gardeners. Within a short period they had not only enough to supply the Western staff, but also enough to give to their Korean neighbors. McCarthy gushed: "It was simply surprising how luxuriantly they grew; tomato plants, for example, had to be supported or they fell down by reason of the weight of their own fruit."²²

The English were not the only ones to establish small gardens and farms, especially later. Almost all the mines had their own small company farms and many of the miners and their families started their own small farms. Mary Deal, the wife of one of the first Whitley County miners, Fred Deal, had a large garden in which she raised vegetables from seeds she brought with her from the United States. Assisting her were two Korean laborers to bring water, and her head houseboy, Lee Shi-wee.²³

The Soldan Blain family at Unsan in the 1930s had a large farm in which they raised chickens, ducks, geese and turkeys which kept them provided with eggs and meat. They also had large strawberry and asparagus patches. The asparagus, along with other green vegetables, was placed in 55 gallon barrels and left on the north side of the building during winter so that it would freeze. When it was needed, one of the servants was sent out to chip away some of the vegetables and then thaw them out so that the family always had a supply of fresh green vegetables. In addition, corn, radishes and cabbages were pickled.²⁴ Many of the mining women, like the missionaries, canned their fruits and vegetables. In addition to the strawberries, there were also watermelons, grapes and plums, and apples, most of which were canned for use during the winters.

Concerned about diseases, vegetables sold at the Korean markets were avoided by many of the Westerners living in Korea because they were fertilized with human fecal matter. This led to a somewhat awkward moment when a group of volunteers for the Red Cross visited the OCMC mines to put on a show for the miners following World War One. When they sat down to eat, the mine manager's wife, Mrs. Welhaven, noted one of her guests was reluctant to eat the fresh vegetables. She clumsily tried to reassure her guest that the vegetables were safe to eat. "Don't be afraid to eat, my dear, these are grown in our own manure."²⁵ Embarrassed laughter greeted the blushing and flustered hostess, but all understood her meaning.

While vegetables were easy to obtain, obtaining meat was always a difficult task. Korean cattle and oxen were generally used for transportation and were highly susceptible to the various cattle epidemics that decimated herds with alarming frequency. One of the Whitley County miners wrote home saying: "It is impossible to get any beef except [when] its days of usefulness are over and it is converted into chow. The natives are

strict vegetarians and glut themselves with rice and similar foods.” The Korean butchers were part of the lowest caste in Korea and had virtually no rights. Most of the Westerners in Korea did not frequent the Korean butchers unless it was out of curiosity—they preferred the Chinese or Japanese butchers who they felt were more sanitary and trustworthy. The Korean butcher shops were small and one British woman described them: “The smells were fearful, the dirt abominable, and the quantity of wretched dogs and of pieces of bleeding meat blackening in the sun perfectly sickening.”²⁶ She went on to describe their techniques for butchering the animals:

The Koreans cut the throat of the animal and insert a peg in the opening. Then the butcher takes a hatchet and beats the animal on the rump until it dies. The process takes about an hour, and the beast suffers agonies of terror and pain before it loses consciousness. Very little blood is lost during the operation; the beef is full of it, and its heavier weight in consequence is to the advantage of the vendor.²⁷

The English-language newspaper in Seoul in the late 1890s printed several stories of diseased animals being used as food. A butcher in Pusan purchased a sick cow and butchered it and then sold the meat to his neighbors, killing eight of them and badly sickening twenty.²⁸ Other butchers in Seoul knowingly bought sick cattle cheaply and then sold the meat to unsuspecting customers, and when caught merely paid a bribe and were set free.²⁹ A Westerner in Chemulpo sent a letter to the editor of the newspaper claiming: “The Koreans here are reveling in fresh meat at present. Some beeves shipped as live freight died on the passage. The dead carcasses have been bought by the enterprising Korean butchers and will be carved up for the customers.”³⁰

To solve the protein problem, McCarthy sent one of his Chinese employees to Manchuria with enough money to buy a flock of 250 sheep. Most people scoffed at the idea because it was a common belief among Koreans that sheep could not survive in their country. So well embedded was this notion that Emperor Kojong, who was “supposed to be the only individual in the country who tasted mutton,” allegedly sent one of the Korean steamers to China every couple of weeks to purchase fresh mutton for the palace. To the skeptics’ surprise, not only did the sheep sur-

vive, they flourished. During the summer they were allowed to wander the mountain slopes surrounding the mining site, but in the winter they were housed in an open shed and fed hay and turnips.³¹ Eventually sheep would be raised in several spots in the north, providing not only meat, but wool.³²

Most of the mines were surrounded by wilderness that was filled with wildlife. The Western miners, through hunting, supplemented their diets with deer, bear, wild boar and fowl, and also enjoyed a welcome form of entertainment.

What the miners could not grow, they bought from abroad. Butter was imported from Australia and New Zealand in one-pound tins, but because of the intense heat in the bowels of the transport ships, it often melted and then re-congealed, giving it a grainy texture. The salted dried cod was like firewood and had to be soaked in water for twenty-four hours before it could be used as croquets. In addition to the food, miners and their families would combine their orders once or twice a year to purchase wines from France, whiskey from Scotland, cigarettes from the United States and cigars from Manila.³³

KOREAN FOOD

It would be remiss not to also mention the Korean miners and their diets. One of the Whitley County miners claimed that the Koreans were vegetarians, and while they did eat predominantly vegetables and fruits, they also occasionally enjoyed meats of all types. A meal enjoyed per se, by Mary Linley Taylor, a miner's wife, was described in her book:

Our dinner consisted, first, of a thin soup sprinkled with red pepper. I could not swallow it. There was fried seaweed, delicious, but not at all filling, and masses of minute fish with blank staring eyes, and tiny beans, not easily eaten with chopsticks. There were little squares of pancake mixture, and numerous chunks of octopus and lily roots, which had to be dipped in *kang jong* [soy] sauce. There were many, many other nameless dishes highly seasoned with onion, garlic and red pepper. But until one can accustom one's stomach to assimilate qualities of rice, one is bound to go hungry.³⁴

The Westerners were not impressed with the Korean diet, especially the fermented vegetable dishes known as kimchi. Gwendoline mine manager McCarthy described it as "nothing more nor less than a vegetable or mixture of vegetables allowed to rot and ferment."³⁵ Mrs. Taylor's first inclination when she saw kimchi was "to throw it out." The mixture of "onions, garlic, ginger, fish, peppers, salt, and turnips" caused her to edge the cushion she was sitting on as far away from "the offending odours" as possible.³⁶ Mrs. Taylor's and Mr. McCarthy's opinions of the odor of kimchi, and for that matter other Korean foods, were shared by a majority of the Western miners: "Breakfast, tiffin, and dinner are all cooked in one pot, but further than this as to what the meal consists of I can't say, for the operation is so nauseous that one is glad to quit the place."³⁷

WORKING CONDITIONS

When the first Whitley County miners wrote home about working conditions, they seemed to have been satisfied, and somewhat surprised.

I think the harships [sic] are over now, and that all things will move along nicely from this [point] on. The work will not be so very hard at any time. The white men here don't do much but see that the natives are doing their work alright and enough of it. They sit around where the natives are at work and enjoy life as best they can. Why, it's apparently against the rule for a white man to do any work. Contrary to my expectations, though to my satisfaction, we were not put right to hard work as soon as we got here, but had several days to rest and get our room in order. . . . The boys will not have to work hard, if ever at all. The thing to do now and required of us is to learn as much of the Korean language and as fast as we can, and watch the work and learn how it is done.³⁸

While traveling from the United States to Korea, the men used to sing (when not seasick) a parody of a popular song that went: "There'll be no more sorrow there. In heaven above there's peace and love," but they changed the words to: "There'll be no Sunday there. In Chittaballie far away, there'll be no Sunday there."³⁹ Ruefully they found that their parody was more accurate than they believed. Oscar Shinbeckler, another Whitley County miner, noted that "work is carried on every day, rain or shine, Sunday and all."⁴⁰ Perhaps that is why all the Koreans were provided with umbrellas.

Work was difficult and dangerous in many ways, but it was easier than most of the men ever believed it would be. All the labor was done by Koreans, Chinese and Japanese. "[T]he task of the American miner in Korea is not only to plan his [the Korean miner's] work, but to keep a constant lookout to see that it is executed as he plans it." Assisting the Americans were Koreans who could speak a few words of English.⁴¹

The Western miners were not even required to care for their own needs. They were provided with servants to cook their food and do their cleaning. A Californian miner wrote home bragging that they had "servants for everything we need. Do not even have to lace our shoes if we don't want to. They shine our shoes, brush our clothes—in fact are like slaves for us. A few years out here would spoil one, although many of the men have been here for 20 years."⁴²

While many men did stay for twenty years or more, there were those who left before the first year was finished. Tom Shepherd went with the first group of Whitley County miners as a machinist and engineer, but quickly found it not to his liking. After the hardships of the Pacific Ocean crossing and the subsequent ten-day overland journey to his Tabowie mine, he had to spend several days recuperating from his sore feet before he could go to work. His accounts of the working conditions in Korea differed greatly from the other miners. A local newspaper in Indiana published the first accounts:

Tom Shepherd had gone to Korea under the impression "that he would make his fortune in a short time, but when he arrived in Korea his rosy view of the situation soon faded and he settled down to harder work than he ever had in Indiana, to keep from starving to death. He made a break for home the first chance he got and now that he is back he swears that he will never leave the Hoosier state again."⁴³

Another article entitled "Indiana Boys Buncoed in Korea" soon appeared in which Shepherd elaborated on the plight of the young men from Indiana who "were not finding their lives a bed of roses" in Korea. He claimed that they were assured that the cost of living was cheap in Korea, but "they were compelled to trade at the Company's store, which charged \$4.50 for 48-cent overalls and for other goods in proportion." Furthermore, they were forced to work at all hours of the day and night

for a mere \$1.10 per day. Shepherd wasn't the only one that left. Three other miners also quit and returned to the United States. He claimed that with the hard work and poor food and housing he "led an existence that knocked all romance out of the experience."⁴⁴

There would be other Whitley County men who left prior to the completion of their contracts, but most did so because of problems such as fights with the Korean population, injuries, and sickness.⁴⁵ Those who chose to leave because they did not like mining work generally did not speak negatively about the OCMC, and in fact probably took some pride in having worked for the company.

There were also those who completed their contracts and were in very good positions at the mines, but just found life in Korea too difficult. James Hunt accompanied his older brother, Leigh Smith Hunt, to Korea in 1898. He survived the hardest years—the years that were filled with the most trouble with the local population and with poor supplies, but after eight years he gave it up and returned to the United States. He complained that "the monotony of living in a country with none of the refinements of civilized life, and nothing but a bleak and waste country surrounding," was not "to his taste." He was convinced that he had enough of "the Korean life to last him for some time."⁴⁶

There were many others who elected to renew their contracts over and over, and they generally returned to the United States richer both in money and experience. For most, Korea was a profitable adventure.

NOTES

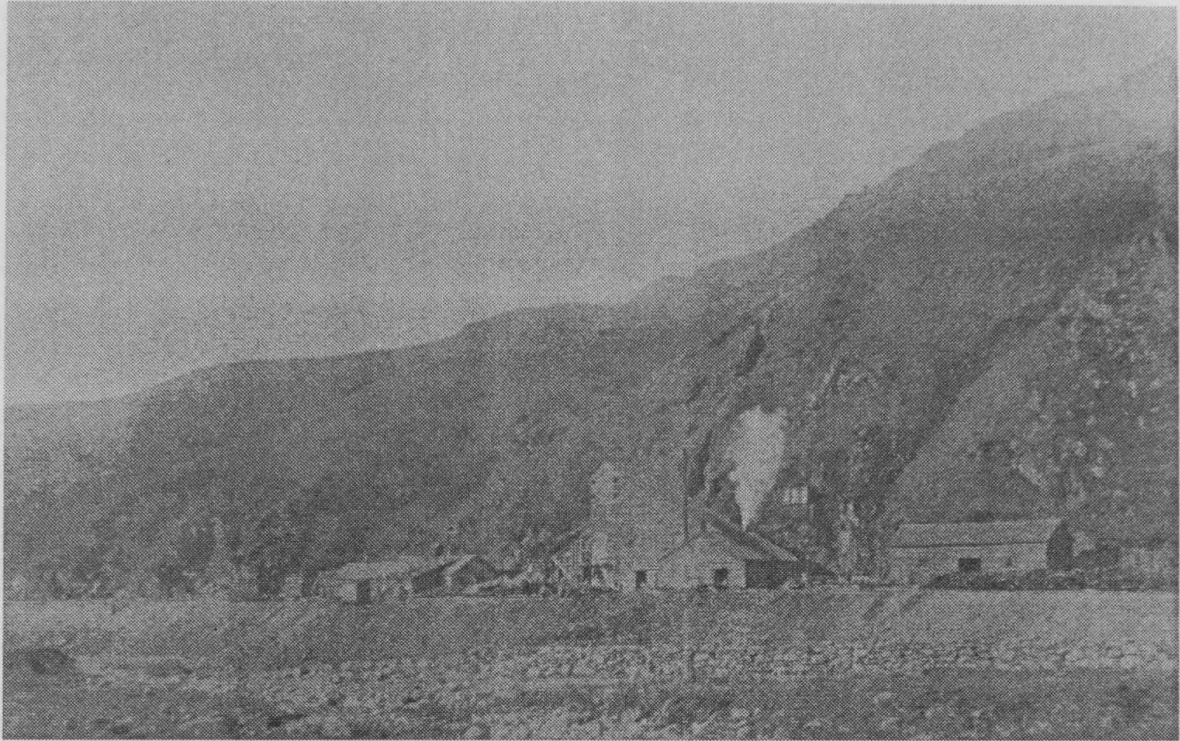
1. John Blain transcripts, in author's collection.
2. *Mining and Scientific Press*, No. 2154, November 2, 1901, pictures from front cover.
3. Donald Clark, *Living Dangerously in Korea* (Norwalk, CT: Eastbridge, 2003), 231.
4. *The Independent*, May 4, 1897.
5. In 1891 Ragsdale came to Chemulpo from Nagasaki; why and for how long he was in Japan is not known. In Chemulpo he was hired as the chief of police of the foreign settlement, a position he held until June 1896, when he went to work for the mining company. He was sent to build the quarters for the miners, but his work was slow and not without problems. First, a ti-

- ger killed a Korean woman and wounded two others in the vicinity. It also took a dog. Then Ragsdale accidentally shot one of his employees, and accused another of helping the Korean placer miners steal gold from the concession site. After only about a year Ragsdale was fired and returned to Chemulpo where he evidently became a hunting guide, escorting four American tiger hunters to Wonsan in September 1897. (Allen to Hunt, April 16, 1896; Allen to Morse, April 22, 1896; Allen to Te Wan Yong, Minister for Foreign Affairs, undated; Allen to Hunt and Morse, July 17, 1896; all in Horace Newton Allen Papers, New York Public Library; Dean Alexander Arnold, *American Economic Enterprises in Korea*, PhD dissertation, University of Chicago, 1954, 59, 68–71; *The Independent*, May 13, 1897.)
6. Edward T. McCarthy, *Further Incidents in the Life of a Mining Engineer* (London: Routledge, 1920), 231–32; F. L. Cole to Dr. Branner, September 21, 1902, Special Collections, Stanford University Library; “Trade of Corea for the Year 1900, No. 2687,” *Diplomatic and Consular Reports*, August 1901, 16.
 7. Evelyn McCune, *Michigan and Korea, 1899–1914*, 80.
 8. McCargar correspondence, private collection of Robert H. Sayers.
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 10. *Weekly Sentinel*, September 14, 1910, 25.
 11. Arnold, 422–23; annotation on Brown Meece picture, circa 1913–14, author’s collection.
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 14. Cleon Fleck, “Happy Trio Thrilled to Seek Adventure in Korean Goldmine,” *Bulletin of the Whitley County Historical Society* 21, no. 6 (December 1983): 20.
 15. Author’s e-mail correspondence with Paul Deal, April 3, 2006.
 16. “Quartz Mining in Korea,” *Mining and Scientific Press*, No. 2154, November 2, 1901, 182.
 17. *Woodland Daily Democrat*, August 29, 1921, 5.
 18. *Seoul Press*, June 25, 1910, 3.
 19. *Seoul Press*, December 2, 1909, 3.
 20. Mary Linley Taylor, *Chain of Amber* (Lewes, Sussex: Book Guild, 1992), 112–13.
 21. A. E. Deardorff to M. L. Galbreath, March 9, 1901, *Columbia City Post*, Whitley County Historical Museum.
 22. McCarthy, 235–36.
 23. Author’s e-mail correspondence with Paul Deal, April 3, 2006.
 24. John Blain transcripts.
 25. Taylor, 121.

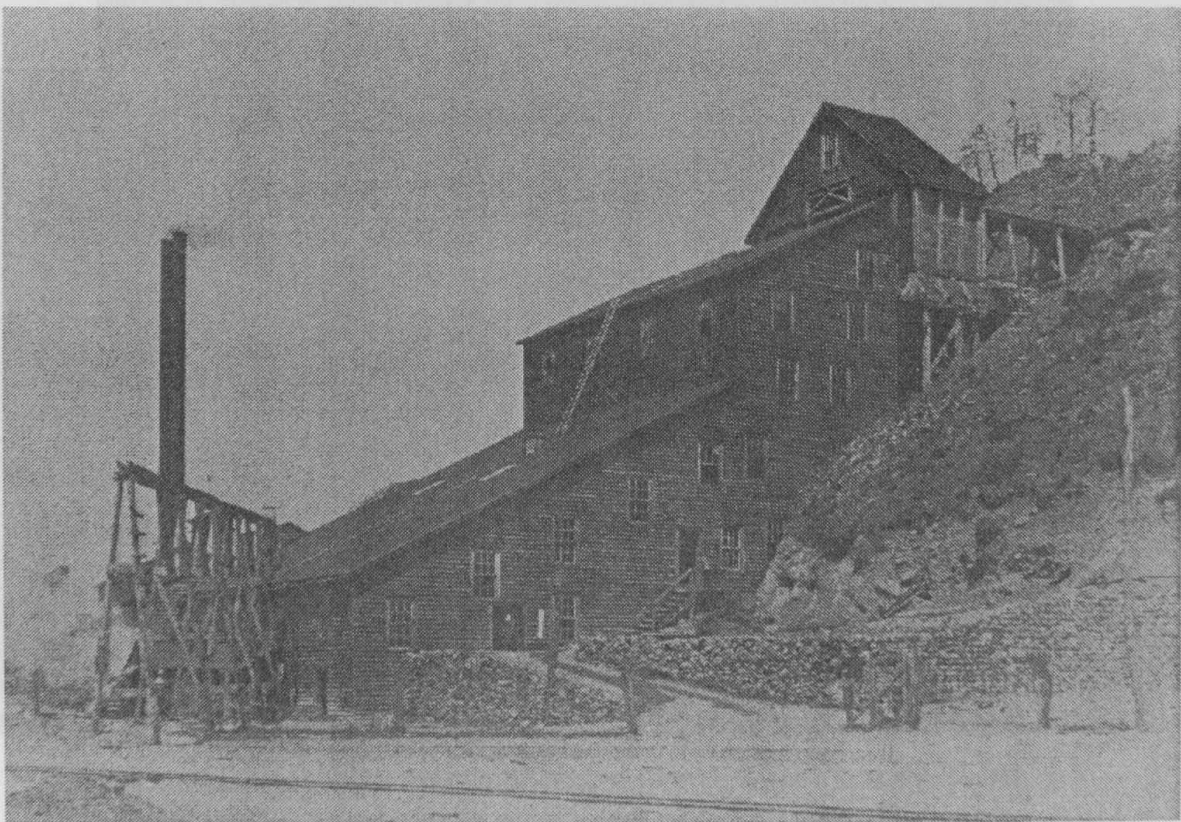
26. Isabella Bird Bishop, *Korea and Her Neighbors* (New York: F. H. Revell, 1898), 172.
27. Ibid. Another account of butchering was given in a letter to the editor in *The Independent*, April 2, 1898.
28. *The Independent*, September 23, 1897.
29. *The Independent*, May 7, 1898.
30. *The Independent*, November 4, 1897.
31. McCarthy, 235–36.
32. In February 1902, nearly 900 sheep arrived in Chemulpo from Chefoo, China. It was unclear if these sheep were to be used as sacrifices at the Royal Tombs or were part of the stock for a newly established Korean ranch near Pu-pyoung between Seoul and Chemulpo. (*Korea Review* 2 [1902]: 76.)
33. John Blain transcripts; author's e-mail correspondence with Paul Deal, April 3, 2006.
34. Taylor, 142.
35. McCarthy, 214.
36. Taylor, 148.
37. *Fort Wayne Journal-Gazette*, August 12, 1901, 3.
38. A. E. Deardorff to M. L. Galbreath, March 9, 1901, *Columbia City Post*, Whitley County Historical Museum.
39. Ibid.
40. *Fort Wayne Journal-Gazette*, May 21, 1905, 25.
41. "Quartz Mining in Korea," 182.
42. *Woodland Daily Democrat*, August 29, 1921, 5.
43. *Fort Wayne News*, November 11, 1901, 3.
44. *Fort Wayne Journal-Gazette*, November 19, 1901, 1.
45. *Fort Wayne Journal-Gazette*, September 23, 1908, 9; *Fort Wayne Sentinel*, October 29, 1913, 7.
46. *Fort Wayne Journal-Gazette*, August 8, 1906, 3.

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The photographs on the following pages are from Robert Neff's book *Nodaji: Western Gold Miners in Korea*, forthcoming in summer 2007 from Eastward Publications.



Unsan Mining Concession (possibly Taracol mine) circa 1905.



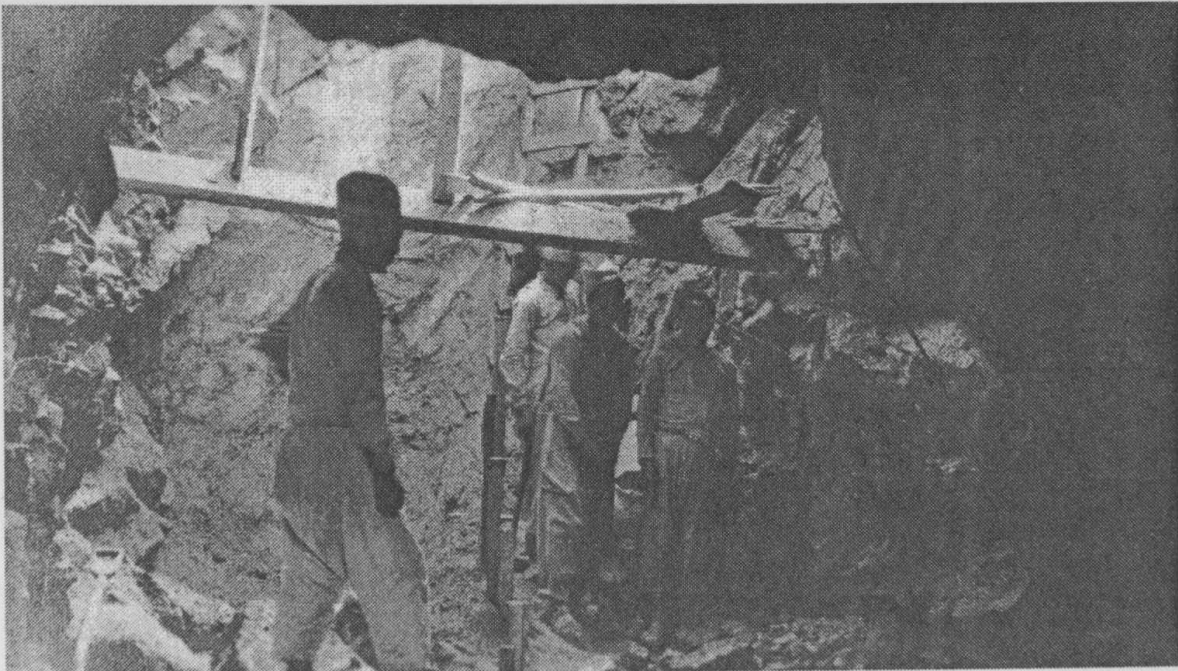
One of the Unsan gold mines circa 1905.



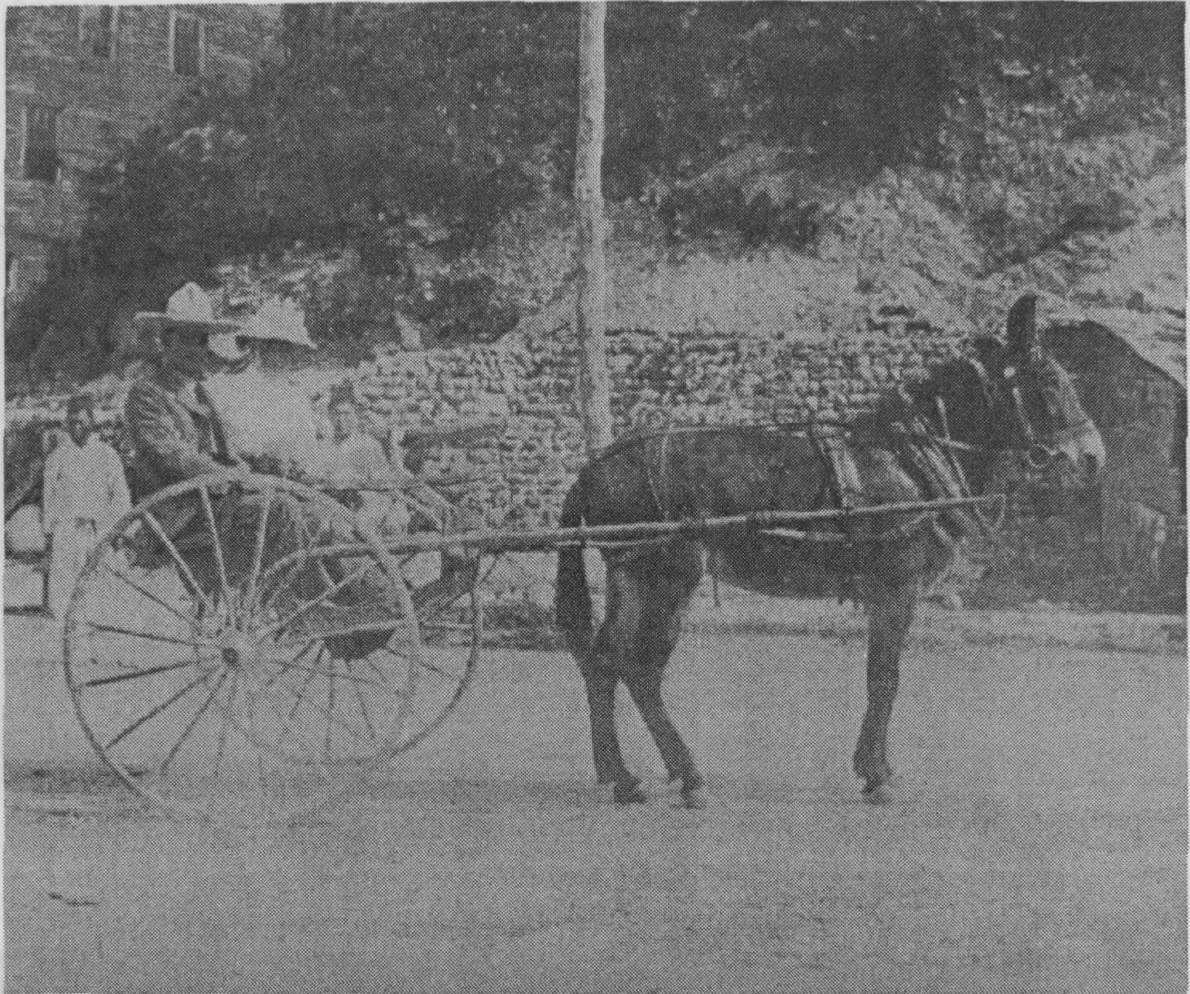
Dredge at the Chicksan Mining Concession near Suwŏn circa 1917.



Korean villagers grinding millet near the Unsan Mining Concession.



Construction at the Unsan Mining Concession circa 1920–30.



A mine manager and his wife in one of the few buggies owned by the mines. Many of the miners were from Columbia City, Indiana, renowned for its buggy factories.

Sacred Aspects and Assets of Taebaek-san

DAVID A. MASON*

ABSTRACT

Taebaek-san or the Grand White Mountain is a medium-sized provincial park on the southern border of the Republic of Korea's Gangwon Province. By any considered standards, it is one of the handful of most sacred mountains in all of Korea. It is a great national treasure, holding a vast cultural wealth that has until the present time been noticeably under-utilized for inbound international tourism attraction.

China and Japan both have internationally well-known "sacred mountains" (such as Tai-shan and Fuji-san) that are featured in their international tourism-promotions. Korea has quite a few "sacred mountains" yet makes little use of their sacred reputations and aspects for this purpose. This paper is intended to serve as an example of how increasingly doing so could be of widespread benefit to both Korea's national reputation and its tourism industry.

Therefore, this paper will discuss the aspects and factors of Taebaek-san which make it one of Korea's most sacred mountains, and provide details on its physical religious assets, including its Buddhist temples and many mountain-spirit folk-shamanism shrines, which I have found to be of unique variety and vivid colorful interest. It will conclude with suggestions for making better use of Taebaek-san's potential value for inbound tourism promotion.

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NOTES ON USAGES

This paper will consistently use the term “sacred” to refer to places or things that have an extraordinary value to one or more traditional Korean religions, spiritual traditions and/or ideologies (including, for the present case, Korea’s native folk-beliefs, shamanism, Buddhism, Daoism, Neo-Confucianism and Nationalism), avoiding possible synonyms such as “holy,” “blessed,” “divine,” “consecrated,” “godly,” “hallowed” or “sanctified,” which to some readers might imply Christian meanings. Useful synonyms for “sacred” could be “spiritual,” “venerable,” “cherished” and “revered,” but I will repeatedly use only “sacred,” at the risk of repetitiveness, for the sake of consistency and clarity.

This paper refers to the particular set of mountains constituting the provincial park and its immediately surrounding areas under discussion simply as “Taebaek-san” (태백산 in *han-geul*) following general Korean usage, rather than using “Mt. Taebaek”, “the Taebaek Mountains”, “Taebaek Mountain” or other possible legitimate alternatives in English.

The scope and length of this paper does not permit a discussion of what “sacred” has meant and still means to the various cultures and religions of the world throughout human history; that is an entire academic field of its own. I use the concept of a “sacred” site, area or mountain in this paper in its general and commonly understood sense of a place that is believed to be intimately connected with the supernatural or divine, regarded as having a special exalted character and possibly supernatural powers, and thus consecrated and revered with respect and veneration, often expressed with ritual ceremonies (public or private).¹

INTRODUCTION

Korea’s folk-shamanist shrines and Buddhist temples, and the practices and artworks they house, are very interesting to foreign tourists, especially to Westerners in my experience, but they are as yet vastly underutilized as draws for Korea’s inbound cultural tourism. South Korea has an ancient tradition of considering some of its mountains to be especially sacred or holy, believed to be inhabited by especially powerful *san-shin* (mountain spirits), which are depicted in strikingly original and colorful icons in characteristic shrines.² It also has many Buddhist monasteries whose presence, architecture and practices add to the sacred character of

the mountains that host them. If the character and meaning of these places is properly explained, they can be very useful factors to attract foreign tourists. The culture of these "holy mountain" shrines and temples is ancient but yet still quite contemporary, still noticeably evolving and growing in a way that is fascinating to observers of religious cultures.

Taebaek-san is a great treasure of the Korean nation, holding a vast cultural wealth which is so far virtually un-utilized for inbound international tourism attraction. By any criteria that is commonly used, it ranks as one of the very most sacred mountains in all of Korea. However, details of its being regarded as sacred since ancient times, and its contemporary religious assets such as temples and shrines, are not very well-known, particularly outside of Korea itself; information about them in English has been scarce.³

China and Japan both have well-known "sacred mountains" (such as Tai-shan and Fuji-san) that are featured in their international tourism promotions. Korea has quite a few "sacred mountains" yet under-utilizes their reputations and aspects for this purpose.⁴ I would like to advocate that increasingly doing so would be of widespread benefit to both Korea's national reputation and its tourism industry, and present this case study as a relevant example.

Therefore, this paper will discuss the aspects and factors of Taebaek-san which make it one of Korea's most sacred mountains, and provide details on its physical religious assets, especially its many Buddhist temples and mountain-spirit folk-shamanism shrines. They have been found by this author to be of unique variety and vivid colorful interest. This paper will conclude with suggestions of their potential value and utilization for inbound international tourism promotion.

Even within South Korea itself, and in the publications concerning it, this topic has received little attention in either popular publications or in scholarly publications. I have extensively searched for books or papers in the English language written by academic scholars (both Korean and non-Korean) on this subject, but have not found any at all. There are a few written in Korean or Japanese, but I could not find any that offered useful detailed listings. Nothing can even be found on the Internet beyond the few statements that I reference in this paper. In South Korea's tourism-promotion literature, both national and local, including both

printed materials and Internet web pages, there are only passing references to the sacred character and religious assets of the Taebaek-san Provincial Park and the areas close around it.

In both the cases of China and Japan, the idea that certain mountains are highly sacred, and these designations of sets of nine or three most sacred mountains, are extensively used for international tourism promotion and attracting inbound tourists, particularly from Western nations. Sacred mountains of this kind are a unique type of attraction, offering combinations of beautiful natural scenery, adventurous and health-promoting hiking and profound cultural interest (at the temples in shrines on the slopes and peaks). Adding the cultural atmosphere and assets of such a place to its natural assets raises it far above ordinary beautiful mountains in its potential interest to sophisticated travelers, who may already have some interest in the Asian religions represented. A general survey of *tourist-attracting brochures and websites (those available in English)* from these nations shows widespread usage of these mountains and their sacred character as factors in drawing tourists, whether in the spirit of viewing exotica or of sincere pilgrimage.

The English tourist-attracting brochures and websites of South Korea, however, make very little mention of the sacred character of Korea's many sacred mountains as reasons or enticements for foreign tourists to visit. In promoting visits to the great mountains, or to the nation in general, the concept of *sacred mountains with fascinating religious sites on them* is generally absent. There is no mention at all of a systematic set of "Korea's Most Sacred Mountains" or so on, which might spark or heighten the curiosity or interest of international travelers. This is a good promotional opportunity that is simply being missed in Korean tourism.

CRITERIA AND TERMINOLOGY FOR SACREDNESS OF KOREAN MOUNTAINS

Factors that I have discovered in the course of my research that lead to Korean mountains being considered sacred can be divided into two categories, factors that are more physical and others that are more cultural.⁵ These are *interrelated and cumulative*. To be considered "highly sacred" a mountain must be seen to have at least several of them; having only one will not be considered sufficient. Every mountain in question

has its own unique and characteristic set and balance of these factors, which combine to establish and maintain its reputation. The overall list is:

PHYSICAL FACTORS

- unusually high peak(s) or great size / outstanding prominence;
- significant geographical position;
- unusual, strange or outstanding topographical features;
- serving as the origin of a major river;
- being a member of the *Baekdu-daegan* range,⁶ one of its major branches;
- serving or having served as the geographical “guardian” mountain of a city or region, perhaps with a military fortress on it.

CULTURAL FACTORS

- the mountain’s name has a profound / auspicious religious meaning;
- people are recorded to have, and/or said to have spiritual experiences or visions, or attain enlightenment and wisdom, on that mountain;
- social heroes having been born, trained or educated there, gaining special powers;
- old folk or religious myths or legends being cited there, including myths of that mountain’s ‘spirit’ appearing, manifesting or causing some phenomena;
- the mountain has served as the spiritual “guardian” mountain of a city, thought to have powers to generate or ensure abundant fecundity, or simply to protect against disaster;
- presence of one or more important Buddhist temples;
- presence of one or more major shamanic shrines;
- presence of significant historical / archaeological remains;
- previous governments established shrines there for worship of its spirit;
- previous governments including it in a numeric-based system of sacred mountains.

Contemporary Koreans themselves rarely speak in reference to any such criteria when mentioning that a certain mountain is sacred. That it meets one or more of these criteria is usually only implied, and usually

assumed to be generally known by everyone, not requiring detailed explanation. *Myeongsan* is the most common term used to designate a sacred mountain—the *Hanja* character *myeong* employed here was apparently originally the one meaning “bright” with shamanic-Daoist religious overtones, but is now its synonym meaning “famous.” Other Korean terms used in this way, although less commonly, are *yeongsan* (spirit[ual] mountain), *shinseong-hansan* (spirit-holy big-mountain) and *shinryeongsan* (mountain with a [strong] spirit).

BASIC FEATURES OF TAEBAEK-SAN

Taebaek-san (태백산) or the Grand White Mountain is a medium-sized provincial park on the southern border of the Republic of Korea's Gangwon Province, located at about 37° 07' N latitude and 128° 57' E longitude. On May 13, 1989 roughly one third of the mountain's total area was designated as a provincial park of Gangwon-do. The designated area includes most of its primary religious and cultural assets, most of which are in valleys and on ridges which are accessed from its northern side, along National Highway 31.

The entire valley on the western side of the mountain is occupied by a South Korean army base, and remains inaccessible to the general public. The southern and the far-eastern slopes outside of the park boundaries are a combination of private and public landholdings mostly used for the forestry industry. They contain a few significant cultural assets.

What I will refer to as the greater Taebaek-san region, the large area (approximately 1600 km²) under the influence of the reputation of this mountain, is comprised by all of Taebaek City, Gohan District in the southeast corner of Jeongseon County, the eastern side of Yeongwol County and the western side of Samcheok City (all in Gangwon-do), and the northern half of Bonghwa County in North Gyeongsang Province (Gyeongsang-bukdo).

Taebaek-san proper features four main peaks above 1500 meters in altitude inside the park boundaries, each with religious character and significance, related with specific myths, deities and shrines. They are listed below as “sacred assets.” It also contains a dozen other peaks above 900 meters in altitude, mostly outside of the park boundaries. Its

highest peak (Janggung-bong, 1566.7 meters) is the seventh highest main summit in the Republic of Korea.

Alpine springs of very high-quality water flow down into ten gorges and valleys around it, the most famous being the Dang-gol streams that form the origin of the Nakdong River. Two small but important “traditional” (founded before the 20th century) Buddhist temples,⁷ a dozen other Buddhist temples and hermitages (founded in the 20th century) and several dozen significant shamanic and/or Korean-Daoist shrines and historic folk-culture sites are found around the slopes and up on the ridges and peaks.

There are now modern tourist facilities such as motels, *minbak* homestays and restaurants all along the northern edge of the mountain, and to a lesser extent on the eastern and southern sides. The Gangwon-do provincial government established a Coal-Mining Museum in the main Dang-gol valley (opened 2000), and holds several tourism festivals in and above that valley every year, the most famous being the *Cheonje* Festival held on *Gaecheon-jeol* (explained below) and the Taebaek-san Snow Festival in mid-winter.

SACRED ASPECTS OF TAEBAEK-SAN

Taebaek-san certainly meets all the physical criteria for a sacred Korean mountain. It is relatively large, and dominates the surrounding countryside. As the intersection of the *Taebaek-sanmaek* mountain range (that runs along the Korean peninsula’s east coast) and the *Sobaek-sanmaek* mountain range (that runs through the middle of the southern portion of the peninsula, forming the northern and western borders of the Gyeongsang Provinces or *Yeongdong* region), it is in a key geographical position that divides territories around it. Together with its surrounding mountains it has always served as the northern military (and spiritual) “guardian” mountain of the Shilla Kingdom (3rd to 9th centuries CE) and the Gyeongsang Province region (after that). Its topographical features are dramatic and impressive, famous among hikers. Although one of South Korea’s highest sets of peaks, they are relatively quite easily accessible, as hiking from the Dan-gol, Baekdan-sa or Yuil-sa trailheads takes only two hours to reach the summits.

Taebaek-san has an unusual biological-flora asset, which has always added to its prominence and mystical character and is a favorite of modern photographers: Jumok-namu trees,⁸ ancient evergreen survivors found only on Korea's highest alpine ridges, are unusually abundant on Taebaek-san's peak areas. Traditional Koreans have regarded them as symbols of immortality, markers of sacred spots and powerful charms against bad fortune and malign spirits, and Korean shamans consider them to be enlightened ancestral beings.

The Nakdong River (South Korea's longest river, of crucial importance to the entire Cholla/Gyeongsang area as it flows southward) originates deep within Taebaek-san itself, while the South Han River (the second longest, of crucial importance to the southern Gangwon-do, northern North Chungcheong-do, Gyeonggi-do and Seoul areas as it flows north and westward) originates at the northern edge of the greater Taebaek-san region. This aspect of being the source of two of Korea's greatest rivers is equaled by only one other mountain, the highly sacred Baekdu-san on the border between North Korea and China. It may have been the origin of this mountain's high level of sacredness at the dawn of Korean civilization.

Taebaek-san holds a primary position in what we might call the "sacred geography of Korea" (according to *Pungsu-jiriseol* theories established long ago by national master-monk Doseon-guksa and others, still widely referenced and utilized today),⁹ serving as a key point in the *Baekdu-daegan* earth-energy and water-source range (the southern end of its middle section, where it turns off west from the *Taebaek-sanmaek* mountain range and begins to follow the *Sobaek-sanmaek* mountain range).

In most instances that can be found in contemporary writings, when Koreans list the three or five most sacred mountains of their nation, Taebaek-san is included as one of them. For example, it is called one of the four "national *yeong-san* (spiritual mountains) of Korea" along with Jirisan, Halla-san and Baekdu-san on a prominent Korean travel website,¹⁰ and as "one of Korea's three sacred mountains" on the official public parks site.¹¹ The Taebaek City website says that it "serves as the nation's spiritual mountain, and a root for all of the mountains located in the southern part of the Korean peninsula. . . . All in all, Mt. Taebaek is re-

garded as the nation's mother mountain, a place of beauty and tolerance."¹²

The name of this mountain itself expresses its highly sacred character. "Taebaek" can be translated as "Grand White," with meaning rooted in Korea's ancient pre-Buddhist culture in which primitive sun-worship had led to shamanic invocation of light and brightness, lending sacred meaning to all words now written/pronounced as *gwang* (light, shining, radiance), *myeong* (bright), *baek* (white), etc. A mountain from which people prayed to heaven was called a *baekpan* or *baeksan*, meaning "bright (white) mountain", and the largest and brightest was called a *taebaeksan* (grandly bright [white] mountain). This particular place is said to have been originally called *hangbakmo-e* or *hanbaedal*, terms meaning "excessive brightness" and the name Taebaek-san and its characters was applied to honor it in the early Shilla Kingdom period.¹³

Other place names on this mountain add to its sacred character, such as Munsu-bong whose origin was already discussed, the summit *Janggun-bong* (Guardian General Peak), the largest valley *Dang-gol* (Shrine Valley), Baekdan-sa (White Altar Temple) and so on. Its oldest monastery *Manggyeong-sa* certainly lives up to its name "All-encompassing-view Temple," offering a stunning scenic view over the upper Dan-gol valley toward Munsu-bong. The name also is a term from the Buddhist sutras, referring to the all-encompassing view of reality (enlightenment) that a Buddhist meditation practitioner can attain from the wisdom of Munsu-bosal, wisdom that is extraordinary, refined, precious and rare. The fact that Manggyeong-sa is Korea's highest-altitude Buddhist temple (at 1500 meters) strongly adds to its sacred character and that of its hosting mountain, as higher altitude has long been associated with sacredness in Korean culture, due to the strong function of mountain-spirits in its spiritual traditions.¹⁴

Taebaek-san has been one of the most sacred peaks in the southern Korean peninsula since at least the 6th-century Shilla Kingdom. Master Jajang-yulsa (590–658), one of the great early progenitors of Korean Buddhism, is said to have climbed it near the end of his life while he was living at Hambaek-san's Jeongam-sa (which he had founded, just a day's walk from this site). He found a stone statue of *Munsu-bosal* (*Manjusri* [Sanskrit] the Bodhisattva of Wisdom) that he had been told had ap-

peared at the Yong-jeong spring where the Nakdong River originates, just below Taebaek-san's summit. He then founded Manggyeong Temple, constructing a building to enshrine that statue (which is no longer extant; believers say it's buried under the Main Hall).

It was probably on this same trip that he is said to have discovered "the mother of *Munsu-bosal*" living as *san-shin* (mountain spirit) of the third-highest peak a few kilometers' hike away, which to this day is called *Munsu-bong* and is considered a holy place by Korean Buddhists.¹⁵ Master Jajang had previously found *Munsu-bosal* himself to be resident at the mountains he named Odae-san (further north up the Taebaek range, now a national park) and was associating this highly important Buddhist deity with the spirits of several of the mountains along the *Baekdu-daegan* line (including also Jiri-san and Geumgang-san), designating them all as excellent potential sites for gaining enlightenment.

The Shilla kings regarded Taebaek-san as the "northern guardian peak" of the outer *O-ak* (Five Peaks) or five great mountains protecting the unified kingdom,¹⁶ and built shrines to worship its *san-shin* (mountain spirit) and the gods of heaven on its *Cheonje-dan* (Heavenly-Altar) Peak, a.k.a. *Yeong-bong* (Spirit Peak), holding rituals there for the well-being of the nation and its citizens despite the constant potential for severe weather. There were both Buddhist-style and royally sponsored Neo-Confucian ceremonies honoring its spirit(s) and beseeching protection and good fortune during the remainder of Korea's pre-modern history.

Taebaek-san was left out of the Goryeo and Joseon royal *O-ak* systems, probably because it was not officially Buddhist or Daoist, remaining as a primarily shamanic mountain and thus outside of the "new" official ruling ideologies. To this day it is one of the few great sacred mountains in Korea that are not especially sacred to Buddhism and host to large Buddhist temples. Rather, there is a continuing shamanic emphasis of its character, supplemented by various geographical and national-historical factors. Despite this, the relatively small Buddhist temples that are on it and in all the region surrounding it have continued to proudly use its name.

Koreans have long believed that their mountains are inhabited by *san-shin*, a divine grandfatherly or grandmotherly figure accompanied by a tiger, personification of the character and energies experienced by those

who live on or visit that mountain. He or she serves as a tutelary guardian of the slopes and the forests, animals, religious structures and villages upon them. Shamans gain their magical and mystical powers from *san-shin*, Buddhist monks draw strength for meditation from them, Confucians regard them as community or national ancestral figures, and local residents in general pray to them for protection against misfortunes. Rituals are recorded being held for them since Korea's earliest times.¹⁷

The *san-shin* of Taebaek-san has long enjoyed fame as one of Korea's most important and powerful spirits. According to the *Samguk-yusa* (Legends of the Three Kingdoms),¹⁸ in 765 C.E. the Shilla king Gyeongdok saw the spirit dancing in a courtyard of his palace (in Gyeongju, far to the south), a powerful omen.¹⁹ Local villagers in the Taebaek area still perform special biannual ceremonies for what they call the *Cheonsan-shin* (Heavenly Mountain Spirit).

Taebaek-san also has the ghost of a historical figure as a kind of supplementary *san-shin*, which is fairly rare in Korea: King Danjong (r. 1452–1455), usually counted as the Joseon Dynasty's sixth ruler. This youthful king was deposed by his uncle King Sejo (r. 1455–1468) and exiled up the South Han River to the remote Taebaek region. He stopped at the town of Yongwol and was a few months later executed by poison from Sejo's agents. Later that same year, a local magistrate on his way back from a business trip met (the ghost of) Danjong riding a white horse and asked him where he was heading. Danjong answered that he was going to Mount Taebaek to become its *san-shin*. Since then his portrait riding a horse has been enshrined next to *san-shin* icons in many temples throughout Yongwol County, southern Jeongseon County and the Taebaek City region.

Just a few decades ago a special shrine was built for Danjong-as-*san-shin* along the main trail just fifty meters below Taebaek-san's Cheonjae-dan peak (fifty meters above Manggyong Temple), resulting from the visionary dream of a local village woman. Mrs. Kim dreamed of King Danjong complaining to her that he had long been living at Taebaek-san, but there was no monument for him. She ignored the dream, but it was repeated. She protested that it was a "great burden for a simple woman," but was told "once you start, it will be accomplished." Indeed, financing was mysteriously offered by anonymous donors, and a truck laden with

the heavy materials made it most of the way up the mountain despite the lack of a real road. It took 32 men 15 days to haul the large stone *biseok* monument up there, and the *Danjong-bigak* shrine was constructed, and has become a well-known feature.²⁰

Taebaek-san has come to play a significant role in modern national identity due to its sharing the same name with Korea's primary foundation-myth, that of Hwan-in, Hwan-eung, and King Dan-gun Wanggeon's foundation of what is now called *Gojoseon-guk* (Old Joseon Kingdom), recorded at the beginning of the *Samguk-yusa* and in a few other sources. This coincidental identification with what has become a major symbol of Korea's theoretical political and cultural unity, long history and racial/national identity has resulted in the refurbishment of the large ancient stone shrine for praying to heaven on Cheonjae-dan. This round-walled square altar is made of uncemented local stones, and is said to date from the early Shilla Kingdom (although taken apart and re-built many times). There is no historical record of its first construction, and no evidence that I know of that establishes its true age. It features at its center a two-foot-tall *biseok* stone which reads *han-bae-geom* (single abdomen king), a reference to Dan-gun as the symbolic ancestor of all Korean people (who thus issued from a "single womb," that of *Ung-nyo*). There is another similar shrine about 15 minute's walk to the north of this main one, on Janggun-bong peak. Many *Manshin* (Korean shamans) hold worship ceremonies there. There is also a lower stone altar, more like a platform, five minutes to the south below the main one. Ceremonies seem to be rarely held there.

Since this main stone altar was reconstructed in the 1950s, there has been a strong revival of holding *Cheonje* (Heavenly Ceremony, or Ceremony for Heaven) on the solar-calendar *Gaecheon-jeol* (Opening of Heaven Day) national holiday on October 3rd,²¹ and increasingly on the more traditional lunar-calendar *Gaecheon-jeol* (third day of the Tenth Moon) as well. Participants and visiting spectators find unique aspects of Korean culture there, wrapped up in myths and legendary spiritual powers, amidst magnificent natural scenery. These ceremonies are sponsored and conducted by locally based cultural-nationalist groups with the support of the Taebaek City government, and also the national Taejonggyo.²² Since 1993 this has been done as part of the official "Taebaek

Cheonje Festival,” and the mayor of Taebaek City and other prominent locals sometimes officiate or at least attend. The abbots of major nearby Buddhist temples and other cultural luminaries also attend with evident sincerity, demonstrating the importance they believe this ceremony has for their community and the nation. Holding the festival with its ceremonies has apparently come to mean a lot for the pride of the local residents in their own ancient cultural forms and values. This follows along with ancient precedents of royal sponsorship of and representation at such rituals. The evident current efforts made and money spent demonstrate how the old traditions of Taebaek-san as one of Korea’s most sacred mountains continues to the present day.

The ceremonies are held in the morning, lasting for well over an hour. They display Neo-Confucian, Daoist and shamanic forms and elements in turn. Up to five hundred Koreans might be there, depending on the weather, some in traditional clothing. Very few foreigners have ever been seen attending; the events are not publicized in English for tourists, although the rituals are colorful and the setting is quite dramatic. The mood up there inspires awe, as the participants appear to be profoundly aware of the symbolic importance of what they are sincerely performing. National and ethnic unity is re-affirmed, traditional culture is renewed, and good fortune is beseeched from the highest deities. On the printed program, the leaders proclaim the purpose and spirit of the ritual to be:

Now, we continue our traditional culture,
and this will be the center-point of the reunification
of North and South Korea,
and the beginning stage of recovering our lost land,
and we will become the leading nation of the world.

Few if any people think that this “Taebaek-san” is actually the mountain mentioned in the myth. Most Koreans now believe that Baekdu-san on North Korea’s border with China is the site of Hwan-eung’s descent and Dan-gun’s birth. The *Samguk-yusa*’s author identified what is now known as Myohyang-san²³ as the one, and some scholars hold that the myth refers to a now-unknown peak in Manchuria. However, Taebaek-san’s having the same name, and its great, ancient reputation (along with the current relative inaccessibility of Baekdu-san and Myohyang-san)

has caused many Korean nationalists to revere it as, symbolically, the holy site.²⁴

At the top of Dan-gol valley, just above the new Museum of Korean Coal Mining, is a large shrine for King Dan-gun, named the *Dan-gun Seong-jeon* (Altar-King Sage-Hall) built in the late 1980s by a private association of cultural nationalists.²⁵ A gleaming bronze statue sits out front, and a large painting resides within. Visitors and pilgrims come all year round to pray for national prosperity and reunification. The shrine also holds a large public ceremony on the solar-calendar *Gaecheon-jeol* holiday, and just in 2006 began also holding one on the lunar-calendar *Gaecheon-jeol* as well.²⁶ More than a dozen other shamanic-oriented shrine-temples have been constructed around the slopes in the past two decades, along with the general neo-traditionalist revival of Korean folk culture and shamanism.

SACRED ASSETS OF TAEBAEK-SAN

From my fieldwork visits and study of maps, I have made this summary listing of the “sacred assets” (features that contribute to character and status as a sacred site) of the entire greater Taebaek-san region. They are listed from north to south (an asterisk indicates one of the important “traditional” pre-20th-century temples or shrines):

- * *Geumryongso* (Golden Dragon Source), original source of the South Han River on the northern slopes of Geumtae-bong (Golden Platform Peak) of Hambaek-san (below).
- * *Jeongam-sa* temple on Hambaek-san’s northwest, one of Korea’s most venerable ancient temples, founded by master monk Jajang-yulsa in 643 CE, in accordance with a revelation he received from Munsu-bosal. He is said to have found a ring on a high cliff above the temple site that could expel a huge serpent living there, and on that spot he built the *Jeokmyeol-bogung* pagoda and enshrined some relics of Sakyamuni Buddha he had brought from China. An ancient yew tree standing next to that pagoda is known as the *Seonjangdan-namu* (Immortal Guardian-of-Altar Tree), held by believers to have magically sprouted from a master’s staff that Jajang thrust into the ground. Although this famous temple is clearly on Hambaek-san,

which is larger and taller than Taebaek-san, the main signboard on its front gate reads "Taebaek-san Jeongam-sa," showing that the reputation of Taebaek-san completely overshadows its neighbors.²⁷ Several other temples are named as if they were located on Taebaek-san, as far away as Bulseong-sa in the Deokgu valley near the east coast about 30 kilometers away, clearly demonstrating the continuing strong sacred status of this mountain.

- *Jeokjo-am*, a modern-built Buddhist hermitage, seventh highest temple in South Korea, on western Hambaek-san above Jeongam-sa.
- * *Jeol-gol* (Temple Valley), running 6 km. long on northeastern Hambaek-san from the edge of Taebaek City up to the main ridge. It got that name due to the many Buddhist temples that have been located in it over the centuries, including Bonjeok-sa, Simjeok-sa, Gwaneum-sa, Myojeok-sa and Unjeok-sa. It is said that the great Shilla monks Jajang-yulsa and Wonhyo-daesa practiced asceticism at Unjeok-sa during the seventh century. They were all subsequently destroyed in the Joseon Dynasty or during the Korean War; the three-story stone pagoda (Provincial Cultural Material #126) on the site of Bonjeok Temple is the only ancient relic that remains today. Simjeok-sa has been reconstructed and a new temple named Gwaneum-sa has been built in the valley.
- The peak of *Hambaek-san* (Completely White Mountain), 1,572 meters above sea level, is the sixth highest summit in the Republic of Korea, dividing Taebaek City and Jeongseon County, offering a breathtaking view of the surrounding mountains. According to the *Samguk-yusa* it was once known as *Myogo-san*, meaning a grandiose, spiritual mountain, and thus came to be home to many temples. However, it became overshadowed by the reputation of its southern neighbor Taebaek-san, as said. This peak and its main ridge extending south, then north, is a major sector of the *Baekdu-daegan* line.
- *Bogyeong-am* (Treasure-Shining Hermitage) and several other shamanic temple-shrines on the southern slopes of Hambaek-san (facing Taebaek-san).
- *Taesan-sa* (Grand Mountain Temple), *Samcheong-sa* and *Seon-gwang-sa* are three modern-built Buddhist temples on Taebaek-san's northeast slope, along National Highway 31.

- *Dang-gol* (Shrine Valley) is a sacred site in itself, running from Taebaek-san's northeast corner to its main peaks. It contains its own village *san-shin-gak* (mountain spirit shrine) surrounded by shamanic *jangseung* (guardian-spirit poles).²⁸ It features famous boulder outcroppings such as *Shinseon-am*, *Byeongpung-am* and *Janggun-bawi*, and Taebaek City's new Coal Mining Museum and various tourist facilities are located there. *San-shin-je* (Neo-Confucian-style but really shamanic mountain-spirit rituals) are frequently held in forest clearings there.²⁹ About 800 meters altitude in its lower reaches, it is considered to be an especially holy area in general.
- * *Cheong-won-sa* (Azure-Source Temple) is a small Buddhist nunnery near *Dang-gol*'s entrance, with a square spring-fed pond in its front courtyard featuring a small, charming shrine for the *Yong-wang* (Dragon King of the Waters) and several related granite statues. This pond is claimed to be the origin of the Nakdong-gang, Korea's longest river that pours into the sea two hundred kilometers to the south. However, the *Yong-jeong* spring (below) should be considered the actual source. There is an interesting myth associated with this site, of a child-dragon who swims all the way up here from the sea searching for its mother, which can be interpreted as a shaman searching for the source of the river.³⁰
- *Mandeok-sa*, a large modern-built Buddhist monastery farther up *Dang-gol* valley.
- *Buljeong-Sandang-am*³¹ (*sandang* means mountain [worshipping] shrine, a new legal building-registration designation), *Daejinju-am* (Great Pearl [of Wisdom] Hermitage), *Bae-ssi-Sandang* (Mr. Bae's Shamanic Shrine) and several other shamanic shrines in upper *Dang-gol*'s eastern and western branches.
- The *Dan-gun Seongjeon* shrine for the national founder king, described above.
- * *Manggyeong-sa* temple, described above, is at the origin of the western branch of *Dang-gol*, and the site of the *Yong-jeong* (Dragon Well) spring, the actual source of the Nakdong River.
- The *Danjong-bigak* shrine for King Danjong as Taebaek's *san-shin*, described above.

- * *Cheonje-dan* peak (1561m) and shrine, described above; on the *Baekdu-daegan* line.
- * *Janggun-bong* peak (the summit, 1567m) and shrine, described above; on the *Baekdu-daegan* line.
- *Musoi-bong* peak (1546m), westward turning point of the *Baekdu-daegan* line.
- * *Munsu-bong* peak (1552m) with five gigantic stone towers built on it with several shamanic shrines, described above.
- Four shamanic shrines on the northern slopes of Taebaek-san, along National Highway 31 and directly off it.
- *Baekdan-sa* (White Altar Temple) deep in *Baekdan-gol* (White Altar Gorge) on the northern slopes of Taebaek-san, accessed from National Highway 31. This claims to be an ancient temple, but evidence is lacking and it is not officially listed as such.
- Six major shamanic shrines in the lower Baekdan Valley, including another (recently established) significant *Dan-gun Seongjeon* shrine.
- *Yu-il-sa*, a nun's temple up on Taebaek-san's northwest, on the trail to Janggun-bong peak, one of Korea's least accessible temples, right on the *Baekdu-daegan* line.
- *Wolam-bong* (Moon Crags Peak in *Hanja*), a.k.a. *Dalbawi-bong* (Moon Crags Peak in *Han-geul*), a visually impressive rocky peak on Taebaek-san's east side, with Wolam-sa shamanic temple and Munsu-sa Buddhist temple.³²
- *Geumcheon-gyegok* (Golden Stream Scenic Valley) and *Baekcheon-gyegok* (White Stream Scenic Valley) of eastern Taebaek-san (leading to Munsu-bong peak from that side) are both deep and remote, famed for breathtaking natural beauty, with many strangely shaped boulders, pristine forests and crystal-clear waters. Half a dozen small Buddhist temples are found in or around them, including Hyeonbul-sa, Donggwang-sa, Jangmyeong-sa, Seokjong-sa and Yong-am-sa.
- *Gakhwa-sa* (Pavilion-Flower Temple) is an important ancient Buddhist monastery on Taebaek-san's remote southern slopes (in Bonghwa County), 9 km. south-southeast of the main peaks. It was founded by Great Master Wonhyo-daesa in 676 CE, serving as a distant but significant meditation retreat for the Shilla Kingdom. It really gained importance in the Joseon Dynasty, however, when the

royal court decided to make it one of the four sites of the royal library archives, where copies of the dynastic records were kept at remote-from-the-capital "guardian" mountains in order to keep them safe from foreign invasions, such as the Imjin War of 1592–98. Only the foundation stones of the *Sago-ji* (History-archive site) still remain following complete devastation during the Korean War, but the temple itself has been reconstructed and is thriving. Three subsidiary hermitages are found on the slopes of *Wangdu-bong* (King's Head Peak) east of the temple: Geumbong-am, Dong-am and Yaksu-am. Two more, Baekun-am and Boyang-am, are found further south along local Highway 88.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Taebaek-san meets all the considered criteria for being considered a sacred mountain, and has an extraordinary wealth of sacred assets that could individually and collectively be promoted to attract higher levels of inbound foreign tourism. The combination of these assets along with its scenic beauty and excellent hiking already make it a fairly well-known domestic tourist destination for Koreans. It is less-visited by domestic tourists and rarely ever visited by international residents and tourists, due to the following factors:

- lack of reputation, information and promotion (especially in English);
- remoteness from major population centers, requiring around five hours or more of transport from Seoul by trains, public buses or private cars; no airport is anywhere nearby;
- relatively poor level of tourism infrastructure (accommodation, restaurants, transportation access, sale of local products, etc.); virtually no English or other international languages are employed or available at any of them.

With greater knowledge and promotion of its sacred aspects and assets as outlined in this paper, I believe that it could attract many more international tourists to Korea.

My research suggests that national and local tourism authorities, as well as private tour companies, ought to make greatly increased efforts toward:

1. Further assessment and systematized categorization of Taebaek-san's sacred aspects and assets, as have been listed in a preliminary way here.
2. International promotion of the results, particularly to Western nations, Japan and China, in order to inform potential visitors of the unique things Taebaek-san has to offer, particularly from the "spiritual and pilgrimage tourism" point of view.
3. International promotion of the more general idea that Korea has a number of highly sacred mountains, comparable in tourism value to those of China and Japan, and that Taebaek-san is a leader among them (comparable to China's and Japan's best).
4. Implementing measures to ensure that Taebaek-san's sacred aspects and assets are more accessible to international visitors, in particular:
 - the upgraded use of English and other non-Korean languages to clearly explain them on websites and in brochures, attracting 'pilgrimage' tourists;
 - the upgraded use of English and other non-Korean languages to clearly indicate and describe them on-site, enhancing the visitor's experience with historical and spiritual depth of understanding;
 - improving transportation connections to its northern and southern entrances, by upgrading the national highways and improving train and public bus services;
 - improving its physical tourism infrastructure, with better accommodation, restaurants and sale of local products;
 - implementing a program to introduce and expand the use of English and other international languages at its accommodations, restaurants and shops—perhaps at first simply making available English signs and menus.

I would further propose that since the greater Taebaek-san region hosts a dozen ancient sacred places, a long-term project should be undertaken to create a pilgrimage trail between most of them, linking them in a single, sign-posted hiking trail. Places to rest and stay overnight at temples and villages and places to eat local cuisine should be established with proper foreign-language support at the appropriate intervals along the way. This Taebaek-san pilgrimage trail, although not having ancient roots, could itself become a significant attraction for spiritually minded international tourists—as well as those merely interested in long healthy walks through beautiful natural scenery. More research should be conducted on this idea by tourism geographers and concerned local officials.

NOTES

1. This definition has been adapted from material found on the web page <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sacred>, on Wikipedia, the online encyclopedia, as a reasonably universal standard source.
2. David A. Mason, *Spirit of the Mountains: Korea's San-shin and Traditions of Mountain-Worship* (Seoul: Hollym, 1999), 14–80; Alan Carter Covell, *Folk Art and Magic: Shamanism In Korea* (Seoul: Hollym, 1986), 42–55.
3. Well-known works on sacred mountains include Edwin Bernbaum, *Sacred Mountains of the World* (San Francisco: Sierra Club, 1990); Adrian Cooper, *Sacred Mountains: Ancient Wisdom and Modern Meanings* (London: Floris Books, 1997); and Chris Park, *Sacred Worlds: An Introduction to Geography and Religion* (London: Routledge, 1994). None of these works, however, discuss or even mentions the mountains of Korea and their strong (historical and contemporary) traditions of sacredness and spirit worship. Bernbaum and Cooper both have separate chapters on China and Japan (and sometimes entire other continents are grouped in a single chapter), but no coverage of Korea at all.
4. Refer to the websites and brochures published by the Korea National Tourism Organization and those published by the relevant provinces, cities and counties of the Republic of Korea. Little mention of the “sacred” character or religious-pilgrimage value of their respective mountains can be found.
5. I don't know to what extent these criteria might apply for evaluating the sacredness of mountains outside Korea. Certainly, most of them are partially derived from and have shared with traditional Chinese culture and the ancient shamanic cultures of Siberia, Mongolia and Manchuria. They probably have a strong similarity with such criteria in Japanese traditional and contemporary cultures, as these have been heavily influenced by Korea

throughout history. Their similarities and differences with concepts of sacred mountains in the wider world outside Northeast Asia might best be discovered in Bernbaum's *Sacred Mountains*.

6. Refer to my web page <http://www.san-shin.net/Baekdudaegan-1.html> for a full explanation, which may be the best one available in English.
7. The criteria for these differentiated listings is taken from Bulgyo-shidaesa, *Dictionary of Korean Buddhist Temples* (Seoul: Bulgyo-shidaesa, 1991).
8. *Taxus cuspidata*, native to Japan, Korea, northeast China and the extreme southeast of Russia (only in very high-altitude areas); related to the yew trees common to northern Europe, held sacred by the Celts and other pagan peoples in ways similar to Korea's folk-shamanic beliefs. See <http://www.san-shin.net/Taebaeksan-03.html>
9. Refer to my webpage <http://www.san-shin.net/Pungsu-jiri.html> for a full explanation, and also to Yoon Hong-key, *The Culture of Feng-shui in Korea: An Exploration of East Asian Geomancy* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2006), 33–53.
10. www.webtour.com/jirisan.html; www.e-jirisan.co.kr
11. <http://park.org/Korea/Pavilions/PublicPavilions/KoreaImage/exit/emun8.htm>
12. http://tour.taebaek.go.kr/english/sub3/sub3_1.asp
13. Ibid.; Bulgyo-shidaesa, *Dictionary*.
14. Refer to my webpage <http://www.san-shin.net/Highest-Temples.html> for listing and discussion.
15. Story is from Bulgyo-shidaesa, *Dictionary*. See also my webpage <http://www.san-shin.net/Taebaeksan-04.html>
16. "The five middle sacred peaks were, in the east Mount Toham, in the south Mount Chiri, in the west Mount Kyeryong, in the north Mount T'aebaek, and in the central region Buak, also called Mount Kong." (Daniel Kane, "Samguk Sagi: Rites and Music," [Honolulu: University of Hawaii monograph, 2004], online at: <http://www2.hawaii.edu/~dkane/Monographs.htm> Kane 2004.) Also, Tikhonov names Taebaek-san as the northernmost of Shilla's Five Holy Mountains, and discusses how this ideology was employed to bolster support for Korean royalty in concert with identical theories held in Tang China. (Vladimir Tikhonov, *Epigraphical Sources on the Official Ideology of Unified Silla—on the inscription on King Munmu's tomb stele* [Seoul: Kyunghee University Monograph, 2001, online at: www.geocities.com/volodyatikhonov/munmuwang.htm].)
17. Mason, *Spirit of the Mountains*; Covell, *Folk Art and Magic*.
18. This chronicle-collection, a sort of 'Old Testament' of Korean culture, was written by the Buddhist master monk Iryon (1206–1289) as a compilation of myth and history, intended to support Korea's growing sense of national identity. The standard English translation is by Ha Tae-hung, published by Yonsei University Press in 1972. Parts have been translated by others, including James Grayson in his monumental 2001 work *Myths and Legends from Korea*.

19. "Gyeongdeok-wang," volume 2, section 2.7.
20. Story is from Bulgyo-shidaesa, a folklore collection of Taebaek City, and the web page tour.taebaek.go.kr.
21. See photos on <http://www.san-shin.net/Taebaeksan-02.html> and <http://www.san-shin.net/Taebaeksan-25.html>
22. An indigenous nationalistic religion which regards Dan-gun as a deity.
23. "Mysterious Fragrance Mountain," a highly sacred mountain north of Pyongyang in North Korea.
24. The identity and mythic importance of "Taebaek-san" and other interpretations of this myth are discussed in Mason, 132-38.
25. See photos and further explanation on <http://www.san-shin.net/Taebaeksan-08.html>
26. See photos and further explanation on <http://www.san-shin.net/Taebaeksan-09.html>
27. Photos of this phenomenon and others of that temple are on <http://www.san-shin.net/Taebaeksan-21.html>
28. See photos on <http://www.san-shin.net/Taebaeksan-01.html>
29. See photos on <http://www.san-shin.net/Taebaeksan-07.html>
30. See photos on <http://www.san-shin.net/Taebaeksan-10.html>
31. See photos on <http://www.san-shin.net/Taebaeksan-11.html>
32. See photos on <http://www.san-shin.net/Taebaeksan-20.html>

* * *

Most of the data and ideas about Taebaek-san presented in this paper were obtained through my own repeated travels to and hikes on that mountain, and analysis of the information and photos obtained on these trips. For details and photographs of all the sacred places and aspects of Taebaek-san discussed in this paper, please see the dozen web pages on my own web site devoted to Korea's sacred mountains, starting at <http://www.san-shin.net/Taebaeksan-01.html>.

Other web sites devoted to this topic on the global or local scales which I found useful in developing the perspectives and arguments of this paper are:

- <http://witcombe.sbc.edu/sacredplaces/sacredplacesintro.html>
- <http://www.sacred-destinations.com>
- <http://sacredsites.com/index.html>
- http://tour.taebaek.go.kr/english/sub3/sub3_1.asp

2006 ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY
KOREA BRANCH

President's Annual Report

Founded in 1900 by a few interested foreign residents who were concerned with scholarly pursuits of things Korean, the Royal Asiatic Society–Korea Branch has undergone considerable transformation. Yet the purposes for which the Society was founded have remained constant: encouraging investigation of all aspects of Korean life, culture, customs, geography and literature in order to deepen members' understanding of the country and its people, and to make Korea better known to the rest of the world.

At the end of the year 2006, the Royal Asiatic Society–Korea Branch had a total of 718 members, including 77 life members, 482 members residing in Korea and 159 overseas members. This represents a slight decrease from the 2005.

Programs during the year included lectures, slide and video presentations, plus music and dance performances. Except during the summer months, programs were held on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month at the Residents' Lounge on the second floor of Somerset Palace in Seoul. A total of 19 lecture meetings were held with participants numbering approximately 800, which is at least 40 percent more than the previous year.

Some 964 persons enjoyed the full schedule of 42 tours, which took members and friends to dozens of places throughout Korea as well as to Japan, China and Cambodia. Tours remain one of the most popular activities of the Society.

Publications during the year included Volume 80 (2005) of the *RAS Transactions* and a reprint of Hamel's *Journal*, a description of the Kingdom of Korea between 1653 and 1666.

The 2006 Garden Party was hosted by Ambassador and Mrs. Alexander Vershbow and the officers and councilors of the Society at the official residence of the American Embassy. Despite pouring rain, a large audience of some 200 members enjoyed food and drink and a special book sale. The event featured a traditional Korean music and dance performance by Park Eun-ha.

While maintaining a reasonable financial position by keeping operating expenses moderate, we reached a critical moment for soul searching and preparation of the next phase of RAS developments. An effort for fund raising by the Action Committee started to bear fruit as Korea Exchange Bank committed to contribute a small amount as well as HSBC. The following comments are by our Treasurer, Tom Coyner:

Thanks to creativity and due diligence of our councilors and Mrs. Sue Bae, not to mention the generous assistance from HSBC and the Somerset Palace, we have done a very good job in reducing the costs of some exceptional lecturers while providing an excellent and accessible venue.

As good as it may seem—in fact, in some ways, even better than ever—we are running on an at-cost basis that could well threaten the long-term well-being of the Society.

First of all, we have over-relied on the remarkably enthusiastic work of Mrs. Sue Bae, who has over the past 40 years put in time and devotion that we cannot expect to replicate upon her retirement roughly two years from now. We have been extremely fortunate to have a superwoman to handle the wide variety of office tasks and outside lectures as Mrs. Bae. It would be reckless for us to believe we will be able to find just one person to carry on after Mrs. Bae chooses to retire.

At the same time, and beyond the need to hire and train eventual replacements, many of the less obvious needs of the Society have been wanting. Specifically, we have a truly invaluable collection of irreplaceable books—some of them 150 years old—that are in desperate need of restoration. We also need to make copies of these fragile documents so that they can become more widely available to the public.

In addition, we need to upgrade our office where we have been lo-

cated since the 1960s into a modern and much more accessible location for the general public. Ideally, we would like to include an attractive bookstore with contemporary book payment options, together with the required accounting system as we are now a registered organization with the national government.

Given all of this, we remain committed to keeping fees to a minimum to encourage the fullest public participation possible, without participants' income levels ever being a factor. To reconcile our tradition of free or low-cost lectures and the above-stated needs, we have initiated a formal sponsorship program that aims to address our immediate, mid-term, and long-term needs to insure that the RAS-KB may complete its second century of education and service on behalf of Korea to the international public. Without this additional support, it is not an exaggeration to say our future may not be well guaranteed. I hope you will help us by sponsorship or introduction to those whom may sponsor the Society.

As I reflect on the past twelve months, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the council members and officers who devoted much of their time and efforts to the Society throughout the year. I also thank our general manager, Sue Bae, who has been the mainstay of the office and day-to-day operations for the Society for almost forty years. Finally, the Society expresses profound gratitude to Somerset Palace, Seoul, for providing to the Society, without any charge, their Residents' Lounge for our regular lectures and meetings.

Respectfully submitted,

Jang Song-Hyon

President, Royal Asiatic Society, Korean Branch

2006 RAS-KB Lectures

- January 24 "Lives of Women of the Chosŏn Royal Palace"
Dr. Yi Song-Mi
- February 14 "Life at the American Gold Mines in Korea, 1900–39"
Mr. Robert Neff
- February 28 "A Critical Eye on Traditional Korean Furniture"
Mr. Anthony Banks
- March 14 "Times and Changes of the Korean Restaurant Scene"
Dr. Andrei Lankov
- March 28 "The Initiation and Termination of Korean Immigration to the U.S., 1902–05"
Dr. Wayne K. Patterson
- April 11 "The Tradition of Korean Classical Poetry"
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- April 25 "Modern Manifestations of Musok (Shamanism)"
Dr. Anne Hilty
- May 9 "Homer B. Hulbert, Mentor and Advocate of Korea"
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- May 23 "Xu Jing: A 12th Century Visitor to Korea"
Professor Edward J. Shultz
- June 13 "Sacred Aspects and Assets of Taebaek-san"
Professor David A. Mason
- June 27 "The Formation of the Early Japanese State and Korean-Japanese Relations"
Ambassador Lars Vargö

- August 22 "Confucian Influence on Korean Life"
Prof. Yonung Kwon
- September 12 "Uncertain Journey: North Korean Refugees in China
and Beyond"
Mr. Peter Beck
- September 26 "Korea: The California and Klondike of Asia"
Mr. Robert Neff
- October 10 "Birds of Korea"
Mr. Nial Moores
- October 24 "Circulating Korea: Alternative Nationalism and the
Emerging Cosmopolitan"
Prof. Samuel Collins
- November 14 "Rewriting Korean History"
Prof. In-ho Lee
- November 28 "Possible Selves: Differing Conceptions of Bicultural
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Prof. Ruth H. Chung
- December 12 "The Korean Yangban and the British Gentleman
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The RAS gratefully acknowledges the support of Somerset Palace, Seoul, which beginning in February 2006 granted free use of its residents' lounge as the Society's new lecture venue.



2006 RAS-KB Tours

<i>Date</i>	<i>Destination</i>	<i>Attendance</i>	<i>Leader</i>
Jan. 7	Inwang-san Hike	11	S. J. Bae
Jan. 14	Sujong-sa Tour	9	S. J. Bae
Feb. 4	Sobaek-san Tour	7	S. J. Bae
Feb. 11-12	Inner Sorak-san Tour	8	S. J. Bae
Feb. 18	Kiln Tour	16	S. J. Bae
Feb. 19	Yoju Tour	9	S. J. Bae
Feb. 25	Embroidery Tour	16	S. J. Bae
Mar. 4-5	Land of Exile Tour	14	S. J. Bae
Mar. 12	Chosŏn Seoul Walking Tour	35	P. Bartholomew
Mar. 19	Suwon Tour	24	P. Bartholomew
Mar. 19	KTX Train Tour to Busan	9	S. J. Bae
Mar. 26	Tanyang Tour	14	S. J. Bae
Apr. 8-9	Namhae-do/Chinhae Tour	17	S. J. Bae
Apr. 13	Mountain Spirit Ceremony	5	D. Mason
Apr. 15	Cherry Blossom Tour A	14	S. H. Jang
Apr. 14-17	Honshu Japan Tour	16	S. J. Bae
Apr. 18	Cherry Blossom Tour B	42	S. J. Bae
Apr. 22	Chollipo Arboretum Tour	28	S. J. Bae
Apr. 29-30	Tongdo-sa and Haein-sa Tour	14	D. Adams
May 5	Buddha's Birthday Tour	79	D. Adams / D. Mason
May 13-14	Andong Tour	11	D. Adams
May 28	Tong River Rafting Tour	22	S. J. Bae
June 10	RAS Garden Party	220	
June 11	Kanghwa-do Tour	20	Y. D. Kim
June 18	Doseon Temple Tour	12	D. Mason
July 22	Independence Arch Tour	11	D. Mason
July 22-23	Chin-do and Wan-do Tour	10	S. J. Bae
Aug. 12	Inwang-san Tour	7	S. J. Bae

<i>Date</i>	<i>Destination</i>	<i>Attendance</i>	<i>Leader</i>
Aug. 13	Soyangho Tour	9	S. J. Bae
Sept. 3	Tong River Rafting Tour	37	S. J. Bae
Sept. 9	Naejang-san Tour	11	D. Adams
Sept. 16	KTX Train Tour to Busan	5	S. J. Bae
Sept. 23	Bukchon Walking Tour	48	D. Mason
Sept. 29 – Oct. 2	Honshu, Japan Tour	30	S. J. Bae
Oct. 2–6	China Tour	14	S. J. Bae
Oct. 14–15	Kyungju Tour	24	D. Adams
Oct. 22	Kanghwa-do Tour	13	Y. D. Kim
Oct. 25–26	Sorak-san Tour	25	S. J. Bae
Oct. 28–29	Andong Tour	13	D. Adams
Nov. 4–5	Chiri-san Tour	11	D. Adams
Nov. 11–12	Tongdo-sa and Hain-sa Tour	11	D. Adams
Dec. 16	Kagwon-sa/Magok-sa Tour	12	S. J. Bae
Dec. 27–Jan. 1	Vietnam/Cambodia Tour	12	H.R. Kim

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Wilson, Mr. & Mrs. Ian H.
Wissinger, Dr. Uwe
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