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Laurel Kendall has a long acquaintance with Korea beginning with Peace Corps service in 1970. After earning a Ph.D. from Columbia University in anthropology with a dissertation on Korean shamanism, she has published numerous articles and has lectured on her specialty often. She is now Assistant Curator in the Department of Anthropology of the American Museum of Natural History in New York.

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Death and Taxes: A Korean Approach to Hell

by Laurel Kendall

One of the most terrifying personalities in the Korean folk pantheon is the Saja, or Death Messenger. The Death Messenger appears at the deathbed to snatch the soul away to judgment in the courts of Hell. In Korean shaman rituals for the dead, the Death Messenger appears in the person of a possessed shaman and stalks the guarded house door, prowling for a new victim. The Death Messenger bears a grim visage and an insatiable appetite.

In the hierarchy of the underworld, the Death Messenger serves Yōmna, the King of Hell. The Death Messenger is the netherworldly equivalent of a yamen runner in the magistrates’ courts of the old Korean kingdom. The magistrate, as judge, was an awesome, distant, and vague presence, while the yamen runner intruded into the families of the accused with threats and demands. In the underworld (chiok), the Hell King commands a similar distance, but the Death Messenger lurks about the village byways, pouncing upon the unwary and hauling them away to justice.

In Korean funerals, the pallbearers sing of the Death Messenger’s journey to arrest a soul summoned by the Hell King:

By a chain thick like your forearm,
The body thin like a thread,
Is seized, tied and dragged away.
Surprised near death the soul takes flight.
"Listen to me honorable envoy,
"You must be hungry have some lunch,
"Let me prepare my shoes and then..."
"Take some travel money and come."
Will the messenger listen,
To supplication due to ten thousand loose ends?

(Dix 1977: 213, his translation)¹

But the Messenger hastens the soul away on an arduous journey “All the way to the main gate of the other world...” (ibid: 214).

In shaman rituals for the dead, the Death Messenger assumes a bold, vivid presence; the Hell King’s court is only glimpsed through a mist of
symbol. In their dealings with the middle-man, with the greedy Messenger from the underworld, Korean peasants most graphically dramatize the process of netherworldly justice, and it is this confrontation that I wish to consider here.

My remarks are based on nearly two years’ field work, in 1977 and 1978, in a place I call “Enduring Pine Village,” a rural community on the periphery of Seoul.

The dead are an ambivalent presence in Korean folk religion. One’s own familial dead are entitled to sustenance and succor from the living. Appropriate categories of ancestral dead are invited back into the home for periodic feasts and libations, for “ancestor worship.” Tending the ancestors, filial sons reveal the full measure of their virtue. But the dead are also a baleful presence. Ghostly wives try to carry living husbands away—and many succeed. A man who died in his prime hovers inauspiciously about his living family. An ancestral grandmother reaches out to fondly stroke her infant grandchild, and the baby sickens. Some dead souls—those who died young, violently, or filled with desire—bear envy or malice toward their living kin. Others, like the doting grandmother, act true to living form and are dangerous simply because they are dead. When the dead are too much with the living, no good results. As a Korean proverb tells it, chugunsonun kasonida, “the hand of the dead is like a hand of nettles”: it cannot touch living flesh without inflicting injury. Lurking familial dead must be exorcised, cast away from the house with a slice of a knife and a tearing of cloth to break their hold on living kinsmen.

When a housewife suspects the ominous presence of an unquiet soul meddling in the affairs of the living family, the housewife consults a shaman, or mansin. The mansin performs a divination. She shakes her bell rattle and intones an invocation. Visions appear before her eyes and she asks her client increasingly specific questions: “Was there someone in your family who died far from home? Someone who died dripping blood? Was there a bride who died young? A suicide who swallowed poison?” If the mansin’s visions bare her client’s family history, if her diagnosis confirms her client’s fears, the mansin will advise the woman to sponsor an elaborate ritual to guide the restless soul through Hell and into the Lotus Paradise.²

These rituals, called Chinogi kut in central Korea, combine and reconcile contradictory responses to the dead: obligation, aversion, and compassion.³ The family assists the soul through the perils of the underworld, pays an appropriate bribe to open an appropriate gate, and then sends the soul along the road out of Hell and into the Lotus Paradise. The living feed, console, and succor the dead while at the same time, they distance the dead,
they send the unquiet souls away "to a good place" (*chohūndero*).

Korean popular religion incorporates the Chinese notion that Hell is a bureaucratic institution. The soul stands trial and receives appropriate, often excruciating punishment. The courts of Hell, vividly depicted in the iconography of Chinese popular religion (Eberhard 1967; Yang 1967: 2, 88), probably entered the Korean religious imagination with Buddhism. In Korean Buddhist temples, the Ten Kings of the Ten Courts of Hell have a separate shrine where the walls bear garish paintings of the tortures awaiting condemned souls. The dead are manacled, chained, strapped to wooden canques, flayed with knives, sawn in two, or cast adrift in vats of boiling oil. Isabella Bird Bishop, the intrepid gentlewoman traveler of the last century, called the Hell paintings "horrible beyond conception, and [they] show a diabolical genius..." (Bishop 1897: 136). One of my *mansin* informants provided her own moralistic descriptions of the Hell court:

There are twelve great gates in Hell, like the twelve great gates in the palace. You have to pay a special fee to pass each one. After you have passed through them all, you are judged by King Yōmna. He asks, "Have you given food to those who are starving? Have you given clothes to those who have no clothes?" He knows the answers already; the facts are there; it doesn't do any good to lie.

Those who insult people and give them trouble sit on cushions covered with needles. Thieves and murderers get their desserts. They go right into a vat of boiling oil. They dangle on a thick rope suspended from the ceiling and are dipped in and out.

Those who have lived good lives, she concluded, are sent to the flowery fields in paradise.

By Buddhist doctrine, the soul navigates hell for forty-nine days after death. Some Korean families hold a memorial service at a temple on the forty-ninth day; monks chant prayers to ease the soul's passage. Shaman rituals are more flexible: the dead are led out of hell when their unquiet souls are the diagnosed cause of sickness or ill luck. A *mansin* might lead souls through the underworld and along the road to paradise months or even years after their demise. In the summer of 1977, I witnessed a send-off for a ghostly family from North Korea, reputed to have been executed during the Korean War and hastily buried in a common grave. A full quarter century had passed before a *mansin* drew a connection between their wretched fate and a run of domestic problems in their refugee niece's house-
hold. But when an unmarried young woman perished with her lover in 1977 on the night before the young man was to report for military service, the mother hesitated only a few months before consulting a *mansin*. The *mansin* determined that yes, indeed, the unlucky couple should be sent along the road, tidily sent as husband and wife.

A family may send on a particularly salient soul, or more often, they will use the occasion to send a cluster of ancestors away “to a good place.” Those who died young and without children are potentially the most dangerous, troubled souls, but lacking descendants, they have no one to “open the road” and release them from Hell. At a *Chinogi kut* for these ghosts, the family sends proper ancestors along the road first, in sequence by genealogical seniority. The less fortunate familial ghosts tag along in their wake.

A family sends off dead souls after honoring all of the gods inside the house with a nighttime *kut*. A *kut* is the *mansin*’s most elaborate ritual. Beginning outside the house gate at dusk, costumed shamans summon the gods and ancestors into the home. In the person of the possessed *mansin*, the household gods appear throughout the dwelling to be feasted and entertained. The ancestors appear, mourn with their living kin, and depart. By the following morning, the *kut* shifts from the house interior into the inner courtyard and finally out the gate. The *Chinogi kut* is held here, outside the house, at the end of the “inside” *kut*.4

Women prepare a fresh tray of offering food on the flat space in front of the gate. This tray is heaped with rice and delicacies for the ancestors. The women prepare a smaller tray with seven little mounds of rice for the seven Death Messengers who come to claim the soul. Kinswomen also prepare this “Death Messenger rice” (*Sajabap*) at the time of death and set it out with straw shoes for the journey.

The spectators at a *kut* anticipate the Death Messenger. A shaman disappears around the side of the house. She ties a cap of rough hemp cloth onto her head with rope and winds more rope around her waist. She thrusts a dried fish, wrapped in a length of hemp, into her belt to signify the dead soul. The rope belt, hempen head covering, and wooden staff all approximate traditional mourners’ apparel. Now the *mansin* is ready to reappear as the Death Messenger.

She makes a bold entrance, her face twisted into a grotesque leer. She strides up to the house gate, but the women crowd the doorway to repulse the Death Messenger. Sometimes, the Death Messenger attempts to slither through the opening at an unguarded moment. The women rush into the breach, pushing, shoving, and tugging at the Death Messenger’s costume.
They defend the house, but with an air of playfulness.

The Death Messenger stalks through the crowd, demanding cash with an open palm and a leer. The Death Messenger approaches the ancestors’ table, cackling with anticipation. Sometimes, the mansin smears her face and body with grease from the piled meat offerings. The Death Messenger tries to steal some of the fruit and sweets prepared for the ancestors. Irate women block these advances, insisting that ample food awaits on the Death Messenger’s own tray. This the Death Messenger invariably disputes before squatting down to gobble up vast quantities of food in a theatrically disgusting show of gluttony. The mansin crams food into her mouth, smearing her cheeks in the process. She spews the overflow into a dipper she holds beneath her chin, as if vomiting the excess.

The Death Messenger demands more cash, threatening to strike at the fish she carries to represent the soul. Kin stuff small bills and coins into the fish’s mouth. The Death Messenger threatens to cast the fish away altogether—but refrains and accepts more cash from the women who implore her to treat the dead soul well. The Death Messenger disappears around the side of the house, and the mansin removes her costume.

A mansin, dressed in the ribbow-sleeved costume of a princess or a bride, sings the long ballad of Princess Pari (Pari kongju), the seventh daughter of a sonless king and queen. The royal parents cast out this last unwelcome girl child, but Princess Pari, raised in obscurity and coached in magic, braved the perils of the underworld to find a magic herb and restore her parents to life. A ‘‘filial daughter,’’ Princess Pari inverts the idea of the filial son. Men give sustenance to their parents through ancestor worship after death; women—as shamans and clients—lead the dead through the dangers of Hell and restore them to life in the Lotus Paradise. The mansin say that they sing the ballad of Princess Pari’s journey to teach the dead the path through Hell. After the song, the mansin thrusts her open fan over her head. The fluttering fan indicates the Road Messenger’s (Toryoŋ) descent. The mansin circumambulates the offering table in a paced dance to lead the dead through the underworld. Sometimes the deceased’s spouse and children, bearing incense and candles, follow the mansin in procession.

The mansin asks a fee to get the dead past the Thornwood Gate (Kasi Mun); she attaches the money to a branch bent in an arch over a basket.5 Relatives and neighbors hold out long strips of cloth, stretched taut in their hands, to make the road out of Hell. They put cash contributions on top of the cloth to help ‘‘open the road’’ and drape nylon clothes for the dead over the cloth road.

A mansin, fish ‘‘soul’’ bound to her waist, chants to Buddha. She
rushes at the cloth road. She jabs it with a knife and thrusts her body along
the length of the fabric; the soul progresses. The **mansin** rips her way first
through a length of coarse hemp, the road out of Hell; then she rips through
a length of finer cotton, the road into the Lotus Paradise.

When death is recent, the **mansin** uses several yards of cloth as graphic
illustration of a difficult, reluctant separation. Several times, the **mansin**
stops her journey along the cloth and, speaking for the dead soul, declares
her unwillingness to continue. The soul demands one last look at a favorite
relative, bolts back inside the house, seizes kin or friends by the shoulders,
and weeps. The women urge the unwilling soul, “Go on, go on. You’re
going to a good place. Take your travel money and go.” Kin and friends
must here acknowledge the necessity of separation and urge the tenacious
dead to depart.

Once the soul is sent off, the family holds ancestor worship, or more
appropriately, “mock ancestor worship.” The family’s proper ritual heir
can, but does not necessarily, perform this rite. A junior son or nephew who
happens to be handy, or even a wife or daughter-in-law can, with the **mansin**’s
coaching, offer cups of wine, rap a pair of chopsticks against a bowl,
and bow, the essential gestures of a **chesa** rite. There is no congratulatory
address, no spirit placing for the ancestor, and no extended prostrations by
a group of junior male kin. Women and shamans merely approximate the
form of a **chesa** as a fitting way to honor the dead. The dangerous, unquiet
soul is settled; the respectworthy ancestor emerges. Immediately after the
mock **chesa**, the dead make one final appearance in the person of the
possessed **mansin**. With sobbing expressions of gratitude, they promise to
help their living kin.

The ritual is complete. A **mansin** propitiates wandering ghosts and
noxious influences with scraps of food and coarse grain she casts away into
the field. The family burns the spirit clothes and the torn cloth “roads.”

**Mansin** borrow both the terminology and expressed intent of Buddhist
ritual. In both Buddhist doctrine and in my **mansin** informant’s idealized
explanations, punishment in the court of Hell makes just retribution for
life’s transgressions. Justice may be seasoned with mercy only when sincere
prayer inspires a bodhisattva’s intercession on behalf of the deceased (Clark
1961: 54). But shaman ritual adds a cynical twist to the legal process. Justice
is tempered by cash and favors bestowed upon a corrupt supernatural func-
tionary.

Scholars of Chinese religion have suggested a parallel between the
traditional Chinese bureaucratic hierarchy of magistrates and the super-
natural hierarchy of gods in popular religion.6 The parallel is most explicit
in the iconography of the courts of Hell where magistrates sit in judgment surrounded by lictors standing ready to administer punishment.

In her recent discussion of Chinese ritual and politics, Emily Ahern argues that “certain rituals can be analyzed as if they were forms of political activity” (Ahern 1981: 4). She suggests further that Chinese rituals contain “information that includes exact details about how the political system works as well as useful strategies for dealing with it” (ibid.: 5). Is this what transpires in the Chinogi kut?

The Korean polity borrowed upon an ambitious Chinese model for both good and ill. The Korean king—subordinate only to the Chinese emperor—sat at the apex of a centralized bureaucracy. Below him, provincial magistrates, and below them, county magistrates administered their territories from yamens that were palaces in miniature. They conducted local rituals synchronized to the ritual calendar of the court in Seoul. As in China, magistrates were appointed on the basis of their performance in a civil service examination and then sent to serve outside their home districts as a check against the claims of kinship. In practice, the system suffered many of the same limitations as its Chinese model. The magistrate’s lack of familiarity with the district had the unintended consequence of strengthening the hand of local notables or the sticky palms of the entrenched yamen staff, ajön, who collected fees, registered land for taxation, and worked a squeeze where they could. As in Chinese historiography, the corrupt underling has become a scapegoat for the kingdom’s ultimate demise. In fact, the ajön functioned within a “system of institutionalized corruption” (Palais 1975: 13). The local staff were not on the government payroll and were expected to sustain themselves through their own mercurial abilities (ibid.). In somewhat jaundiced accounts by early foreign observers, “The temptations of the ajun [sic] are very great. The whole revenue of the district passes through his hands, and it would be surprising if some of it did not stick to them” (Hulbert 1906: 55). Or, “The exuberant vocabulary in Corean for the various taxes, mines, mulcts, and squeezes of the understrappers of the magistrates in gross and in detail, chief and supplementary, testify to the rigors and expenses of being governed in Cho-sen” (Griffis 1911: 232).

Tax exemption and underreporting of taxable land by the local elite—in complicity with the yamen clerks—strained the magistrate’s budget and called again for some official squeezing to sustain the magistrate’s household, his personal staff, and his professional ambition. The magistrates were often subject to only weak supervision by the central government although, theoretically, they were monitored by secret censors (amhaeng
ōsa) who roamed the land in disguise (ibid.: 10, 13; Henthorn 1971: 202; Chon 1975). This “check” yielded its own abuses (ibid.: 138). From a wry turn-of-the-century newspaper report: “Lately the interior towns have been crowded with royal inspectors, imperial inspectors, Home Department inspectors, inspectors of morals, and many other kinds of inspectors; thereby a good portion of the public and private funds have been spent in entertaining them and frequently considerable sums of money from Government revenues have been loaned to these worthies by the local officials in order to be on their right side” (The Independent, 4 December 1897).

The corrupt magistrate, the rapacious underling, and the righteous or fallible inspector appear in Korean folk tales and vernacular literature. One finds them today in costume dramas on Korean television. While some filthy lucre necessarily greased the administrative apparatus, thoroughgoing corruption was worthy material for drama or comedy—as in the Death Messenger Play, where the soul falls into the clutches of the Death Messenger, a supernatural counterpart of the extortionate yamen runner, the stock villain in nineteenth and early twentieth century accounts of Korean life. According to one Korean legal scholar:

A criminal prosecution meant an opportunity to extort money from the accused and his family. It was a happy occasion for the law enforcement officials. Wretched underlings who went to arrest the accused demanded remuneration for their journey to and from the accused’s house (Hahm 1967: 87).

Once in prison, the arrested man’s family and friends would bargain for his release while clerks and jailers claimed a variety of fees to expedite the case or provide the prisoner with minimal comforts (Hulbert 1906: 57; Hahm 1967: 67). Rampant arrests were the mark of a corrupt administration. Consider, for example, an early newspaper exposé of one Magistrate Yun, “whose disposition is dark, and whose heart is covetous and stingy, (who) employs those only who are skillful in the art of extortion... thirty runners and two detectives. Innocent people are arrested throughout the district like a string of fishes and locked up in jail. Eighty to ninety persons are always found in prison through no fault of their own” (The Independent, 9 June 1898). The author of an early “modern” Korean novel draws this unflattering parallel between a corrupt magistrate and the Hell King:

The people of P’yŏngan Province say they have two Hell Kings. One is in Hell, and one is the magistrate who sits in the yamen in P’yŏngan. The Hell King in hell snatches away the
old and sick who have become a burden to humanity but the magistrate snatches away all those who are healthy and wealthy (Yi 1906: 9-10, my translation).

In the Chinogi kut, it is the Death Messenger who imposes demands upon the family of a soul snatched away to judgment. The Death Messenger demands treats and cash favors to secure the good treatment of his charge. In dynastic times, a bribe from relatives or friends softened the number and severity of the inevitable blows the prisoner received in the yamen (Moose 1911: 186) much as women stay the Death Messenger's hand with cash.

The typical Korean prison of the last century was a simple shelter with an earthen floor and no fire. The prisoner was dependent upon relatives and friends for food, warmth, and eventual release from torment (Hulbert 1906: 64, 182-4). Similarly, family and friends give the dead soul food, clothing, and travel money. They bribe the Death Messenger and pay the appropriate fee to open the Thornwood Gate. Without this aid, both the accused in prison and the soul in Hell might starve, suffer ceaseless agonies, and become malevolent ghosts.

One significant difference between the Chinogi kut and the rituals Ahern describes for China is the emphasis on bribery and corruption in the Death Messenger play. In the Chinese pantheon, ghosts and low gods are amenable to bribes, but for most significant transactions, supplicants have direct access to the impartial, incorruptible high gods. Bribery is unnecessary and irrelevant. One gives the high gods gifts out of respect, not in anticipation of special favors. Ahern finds here a single salient contrast between the actual lived Chinese polity and the imagined Chinese supernatural polity. "High officials are shielded by corrupt underlings or are available only through subordinate and less upright officials... high gods are not so shielded and access to them is relatively open," she suggests (Ahern 1980: 99-103). Did the Koreans not follow the Chinese in envisioning a better supernatural state?

Indeed, many of the gods who possess Korean shamans are "high gods," mountain gods, supernatural generals, and the tutelary gods of home and community. They do not importune the spectators for cash; this would be beneath their dignity. They merely extend a spread fan and claim their due. These are regal beings and the mansin describe their bearing as "like kings," which is also to say like magistrates who were kings in miniature. In a kut, the high gods are followed by their avaricious underlings, the Taegam, or Officials, whose antics provide much of the real drama and comedy of a kut. The Taegam are never satisfied. The householders must
bargain with, argue with, cajole, and sometimes try to outwit the wily Taegam, much to the spectators' amusement. One of my mansin informants suggested a parallel between this pantheon and "what you see on television": the king sits up on the throne stroking his beard and the Taegam are all down below scheming.

Insofar as shaman rituals provoke both mirth and consternation in contemporary participants, one must ask if they reflect enduring perceptions of political behavior. It is my impression that they do. Anthropologists who have worked in Korean villages note a profound wariness in dealing with the state's low-level functionaries. Particularly discomfiting for all concerned is an unheralded visit by a plainclothes policeman come to check on the resident anthropologist. When confrontations are unavoidable, one notes also a canny generosity.

In the Chinogi kut, it is the avaricious low-level functionary who claims center stage while the judge is only a shadowy presence. Although hellish torture is a vivid component of Korean religious consciousness, the soul's punishment is remarkably underplayed in the Chinogi kut. The dead express anguish, not because they have been meted severe punishments in Hell, but because they must leave the world of the living. They weep because they have left loved ones behind, because they carry smouldering grudges, or because they are filled with desire. The Chinogi kut is not, primarily, a morality play of retribution and reward. Expressed belief in netherworldly justice is belied by flagrant extortion and bribery in the Death Messenger play. If anything, the Chinogi kut is psychodrama with some comic relief. The living must acknowledge death and free themselves from the unwholesome emotional claims of dead souls. The Chinogi kut makes this callous task an act of compassion: the dead go away, but to a good place. Kin cannot influence the administration of impartial justice—and the ritual does not question the possibility of a righteous King Yōrna. Kin can bargain with a corrupt low-level functionary to secure the soul's good treatment and ultimate release. The Chinogi kut does say something about strategies for dealing with the political system, as Ahern suggests. What the mansin and their clients choose to say reflects the particular problem they address: ambivalence toward the dead. The "political information" contained in this ritual reaffirms the positive powers of kinship and friendship against overbearing officialdom and outrageous fortune.
NOTES

Some of the material contained in this article initially appeared in my 1985 book Shamans, Housewives, and Other Restless Spirits: Women in Korean Ritual Life published by the University of Hawaii Press which has graciously consented to its republication here.

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1. Dix translated the "Song of Repentance" (Hoesimgok) from a book of Buddhist chants but found the text to be almost identical to the pallbearers' dirges he observed in a South Ch'ungch'ŏng village, with some extemporizing in each pallbearers' performance (Dix 1977: 210-211). The mansin I worked with in the village described the Song of Repentance just before the Death Messenger's appearance, memorizing a version contained in printed prompt books of shaman songs.

2. The Korean term, kŭngnak, means "(place of) eternal bliss." The mansin describe a boundless garden of flowering lotus, thus my liberal gloss.

3. For an interesting comparison of the Chinogi kut and the Catholic requiem mass, see Kiester (1980).

4. Kut are held for many reasons and are loosely distinguished by their instrumental functions: kut for prosperity, kut to send off the dead, healing kut. The Chinogi kut is actually a tail appended to a basic household kut, and for which the sponsoring family pays an extra fee (Kendall 1985).

A night long household kut followed by a leisurely Chinogi kut that lasts the better part of the next day is the "classic" pattern in central Korea. Urban kut cease in the early evening to avert charges of noise pollution. Some mansin in some circumstances will rush a kut and have the souls sent off by dawn.

5. Although the bribe at the gate was brief and simple in the ceremonies I observed, other mansin seize this opportunity for extensive dramatization and high comedy. One of Kim Taegon's informants described an elaborate Chinogi kut held in Seoul in the 1920's. On this occasion, twelve gates were set up in the shrine where the ceremony was held. A shaman stood at each gate demanding certification before allowing the soul to pass the threshold. Kin provided fees, and the shaman would produce a key, but declare it too rusty to work; it could be polished for an additional fee. Fees were collected three or four times at each gate before the soul could be lead across all twelve thresholds (Kim 1966: 75-6).

Drowning and deaths away from home yield unsettled, dangerous souls. Among Cheju fishermen, the shaman's ritual for the dead begins with a progress through the Hell Gates to the house, signifying the calling back of one who died away from home. The soul, reconciled to death, is sent back through the gates in the second half of the rite (Beuchelt 1975). The dramatic structure of the Cheju ritual addresses a recurrent tragic motif in seaside villages.


7. As a preface to his retelling of the tale of "Sin the Squeezer," "X" offers this observation:

The Koreans being capital story-tellers and much given to folklore it is natural that in
Korea where, during some periods—it would be untrue and misleading to say at all times—the people have been grievously oppressed and robbed by governors, magistrates and other officials put over them, they should have stories about how these thieving miscreants have been exposed and brought to punishment by those they have so cruelly and remorsely oppressed and plundered. . . . On the other hand the Koreans with characteristic and most commendable fairness have tales of how rascally officials have also by smart tricks and cunning expendients contrived to hoodwink or outwit the higher officials and to cover up their evil deeds and thus escape the punishment they so richly deserved ("X" 1898: 419).

REFERENCES


**GLOSSARY**

ajŏn  衛前
amhaeng Òsa  暗行御史
chesa  祭祀
Chinogi kut  지노기 굵
    or chinogwi kut  지노鬼 굵
chiok  地獄
chohūndero  축운데로
chugŭnsonun kasisonida  죽은 손은 가시손이다
Hoesimgok  回心曲
Kasi Mun  가시門
kŭngnak  極樂
kut  犬
mansin  萬神
Pari kongju  巴里公主
Saja  使者
Sajabap 使者使
Taegam 大監
Toryong 道령
Yømna 閻羅
Entry Sequence to Buddhist Temples

by Kim Kyun

INTRODUCTION

There is a common denominator to the way in which most Korean Buddhist temples are introduced to people entering them. Approaching the sanctuary of a temple, one must shed or abandon worldliness and its desires outside and must gradually transform oneself before entering the inner sanctum of the temple. This self-transformation is encouraged by the sequential use of gates, sculptures, spaces, inclines, and other features of temple design.

I intend to share with the reader my observations on the way these elements of design—conscious or unconscious—help Korean Buddhist temples achieve their spiritual purpose. I have chosen four examples: T'ongdo-sa, Pōmō-sa, Haein-sa, and Pulguk-sa, all located in South Kyōng-sang Province. Their respective entry sequences will serve as examples of the ways in which visitors are led into and out of temples. The emphasis will be on the intentional or unintentional frame of reference through which one's view is carefully manipulated. This article is not a dissertation on Korean Buddhist temples; it is an attempt to create in the reader an awareness of spiritual transformation and of conscious intrigue as one passes through the entry sequence to a temple by showing it through the eyes of an architect.

BRIEF HISTORY OF BUDDHISM IN KOREA

Buddhism came to Korea overland from China to the north and arrived first in 372 A.D. in Koguryō, the one of the three kingdoms located in the northernmost part of Korea. Buddhist teachings were carried further south to the Paekche kingdom, located in southwest Korea, by Marananda. Only Silla, the kingdom located in the southeast, hesitated to accept Buddhism. It is believed that the efforts of the Priest Ado brought the religion to Silla by 424 A.D. However, even Ado's missionary zeal was not successful; the people of Silla remained unwilling to accept the new religion.
In 527 A.D. Buddhism finally was accepted and proclaimed the national religion of the Silla kingdom. Legend has it that its acceptance was won through the martyrdom of the official Yi Ch’a-don, who is said to have declared that his blood would run white to illustrate to King Pŏphŭng (the 23rd Silla King) the truth of Buddha.

Buddhism flourished during the next three centuries, and the golden age of Buddhist art, sculpture, and architecture greatly influenced the cultural development of unified Silla in the middle of the eighth century. Pulguk-sa, Haein-sa, and Pŏmŏ-sa are but three among dozens of temples remaining from that era.

Unified Silla fell and was taken over by the Koryŏ kingdom in 936 A.D. For the next several centuries, Buddhism became a powerful influence on the political factions in the royal court. Not only did Buddhism divide into several different sects, but many external factors contributed to the deterioration of its religious significance. The practice of black magic was introduced by Lamaism coming out of China, and Buddhism fell into superstition as it became confused with other traditional Korean beliefs such as Shamanism.

In 1392, General Yi Sŏng-gye founded the Yi Dynasty, taking over the throne of the corrupt monarchy. Buddhism, however, lost its popularity as Confucianism became the national religion. As a result, Buddhism experienced a great deal of political repression and a rather sudden deterioration. Many temples situated close to civilization were destroyed; only those located deep in the mountains survived. Of course, the influence during the Koryŏ period of the Zen Buddhist sect, which taught the doctrine of purification through removal from civilization, also had the effect of driving the temples deep into the mountains.

Thus, Buddhist temples experienced destruction by Mongols in the middle of the Koryŏ dynasty, political repression and deterioration during the first part of the Yi dynasty, and additional destruction by Japanese armies under Hideyoshi. It is a wonder that temples built even before the Koryŏ dynasty have survived to this day.

**SEQUENCE**

Buddhist temples generally are divided into three spaces: approach space, religious activity space, and living space for the monks. These three parts have a very strong organic correlation. In order fully to appreciate a temple, one should consider all three. However, because of the author’s limited knowledge and his specialized point of view, this article will deal
only with the approach space.

Basic Buddhist doctrine states the belief that one can enter Nirvana (heaven) through meditation and that to do so one must shed all earthly desires. Temptations to accumulate wealth, to beautify oneself, to satisfy physical appetites for food and sex, to indulge in vanity must be abandoned. This doctrine explains why Buddhist temples usually are located deep in the mountains, far away from a life involved with worldly desires. The pathway to a temple allows a visitor time and space in which to prepare himself for the sanctuary of the temple; often it entails a long climb through rough terrain, sometimes along a narrow path that forces the traveler to use rough steps or to ford running streams. The whole process permits one gradually to abandon all that is related to the business of everyday life and to begin to meditate on the purpose of the Buddhist temple. In other words, it allows each person to cleanse his mind and let it be filled with nothingness.

Thus one reaches the first arrival point of a temple, Ilju-mun, or single pillar gate (Fig. Po2, H2, T2). One usually passes through three gates before reaching the final destination. These are the Ilju-mun, the Sach'ŏnwang-mun (Four Heavenly Kings Gate—Fig. Po3, H3, T3), and finally the Puri-mun (no other gate or the last gate—Fig. P04, H4, T4). The Puri-mun honors Munsu Posal and Pohyŏn Posal, two Bodhisattva. Munsu rides a tiger; Pohyŏn rides an elephant. Although variations do exist in the names and sequences of the gates, the four temples used in this case study employ the sequence described above.

In order to achieve certain desired effects, several planning techniques have been used. The use of naturally growing or deliberately planted trees (Fig. H3, T3) along the walkways imparts a feeling of having entered more deeply into a world far away from earthly concerns. The length of the walkway must be carefully crafted. If it were too long, it would risk creating boredom and might even cause the visitor to lose sight of his purpose in coming to the temple. But if the walkway between the gates were too short and the gates placed too close together, the visitor might not have enough psychological time to transform his thoughts. Therefore the gates are usually separated by a distance of between thirty to sixty meters.

Most temples are sited on inclining terrain so that the approach to the main space rises gradually. This gradual rise not only helps to induce anticipation and joy but, more interestingly, because it permits the introduction of stone steps (Fig. Po4) in strategic locations along the walkway, it helps to separate one space from another and to create a definite hierarchy. In most cases this is climaxed by the presence of a steep set of steps in front of the
main building (Fig. Po5, H9, Pu3).

To create a dramatic effect upon the visitor arriving after having traversed these long processional spaces, the final main space usually is not exposed all at once. A structure placed in front of the main space bars a clear view so that one must pass through the structure, walk beneath it through a confined dark space (Fig. H6), or go around it. The first and second experiences offer a dramatic contrast between the dark passage through or under the building and the bright and open main space. The third creates visual effects by forcing one to approach the main space from an oblique angle, rather than head on. The side entry into a main space allows one to perceive and accept it more gradually than does a direct entrance out of the dim structure. Perhaps this side entry presents the best vantage point in terms of appreciating the view of the main building as a whole and as a three-dimensional view. In all cases the structure in front of the main space plays an identical role: it is the final node connecting the processional space and the main space.

Gates

The three gates and their respective processional spaces are intended to protect the main court—the final destination—from all evils. They exist as a man-made extension of space, whereas the long climb to the first gate can be said to have been created by nature.

The first gate, the Ilju-mun (Fig. Po2, H2, T2), has no door but is a single pillar gate. It symbolizes arrival and beginning, and beyond it lie the processional spaces that lead to the temple. "Single pillar" does not mean there is only one pillar. Such gates feature at least two pillars, and sometimes four pillars, but these pillars always are aligned in such a way that an observer viewing them from the side would see what appeared to be a single pillar, thus, "single pillar gate." From this point, one can see the second gate and the space between the first two gates framed by the opening of Ilju-mun (Fig. Po2, T2). As one nears the gate and then passes through it, the focal point grows and the picture gets larger. This phenomenon strikes the viewer with particular effect between the second and the third gates because the second gate actually is a building with a doorway (Fig. T4).

The second gate, Sach’enwang-mun or the Four Heavenly Kings Gate (Fig. Po3, H3, T3), has been charged with the duty of protecting the temple from all the evils of the four corners of the world. This building has a pair of gates and a wall which actually does protect the inner space. Inside this building the four mythical rulers of the heavenly kingdom (Fig. T5, T6) are
depicted. Sometimes the kings are painted; sometimes they are sculpted figures. In either case they are positioned inside the building at the four directional corners of the universe and are displayed crushing the enemies of Buddhism beneath their feet. One of the rulers to the viewer's left as he enters the gate holds a dragon; the other holds a pagoda (Fig. T5). Opposite them, one image carries a musical instrument, the other a sword (Fig. T6).

This gate has been the subject of much mythical interpretation, but to a visitor entering the temple it marks the symbolic cleansing of one's soul in preparation for the holy space. The framed view of the third and final gate, as well as of the space between the second and third gates, is carefully arranged so that the perspective view of the last gate draws the eye and the concentration into the space (Fig. T4). More the exception than the rule, T'ongdo-sa has a very slight rise between these two gates. In most cases, as exemplified by Haein-sa and Pômô-sa, the space rises constantly with the steps in front of the gate producing a climax. Because of the incline, only the bottom of the gate or the lower steps usually may be seen through the second gate. This incomplete prospect entices the visitor onward.

The processional spaces separating the gates usually are lined with trees. Sometimes a stream flows beside them, and occasionally man-made walls stand in proximity (Fig. Po4, H3, T3). The walk itself always is very dynamic: it rises or curves. More often than not, the walk is asymmetrical and the approach slightly skewed. All these features have been calculated to create interest, pleasure, joy and, most of all, expectation.

The third gate is called Puri-mun, meaning no other gate or the last gate (Fig. Po4, T7). As its name indicates, it is the final portal before entry to the sanctuary. As was mentioned previously, this gate is designed to honor two Boddhisattva, Munsu Posal and Pohyôn Posal. Not all temples have this third gate; some present variations of it. For example, at Haein-sa, one arrives at the destination by walking under a building (Fig. H5, H6, H7), at Pômô-sa one goes around a building to enter the final space, and at T'ongdo-sa one walks directly into the destination by going through the third gate.

Entry into the final major exterior space imparts to the visitor a feeling of having reached the final destination. Level and spacious, it is surrounded by many buildings. Now only one more climb remains before arrival at the main temple (Fig. H9).

The steps to the platform where the main temple structure is situated usually are very steep with high risers. The visual phenomenon that results as one climbs these very high steps is, again, one of intrigue and anticipa-
tion. When viewed from across the open space, the temple structure is completely visible from the roof to the base, although the details are not comprehensible because of the distance (Fig. H9). From the foot of the steps, only the roof of the structure is visible—the walls and the base are cut off from view by the top of the steep steps (Fig. H10). As the viewer ascends the steps, the lower half of the structure begins to appear (Fig. H11) and finally, at the top of the steps the whole building is visible again, this time in all its comprehensible details (Fig. H12).

CONCLUSION

Thus we arrive at the final destination of a temple: the space where Buddha resides. Reviewing the whole process of entering this temple, from the foot of the mountain to the last platform where the main temple stands, one can see that the entire sequence deals with manipulating exterior spaces. Such manipulation of these exterior spaces—the use of rises and inclines, bends and curves, passages under and around—is intended to create interest, drama, joy, and expectation. At one point the visitor is given a slimpse of things to come through a framed view that changes its size as one moves through the space; at another the entire scene is shown at first and then partly obscured, its visibility manipulated to create intrigue and interest.

If going into the temple is to rise, going away from it is to descend. The sequence described above is repeated in reverse order with each distinct downward view. Departure is a process wherein one comes down from a holy place.

Among the many planning techniques used in temple entry sequences, the use of three gates appears to be a very basic principle. Within this basic framework, however, several different patterns of design appear, depending on the site conditions and on the designer’s own interests.

One reason that the approach or processional space is so important in Korean temple design may be the Buddhist belief that there is a line through which one may enter Nirvana. However, the approach spaces in both Chinese and Japanese temples are comparatively much shorter. This difference may have resulted from the fact that historically Korean temples were forced to be located deep in the mountains so that the approach distance naturally lengthened.

In any case, the approach spaces in Korean temples relate their shape to their function successfully and harmonize superbly with nature. Entry sequences such as these are considered by all architectural planners to be examples of superior sequential use of space.
Haein-sa (Sea or Reflection of Smooth Sea)

(Fig. H1)

In 802 the 40th King of Silla, Aejang, ordered this temple to be built in appreciation for a deed performed by Buddhism. Two monks, Sŏnŭng and Ich'ŏn, miraculously cured his queen’s illness. This temple houses the Tripitaka, a set of 81,258 wooden blocks engraved with Buddhist scripture that was completed in 1251 and predates the Gutenberg printing press.

The path to Haein-sa from the village is very scenic, winding through a woods. The path crosses a stream, but the stream is not directional as is the brook at T’ongdo-sa. There is a bit of a climb before one reaches the Ilju-mun (Fig. H2), which leaves a sense of quietness. The path makes a sharp right turn as it approaches Ilju-mun, as if to announce the gate’s presence. Supported by the steps in front of the gate, it gives off an air of importance and, indeed, announces the beginning of the entry sequence. The tree-lined path to Sach’ŏnwang-mun leads up a very gentle incline with a very slight curve (Fig. H3). One can see the Sach’ŏnwang-mun some distance away. It sits up on steps at the end of the walk and looks very inviting. The second space, that after Sach’ŏnwang-mun, is not very well defined (Fig. H5), and the path to the final destination is not very clear. The way to the major space here is unique: the walkway opens onto the final major space from an approach beneath a building. The opening is not symmetrically placed on the buildings, making it seem insignificant (Fig. H5); the opening is relatively small compared to façade, and very steep steps (Fig. H6) under the building make the way quite awkward. However, the resulting visual phenomenon is very striking as the bright main space becomes visible with its major building, Taejŏkwan-jŏn, perched atop the steep steps (Fig. H7, H8). An interesting effect may be achieved by viewing the main hall not directly from the front but from an angle slightly to one side (Fig. H8), a perspective that creates a sense of wonderment or puzzlement. In Western architecture, one would expect to approach so important a final destination as this main hall directly and symmetrically.

One excellent final example of the viewing sequence is that of the main building, situated high up on very steep steps. Through the last gate and just after having gone through it, one may see the main building as a whole. As one nears the steps, the bottom part of the structure is obscured from view by the top of the steep steps, but the climb up the steps alters the view gradually until the building is once again revealed in its entirety (Fig. H9, H10, H11, H12).
T'ONGDO-SA (TO SAVE THE WORLD BY MASTERING THE TRUTH)

(Fig. T1)

This temple, the largest in Korea, was founded by Priest Chajang in 647 during the reign of Queen Sŏndŏk. It comprises thirty-five buildings, most of which look very much like an old, unaltered temple.

The temple buildings all stand very close together and appear unorganized (Fig. T1); the approach, however, is very classic. From the village the approach road winds its way to the temple between a large brook and beautiful pine forested hills. At the end of this road, the first gate, Ilju-mun (Fig. T2), greets visitors. The space between Ilju-mun and Sach'ŏnwang-mun is a very simple, short exterior space with a wall on the right and the continuation of the brook to the left (Fig. T3).

The framed view through Sach'ŏnwang-mun serves as a very fine example of viewing the next destination, in this case the second space (Fig. T4). The dark interior of the Sach'ŏnwang-mun contrasts with the outside, especially accentuating the images of the Puri-mun and its foreground. Here one gets a vivid feeling of beginning, of the temple juxtaposed with many buildings, one of which is a drum tower. Unlike other temples, T'ongdo-sa offers an approach to the last gate, Puri-mun, that is relatively flat and is dominated by the view of the final destination, the Taeung-jŏn. Because the approach is flat, one can see this main hall from relatively far away from the last gate; the picture changes as one walks closer to the gate. As is true in many other temples, the final destination is rather unexciting, leading one to conclude that perhaps the anticipation and expectation aroused by the approach sequence are themselves more important than the actual ending.

PULGUK-SA (NATION CARED FOR BY THE BUDDHA)

(Fig. Pu1)

Both the best known and the most ancient group of temples in Korea, Pulguk-sa dates back to the Silla period. It was first constructed in 535 during the reign of Pŏphŭng, the 23rd Silla king, and is one of the largest surviving monasteries in Korea.

The temple was redesigned and rebuilt by Kim Tae-sŏng some two hundred years later during the reign of Kyŏngdŏk, the 35th Silla king.

Pulguk-sa, at the present time, does not have the entry sequence described in this article. The main stone steps leading to the main space are very dramatic (Fig. Pu3). From a distance, one can glimpse the main space
and the hall through the opening of the gate that crowns the steps. From the bottom of the steps, only the rooftop and the opening of the gate remain visible, but as one climbs up the steps the rather dramatic appearance of the main temple through the opening of the gate that tops the steps is fascinating. Even from the top of the steps, because of the gate through which the main building is framed, not all of the main hall is visible (Fig. Pu5). As one walks close to and then through the gate, the main hall and the surrounding environment with its covered walkways and pagodas begin to appear (Fig. Pu6), an invitation to enter the main space.

**Pŏmŏ-sa (Where Fish from Nirvana Play)**

(Fig. Po1)

According to legend, on the top of a noted mountain in the southern most part of Korea was a large rock with a well of water in its center. The color of the water was said to be gold and in that water fish from Nirvana played. When a temple was built on that site, the mountain was named Kŭmjong-san “Golden Well Mountain” and the temple Pŏmŏ-sa “Where Fish from Nirvana Play.”

This temple was built in 678 A.D. during the reign of King Munmu, 30th Silla king, and was rebuilt under the 42nd king, Hŭngdŏk, in 835. A Japanese invasion that took place late in the 16th century burned and destroyed many parts of the temple, which were rebuilt in several stages. The temple was rebuilt with the express purpose of preventing Japanese invasion with the help of Buddha; it is known as a temple to ward off other evils.

Located about three kilometers from the foot of the mountain is the Ilju-mun (Fig. Po2). It is among the most beautiful and unusual of such gates in that it has four stone pillars lined up in a row. Beyond this point, the processional spaces stretch—very strong but very simple. The space between Sach’ŏnwang-mun (Fig. Po3) and Puri-mun is lined on each side with a low wall, and the vista terminates at the Puri-mun. Several stone steps (Fig. Po4) interrupt the spaces between the gates to deter boredom. The walkway is paved with stone and has been located slightly off to one side of center, forcing the visitor to view the Puri-mun from a slight side angle which accentuates its three-dimensional quality.

Past the Pulri-mun, the open processional view is abruptly stopped by the six-meter high stairs (Fig. Po5) and the structure Poje-ru above them. Originally, about 1.5 meters of open space was left between the ground and the floor of the building, allowing a view of the main space to persons walk-
ing around it. This playful or teasing glimpse of the main space, which could be seen but not entered, would have created interest. Unfortunately, the open space beneath the Poje-ru has been filled, depriving today’s visitor of a piquant view.

Pŏmŏ-sa is one good example of the planning principle whereby spaces are manipulated. It has a simple axial approach, but the rising and closing and opening of spaces prevents boredom while simultaneously heightening the visitor’s curiosity and anticipation for the final destination.

The main temple is located on a platform seven meters above the main space. The sequential effect obtained by that climb (Fig. Po5, Po6, Po7) is similar to that one experiences at Haein-sa, but the top level presents a surrounding environment that is beautifully harmonized between nature and temple artifice. Various temple buildings are sited between protruding rocks or above the plateau, creating a sense of beauty and serenity unmatched.

NOTES

I was assisted by Whang, Hee-yun, Assistant Professor, Department of Architecture, Chungbuk National University, and by Patricia Parker, Second Secretary and Vice-Consul, American Embassy, Seoul.

REFERENCES

Haein-sa
Haein-sa
Pŏmŏ-sa
Slaves and Owners; or Servants and Masters?
A Preliminary Examination of Slavery in Traditional Korea

by Mark Peterson

In Korean there are two words for slavery. One, nobi chedo, is used to describe traditional Korean slavery; the other, noye chedo, is used to describe slavery in all other countries. There is nothing romantic about noye chedo, but somehow the common perception of nobi chedo is somewhat romantic and is considered by many as an institution in which the slave was not treated badly. There are even those who prefer to translate nobi as servant, and noye as slave. English accommodates that distinction in terminology, but when one speaks of the institution chedo, both nobi chedo and noye chedo must be translated as "slavery."

The popular concept of slavery in Korea in remarkably romantic. There is hardly a presentation of traditional times, be it in novels, or a drama on TV or in the movie theater, that does not portray a slave as one of the figures in the story. Look at what is probably the best-known story in Korea, the tale of Ch’unhyang. The hero, Yi To-ryŏng, is in the constant companionship of Pang-ja, his servant (or slave). He is portrayed as a "sidekick" and he provides some comic relief in the story. The suggestion that Yi To-ryŏng could sell Pang-ja strikes Koreans as shocking and unthinkable. Yet in traditional times, slaves were bought, sold, traded and inherited.

In recent years I have been studying the inheritance system of the Yi dynasty, that is to say I have been examining matters of inheritance from the perspective of the originators of the documents—the aristocracy. To them, property meant primarily land and slaves. Such documents show slaves were generally inherited from generation to generation, that they were given as special gifts and special allocations of property, and that they were bought, sold and traded. In this study I will re-examine these inheritance documents from the perspective of the slaves.

Studies published on slavery heretofore have been largely based on hojŏk, census registers. Among the more important are those by Edward Wagner (1974), Susan Shin (1974), John Somerville (1976/77), Kim Yong-sŏp (1963) and the classic Japanese period work by Shikata Hiroshi (1938).
These articles, based on studies of *hojŏk*, show that a large proportion of the population was of slave status and that there were changes over time in the institution of slavery and status of slaves, but they do not show other important aspects of slavery such as the purchase, inheritance or barter of slaves. Each of these articles acknowledges the fact that the work on these documents has just begun and that much of what they conclude must be tentative. By adding the perspectives on slavery provided by the inheritance documents, documents that are just recently coming to light, we are able to see much more of the social situation of slaves and their owners, the aristocrats. Still we are in the pioneer stage and much of what we conclude is still tentative. However, with the added perspective of a completely different type of document, the inheritance document, we are getting much closer to understanding Korean slavery.

Another reason for examining Korean slavery in more detail at this time is the uniqueness of Korean slavery as described in Orlando Patterson’s important work, *Slavery and Social Death*. Therein, in two separate locations, he argues that Korea had the most highly developed system of slavery in Asia (1982: 126-143). In his book, he gives a cross cultural explanation of the institution of slavery wherever it was found throughout the world and throughout history. Korea stands out as an unusual case in several respects. Patterson repeatedly refers to the sophistication and breadth of the institution in Korea.

If Korean slavery is unique, in what ways is it? And what social conditions made it so? With the availability of inheritance documents and other personal papers in large numbers, we are able to move further along the way to answering these questions. Studies on Koryŏ period slavery have been conducted largely on the basis of the official court records. Yi dynasty slavery can now be examined from a variety of perspectives. In addition to the official court record, the *Sillok*, which gives considerable data about slaves but only in either a very general sense or in specific cases where a slave rebellion or an incident involving a slave reached the attention of the court, studies on the Yi dynasty have used the *hojŏk*, the census registers.

*Hojŏk* clearly show that society was divided into three classes: aristocrats (*yangban*), commoners (*sangmin*) and slaves (*ch'ŏnmin*). Shin reports, “The distinction between the *sangmin* and the *ch'ŏnmin* is occasionally ambiguous; the barrier between the *yangban* and *sangmin*, on the other hand, is unmistakable” (1974: 15). Most writers comment on the social mobility observed in the *hojŏk*, but two saw wholesale upward mobility (Shikata & Kim), and two saw an equally drastic downward mobility (Shin & Wagner).
Aside from questions of mobility, *hojŏk* generally give the impression that slaves had social status somewhat similar to free men (commoners) because of two factors often found in *hojŏk*: (1) a high frequency of intermarriage between slaves and commoners and (2) a high percentage of slaves who lived away from the household of the owner. *Hojŏk*, on the other hand, also indicate one area of discontent, the number of escaped slaves, by faithfully listing them years and years after their escape.

Other dynamics can be inferred from the *hojŏk*, but not confirmed. Wagner, in looking at the 1663 "Seoul pukpu *hojŏk*," draws the conclusion that "buying and selling or other transfer of ownership had taken place" (1974: 53). At another point he states:

A further analysis of the slave component in such terms as continuity of ownership, sale or transfer of slaves, patterns of bequeathing ownership, inheritance of slave status across generations, slave marriage and its relationship to an owner's effort to maximize his slave assets—these and no doubt other vital questions can be answered with varying degrees of success on the basis of further intensive work on the document (1974: 52).

Wagner also notes that large-scale slave owners had slaves residing in numerous different locations throughout the peninsula:

The census document offers us no information on this point, but it seems not unreasonable to suppose that these slaves for the most part lived and worked on agricultural lands held by their owner (1974: 44).

On these points, the inheritance documents provide some answers, fill in some gaps, and provide some surprises.

Inheritance documents and other private documents, many of which have come to light in recent years, reveal a much more dynamic portrait of the life of slaves and the interaction between slaves on the one hand and commoners or aristocrats on the other. Unlike the *hojŏk* which record all human beings, albeit according to status, the inheritance documents record slaves as property. Other kinds of documents at times found in private collections along with inheritance documents include those detailing the sale or barter of slaves, and occasionally there are those that reveal other details about the meaning of slave status and the relationship between owner and owned, such as one document in the Puan Kim collection which shows that an aristocrat was incarcerated over a slave's death by beating.
First, let us examine a typical set of inheritance documents in order to see what type of information in available therein. In my possession is an inheritance document kept by a branch of the Chŏnju lineage dated 1632. In the document the property of Yi Hyŏng-uk and his wife was divided between his four children who, listed in order, were a son, Yi Yŏm; a daughter who married Min Ŭng-hyŏp; another son, Yi Suk; and another daughter who married Pak An-hyo. Property (land and slaves) in the early seventeenth century was divided equally irrespective of the sex and the sequence of birth of the heirs. The Yi dynasty code as well as social custom stipulated that the property was to be divided equally, and indeed it was divided equally in every respect.

One of the more curious aspects of the inheritance process is the practice of dividing land and slaves without regard to location of the land and residence of the slaves. Each of the four siblings received land in three or four areas of Korea; all received part of the land in Paekch’ŏn, two split the property in Namyang, and all received one or two smaller parcels in toto. The residences of the slaves were similarly spread over the whole peninsula, with each heir having slaves in six or eight areas, none of which coincided with the location of the inherited fields.

In dividing up the slaves, each sibling received, as near as was humanly possible it appears, an equal number of fold and young, male and female, strong and weak, and near and distant slaves. Each of the four siblings not only received the same total number of slaves (eighteen), but by subcategory, they each were given exactly four “new” slaves, thirteen “inherited” slaves and claim on one “escaped” slave. The average age of slaves inherited by each sibling was 27.8, 24.7, 24.0, and 25.8, respectively. If factored by age group, it appears even more clearly that the division was as equal as possible:

Table I: Number of slaves distributed to each sibling according to age of the slave

<table>
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<th>Age grouping</th>
<th>#1</th>
<th>#2</th>
<th>#3</th>
<th>#4</th>
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<td>1-20</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-36</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37-61</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The division of the slaves was also equal according to gender, although not as clearly so as was the division by age.

Table 2. Number of slaves distributed to each sibling according to gender of the slave

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Slave Gender</th>
<th>#1</th>
<th>#2</th>
<th>#3</th>
<th>#4</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
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</table>

Sibling number four, the daughter who married Pak An-hyo, received more female than male slaves, but given all the variables not only of age and gender but also of physical strength and fertility which certainly bear on the economic value of the slave and the proximity of the slave’s residence to that of owner’s, it can still be argued that they divided the slaves as equally as they possibly could.

Land was also divided equally to such an extent, in fact, that each parcel large enough to be divided was divided so that each sibling could have part of each parcel, and this was done in spite of the fact that landholdings were scattered all up and down the peninsula. The division of the property, both land and slaves, shows a total concern with the principle of equality.

How did the apportionment of slaves bear on the unity of the slave family? More often than not, each member of a slave family was inherited by a different sibling. For example, in a slave household of four—father, mother, and two children—each of the owner siblings would receive one of the slaves. This does not mean, however, that the slave families were broken up. The system was sophisticated enough to allow separate ownership without moving individual slaves to places geographically more convenient. For example, the slave family residing in Yŏngp’’yŏng was comprised of a mother and her six children. The mother was owned by the third sibling; the eldest child, the third and the fifth were inherited by the second sibling; the second and the last child were owned by the fourth sibling; and the fourth slave child was owned by the first-born of the aristocratic siblings.
Table 3. Inheritance of one slave family distributed among four sibling owners

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<th>Yŏnhap (mother)</th>
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<tr>
<td>b. 1585</td>
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<td>inherited by #3</td>
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<tr>
<th>Wŏnsaeng</th>
<th>Kūmsaeng</th>
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<th>Yŏnsaeng</th>
<th>Paksaeng</th>
<th>Husaeng</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b. 1607</td>
<td>b. 1611</td>
<td>b. 1614</td>
<td>b. 1622</td>
<td>b. 1623</td>
<td>b. 1628</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#2</td>
<td>#4</td>
<td>#2</td>
<td>#1</td>
<td>#2</td>
<td>#4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Whereas it would seem more reasonable to give all the slaves resident in one place to one sibling and all the slaves in another to the next sibling, the middle Yi dynasty Koreans gave all the siblings an equal share in all the property in all of its locations, at least as far as it was possible to do so. Although it appears unnecessarily complicated at first, there must have been good reasons for doing so. One that comes to mind is that the siblings would be forced to interact and cooperate with each other since they all owned property adjoining each other in the case of land and related to each other in the case of slaves. The interaction in such a fractionated situation must have been intense, and the siblings must have found ways to cooperate. If they did not, the fighting and lack of cooperation would have rendered management of the estates impossible. In this way the method of disbursing the inheritance provided a cement made up of the networks necessary to control and exploit the property—a kind of lineage glue.

One document from the Kyŏngsang area shows siblings enacting a trade for the sake of convenience. The document stated that since both owners had slaves in each of two locations, an exchange of ownership would enable both siblings to more easily manage the property. Although only one such document has been uncovered so far, this sort of practical readjustment after the allocation of the property probably occurred often.

The set of documents held by the Puan Kim lineage is large and varied. In addition to the inheritance documents which show much the same concern for equal division of the property as did the Chŏnju Yi document, the Puan documents cover a long period and eventually show the change in the inheritance pattern from the equilateral system of the early Yi period to the primogeniture pattern of the late period. One document was even written to declare that the change was going to be made and
provided the rationale for disinheriting those who had had, up to then (1669), equal access to family property (Puan p. 224, #33).

In addition to the inheritance documents which provided a record of the division of property between the siblings, there were several documents of special inheritance which were gifts given at the perogative of the owner usually for a special occasion such as a wedding, birth or the passing of an exam. On such an occasion, a son or other close relative would be given a “special allocation” (pyŏlgūp); in the text of the document the reason for the gift was usually explained.

In addition to the inheritance documents, the Puan collection also has a large number of hojŏk documents. These are not the type mentioned above (as the basis for many of the studies done up to now) which were large bound copies that recorded everyone in the county but are single sheets of paper which were the copies retained by the householder at the time of each triennial registration.

There are also isolated sales documents, many of which involved the purchase or sales of slaves, and other miscellaneous documents, many of which touched on the life and role of the slaves and their relationship to the owners. In fact few of the documents did not mention slaves in one way or another.

One case of an interesting gift is found in two documents dated 1735 wherein a man gave property to his son (Puan p. 206, #19) and to his new daughter-in-law (p. 206, #20) on the occasion of their moving to his patrilineal home after an initial postmarital stay at the bride’s natal home. He gave his son sixteen slaves and his daughter-in-law nine slaves. A similar document in my possession from a segment of the Chŏnju Yi lineage records a mother-in-law addressing her daughter-in-law. In it she stated that she had only one son but had always wanted a daughter. She wrote, “You have entered the household and have been the daughter to me that I never had.” She went on to say that she would give her daughter-in-law five slaves to wait on her and help her. She closed by saying, “Do not reject this gift but use these slaves to make your life comfortable.”

In one property purchase document, a casual statement about slaves raises an interesting point—the peculium. In the document, a large piece of property is acquired by the Puan Kim group from the a man named Yu Sŏng-min (p. 177, #16). The document states that all the property bounded by some small hills on two sides, the ocean on the third, and a stream on the fourth side were to be sold, with the exception of two small parcels that had already been sold to two slaves. Property owned by
slaves is called the peculium and is always considered to be of minimal value, usually being small personal items.

Land owned by slaves was another of the unique aspects of Korean slavery according to Patterson (1982: 183-4). Korean and Russian slaves were the only ones he could find who could own land, although he argues that the Korean case was not really an exception to the rule if one considers that slave landholding was temporary and that a slave’s land was easily taken over by the master (1982: 425). His argument is that landholding commoners who sold themselves into slavery to avoid debt or taxes would bring property with them, but that situation would not prevail long and the slave owner would eventually get control of the slave’s land.

In the Puan case, there were slaves who were not just trying to maintain property but had actually acquired property. This may be evidence that refutes Patterson’s attempt to downplay the uniqueness of Korean slavery; on the other hand, it is not very solid evidence because this may be viewed as an isolated case, or the slaves may have not been acting for themselves but as surrogates for their owners. Because of Confucian biases against commercial transactions, many pious aristocrats would not handle money directly but worked though agents—their slaves. The case at hand may have been such.

The most unusual of the Puan documents (Puan p. 116, #68, 1760) was one written by the widowed mother of Kim Tŭng-mun (1732-1767). Her son was in jail and she addressed her petition to the magistrate pleading the innocence of her only child. The charge was the killing of a slave. The plea for innocence was based on the concept that proper punishment of a slave, up to five lashings, was acceptable and her son had acted within the provisions of the law. She also argued that her son was frail (and not strong enough to kill anyone). The fact that the slave died was coincidental, she argued, and quoted a Chinese four-character expression, “crow flies, pear falls,” a saying used to illustrate a case of simultaneous events that are mistakenly assumed to be in a cause-and-effect relationship. The document recorded the magistrate as saying that Tŭng-mun need not be held over for trial.

The most common documents, however, are probably the most telling. These are (1) inheritance documents, similar to the ones discussed above, which show that slaves were passed on from generation to generation, and (2) purchase and barter documents which show that slaves were sold and traded. In the Puan collection there are seventeen slave-purchase documents (Puan pp. 157-169) and thirty-five inheritance documents in
which slaves were the primary forms of property listed (Puan pp. 201-226). The Kyŏngbuk collection contains 212 inheritance documents and twenty-two slave-purchase documents. Both collections, the Puan collection and the Kyŏngbuk collection, contain several other categories of documents, such as letters, land sale agreements, etc., many of which discuss slaves. Many of these documents have yet to be studied fully; but when they are studied they will reveal a great deal about Korean slavery and social stratification. More of these types of documents are becoming available, and with them the possibilities for the study and analysis of slavery increase.

The use of inheritance documents and the other private documents take us one step closer to answering the basic questions posed at the outset of this paper. Let us re-examine the statements quoted from Wagner above. First, he inferred from the hojŏk that there was buying and selling going on; and we have seen that numerous slave transactions took place and were recorded in documents that are coming to light today. Second, such “vital questions” as

...continuity of ownership, sale or transfer of slaves, patterns of bequeathing ownership, inheritance of slave status across generations, slave marriage and its relationship to an owner’s effort to maximize his slave assets... we are told, “can be answered with varying degrees of success on the basis of further intensive” study of hojok. But now we have the very documents that deal directly with these “vital questions” and we are just beginning to make progress in understanding these vital processes in traditional Korea.

The third point drawn from Wagner’s article was that “it seems not unreasonable to suppose that these slaves for the most part lived and worked on agricultural land held by their owner.” The Chŏnju Yi inheritance document cited above shows that this reasonable alternative did not pertain. There was no correlation between the locations of allocated lands and residences of allocated slaves. That situation is admittedly so unreasonable that it is hard to imagine how the society functioned. Yet that appears to be the situation, which implies that Orlando Patterson was right in his assertion that Korean slavery was indeed sophisticated. We are viewing an economic system that enabled an aristocrat to own slaves in certain sections of the country, some far removed from his residence, and at the same time own land scattered around the country in areas other than where his slaves were resident.
Finally, what of the position of Korean slavery in the world as outlined in Patterson’s book? Slavery is slavery and the ethnocentricity displayed in the terminological difference in describing domestic slavery versus other-nation slavery is nothing more than that, a display of ethnocentricity. “Slave” is the more accurate term, not “servant”; and “owner” is more accurate than “master” because Korean slavery, like slavery elsewhere, was at root a system in which people owned other people.

Yet there were unique aspects of Korean slavery. It was one of the longest held systems, one of the broadest in scale, and one of the most sophisticated in the pre-modern world. The ramifications long overlooked in Korean studies must have some relationship to the vital questions of modern Korea. Such questions include those that are part of Korea’s travail: the failure to enter the twentieth century as an independent state, the rise of a Communist regime in half of the territory, and perhaps others. The fact that it is a sensitive subject is one reason the study has long been overlooked. Now, with the aid of newly available and pertinent documents, the study can begin in earnest.

NOTES

1. The latter would also be found in South Korea if the North Koreans ever conquered South Korea—at least that is what government slogans pasted on walls and billboards all over South Korea say.

2. These sources are concerned, as is this paper, with the Yi dynasty, but there have been important works on the Koryo period. Among them is the dissertation by Ellen Salem Unruh, “Slavery in Medieval Korea” (Columbia University, 1978).

3. Somerville sees the mobility as terminological, that is to say, commoners obtained yangban titles but then, as a sort of nouveaux riche, were excluded from the old elite circles. He did not address the problem of slavery to any extent.

4. One of the first was Kyônbuk chibang komunsô chipsông (A collection of old documents from the North Kyongsang Province) published by Yôngnam University, Kyongsang, 1981. Also several collections belonging to private households or lineage groups have been published by the Academy of Korean Studies (Chôngsin munhwa yôn’guwôn) including Puan Kim-ssi uban komunsô (Old documents of the Uban segment of the Puan Kim lineage), Kojôn charyo ch’ôngsô 83-3 (Classic resources collection #83-3).

5. In the subsequent century the inheritance system changed from this type of equilateral system to one of primogeniture wherein the eldest son received the largest share, other sons received minimal shares and daughters were disinherited, although they did receive a dowry.

6. Other documents in the Puan collection reveal that he was an adopted son (p. 99 #15; see also the chart on p. 7).
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Kim, Yong-sŏp. “Chosŏn hugi e issŏsŏ ŭi sinbunje ŭi tongyo wa nongji chŏmyu” (Land Occupation and Transformation of the Status System in the Later Yi Dynasty), Sahak Yŏn’gu (Historical Research), No. 15, April 1963.

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In Memoriam: Mr. Boo Wan-Hyuk

by James Hoyt

The Korea Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society was saddened by the death on December 31, 1984, of its former Vice President (1982), Councillor (1974-84), Membership Committeeman and Life Member, Mr. Boo Wan-Hyuk. Mr. Boo made many contributions to the activities of the Society for more than a decade and he will be long remembered for his promotion of Korean culture, journalism, education, banking, government, international communication and goodwill.

Mr. Boo was born on an auspicious day for a Korean nationalist, March 1, 1919. A resident of Seoul, he graduated from the First Public High Common School (later renamed Kyonggi High School) in 1936 and a month later entered the preparatory course of the Department of Literature of Keijō Imperial University. At the university itself, however, he studied in the Department of Law. In October 1941, just before the outbreak of the Pacific War, he passed the Japanese High Civil Service Examination, held in Tōkyō, and was subsequently appointed to the Local Administration Section of Kyōngsangpuk-to in the capacity of Provincial Clerk. During the war years, he continued to serve in Kyōngsangpuk-to first as County Head of Sonsan and later of Kyōngsan.

With liberation, Mr. Boo was appointed Associate Professor in the College of Political Science and Law, Korea University. Then, in 1949, he reentered government service as Second Secretary, Foreign Service, Office of Foreign Affairs, South Korea Interim Government. In 1948 he was appointed Secretary to the Prime Minister and in 1950, Secretary to the Home Minister, Republic of Korea.

During the Korean War, he was Chief of the Bureau of Material Mobilization and Acting General-Secretary (Korean side) for the Combined United Nations Command-ROK Commission.

After the armistice of 1953, Mr. Boo began his career as a journalist, editor and publisher. He first served as editorial writer and then as Editor-in-Chief and Editing Consultant of the Chosun Ilbo. Concurrently he was Titular Member of the Monetary Board, located at the Bank of Korea (1960-61). In December 1967, he became publisher, editor and printer of Sasanggye ("The World of Thought"), a leading monthly magazine.

He travelled widely abroad, including a global survey tour (1953), an
observation tour at the invitation of the Australian Government (1961), a study tour of central banking systems of Southeast Asia (1961), a visit to Germany at the invitation of Der Monat magazine (1961) and a survey of U.S. and European economies and politics (1964).

In 1962, Mr. Boo was banned from political activities as "an anti-revolutionary element" pursuant to the Political Purification Law. But as one trained in political science, he did not give up easily and went on to become a member of the Planning Board of the Nationalist Party and later Chief of the Policy Commission of the New Democratic Party.

In 1974, he was appointed Advisor on National Unification by the President of the Republic of Korea. But in later years, his main interest was as chairman of the Yulsan Aluminum Industrial Company, the Yulsan Industries Company and the Yulsan Construction and Development Com-pany.
Annual Report of the Korea Branch
of the Royal Asiatic Society for 1985

The Royal Asiatic Society, Korea Branch, is one of several branches of its parent organization, the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland. Founded in London in 1824 under the royal patronage of King George IV, the purpose of the Society as a whole is to study the "progress of knowledge in Asia and the means of its extension." Since its founding in Seoul in June 1900 by a small group of foreign residents, the Korea Branch has been devoted, as its constitution requires, to stimulating interest in, promoting the study of, and disseminating knowledge about the arts, history, literature and customs of Korea and neighboring countries. To meet these requirements the Korea Branch sponsors lecture meetings, tours, and publications. Among the requirements of the Branch’s constitution is one that specifies an annual meeting at which a report of the year’s activities should be made to the membership and an election of the next year’s officers and Council held. The annual report follows:

Membership: From its founding 17 members in 1900, the Korea Branch has increased to an impressive 1,687 members, this being the number registered in 1985 at the time of this report. The total figure includes 58 life members, 509 overseas members and 1,120 regular members residing in Korea. Membership includes not only those who participate in the activities of the branch in Seoul but also those who have joined the Taegu and Kwangju Chapters.

Meetings: During the year, 20 lecture meetings were held in Seoul and ten lecture meetings were held both by the Taegu and the Kwangju Chapters.

Tours: Full schedules of tours were carried out by the branch in both the spring and the fall of 1985, with participation totaling more than 1,600. Members in Kwangju and Taegu also organized tour activities for their chapter members.

Publications: The Korea Branch is justifiably proud of its accomplishments in producing and distributing works in English about Korea. Besides its annual Transactions Volume 59 for 1984 which was distributed free to its members, the following titles were reprinted in 1985 to meet continuing demands: Transactions Volumes 1-30, hardbound, reprint edition (200 sets), and Korean Patterns by Paul Crane. Add to this a new RAS publication, and it was an impressive year for the new as well as the old. The
newest publication was *Korea Under Colonialism* by Ku, Dae-Yeol.

**Finances:** Monthly statements from the treasurer report (because of the continuing sale of its publications) the Korea Branch enjoys a state of financial health which allows it to continue to offer meetings, tours, and publications in order to meet its commitment to contribute to the "progress of knowledge" about Korea and her neighbors.

**Douglass Fund:** The recipient of the 1985 Douglass Scholarship was Mr. Lee, Ka-Haeng. The Douglass Scholarship is an award given each year to a deserving student whose focus is on Korea. This year's awardee, Mr. Lee, is a first-year graduate student of the Korean History Department at Songkyunkwan University in Seoul.
## Activities of the Seoul Branch

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**Tours 1985**

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