

The Journal of Chang Inmyŏng

Introduced and translated by Bruce and Ju-Chan Fulton
from a modern Korean version prepared by Young Ok Choi



The journal of Chang Inmyŏng (Yeen Myung Chang) was handwritten in *hangŭl* with a sprinkling of Chinese characters and English words, in a daily-planner journal for the year 1950 likely purchased in Chicago, where the author lived at that time. It was presumably begun no earlier than that year and finished sometime between 1957 (the most recent year mentioned in the journal) and 1963 (the year of the author's death). The journal is first and foremost an account of the author's family history and his own coming of age, in both Korea and the U.S., at the end of the Chosŏn period. It offers fascinating glimpses of human relations in a variety of social structures—extended family, ancestral village, officialdom, enterprise, religion, and, especially in the later entries, service on behalf of the Korean nation-become-colony. The journal is written in a lively style that combines narrative and dialog and even a poem, as well as the occasional rhetorical flourish that harkens back to the Korean oral tradition.

Like many a memoir, this journal perhaps raises as many questions as it answers. What, for example, became of the extended family left behind in Hwanghae Province? Did Chang have contact with any family members there after Liberation from Japanese colonial rule in 1945, or

BRUCE FULTON (fultonb@mail.ubc.ca) is an associate professor in the Department of Asian Studies, University of British Columbia, Canada.

JU-CHAN FULTON (ju.chan.fulton@gmail.com) is the co-translator, with Bruce Fulton, of numerous volumes of modern Korean fiction.

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after 1948, when separate regimes were founded on the Korean Peninsula? What views might he have had about the territorial division of the peninsula? Indeed, did he visit Korea at any time between his arrival in the continental U.S. in 1906 and his passing in 1963? And what of his years in Los Angeles—home to the largest Korean community in the world outside of Korea—from 1952 on, years about which he says only that he “contributed nothing to the community”?

There is a burgeoning corpus of Korean-American fiction dealing with the Korean diaspora but comparatively few published firsthand accounts of that experience. If for no other reason than this, the journal left to us by Yeen Myung Chang is a valuable resource, one that reminds us that the diaspora experience encompasses not only the day-to-day struggle to make a new life for oneself but also the challenges of finding closure with the life left behind. To judge from the final entries in the journal, which concern the demise of Chang Kyōng, who died an early death far from home, the diaspora experience perhaps defined the extraordinary life of the author.

In this translation we use brackets to identify the years cited by traditional nomenclature, such as *pyōngsul* and *kich'uk*, in the journal.

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The Journal of Chang Inmyōng

Birth

I was born to the Kyōlsōng Chang clan in Sōkp'o, Pangnim Precinct, Pangjuk Township, Songhwa County, Hwanghae Province, in the kingdom of Chosōn on July 29 of the *pyōngsul* year [1886]. My father's given name was Ŭngsōn, and my mother was from the Sōhae Im clan.

Songhwa was known as Kahwa earlier in the Yi Dynasty. It is bordered to the north by Kuwōl Mountain in Munhwa County; to the south by Changsan'got in Chang'yōn County; to the east by Shinch'ōn and by Haeju, the provincial capital; and to the west by P'ungch'ōn, adjacent to the West Sea.

The area is neither all mountainous nor completely flat, the climate is mild, and never has there been a bad harvest.

Songhwa County was for centuries the seat of three clans--Kang, Yang, and Chang. Sugyo Market in Songhwa was famous, especially for its gold exchange.

Ominous Family Fortunes

The smallpox epidemic in the spring of the *pyōngsul* year [1886] took two of my brothers; one was nine years of age and the other three. In the *kich'uk* year [1889] my second oldest brother

was killed by a falling tree while working in the woods; he was twenty-two years of age and newly married. Mother was heartbroken and lost the use of her eyes; only after two years was she able to regain her sight.

Family Prosperity

Around the time of the Tonghak Peasant Army uprising in the *kabo* year [1894] Father sent Insöng, my eldest brother, to Pang Wönjung, assistant head of the Tonghak parish in Hwanghae Province, to feel out the situation. There he heard that tens of thousands of Tonghak believers had congregated in the seven townships flanking the stream flowing from Kuwöl Mountain and had formed a peasant militia under Pang, the deputy militia leader in those townships, who reported to Yi Tonghyök, who for his part was at the tender age of seventeen the militia leader for all of Hwanghae Province. Thousands, perhaps tens of thousands of rebels were encamped along the stream below Munömi Pass in Shinch'ön, and government forces together with Japanese soldiers were dispatched from Haeju to scout their movements, which they did by tiptoeing their way above the militia and scattering to take up positions and fire down with their Western rifles. The *ttang ttang* of the rifle fire terrified the militia into assuming they were under attack by an enemy numbering in the thousands rather than the actual hundreds. What else to do but hightail it out of there--and soon thereafter the leaderless militia collapsed. The resistance movement failed in turn, for how could the massive militia, once dispersed, come back together?

Having witnessed this spectacle, Eldest Brother reported to Father, who concluded with respect to the Tonghak that "this party is not to be trusted or followed. What we need now is to farm diligently and ready ourselves to engage in commerce." He then had all the clan households, from oldest to youngest, turn out every day to mill the grain and subsequently he acquired both an ox and a mule to turn the mill wheel.

Meanwhile the wealthy had grown concerned about the public sentiment engendered by these restless times, and they began stockpiling grain. In response Father devised a plan—acquire grain from the wealthy at the going rate, but on credit with the promise to return the grain once the times returned to normal. Each side recorded in its ledger the transaction of several hundred sacks of grain. At the same time Father continued to mill his own grain day in and day out and he stockpiled so much of it, several hundred sacks, that people came to view him as fabulously wealthy.

And then when the Tonghak militias demanded grain from him he would tell them they could take what they needed. And when they came back later to haul the grain away Father would ask for written confirmation that they were taking 100 sacks each to Kim, Yi, Paek, and Yang, the Tonghak religious leaders. And then he emphasized that because he himself had obtained the grain on credit it would be a great disappointment if it weren't returned, besides which he and his family would suffer a great loss. But in fact Father was safe, because every last transaction was recorded in his ledger and his IOUs to the wealthy covered him in case the borrowed grain was taken by the militias.

With the resistance having failed, the Tonghak militias were no longer active. A few straggling militias marched up to Father and demanded grain, offering their meager wages in payment. All Father would ask in return was that they write down who they were and how many sacks of grain they took. The following year, *ülmi* [1895], government forces along with constables from Haeju scoured the region far and wide rounding up the remainder of the militias, and back at long last came normalcy. In early summer of that year the price of rice shot up in response to demand from Japan. Father's rice was the most coveted in all of Sugyo Market, and he sold several hundred sacks of it, bringing a gigantic profit that enabled him to pay off his IOUs to the wealthy. And that is how the calamity of 1894 made the Chang family unimaginably rich.

Father Who Began Farming at Age Nine

Father's mother passed away when he was nine, leaving him and his three-year-old sister, Tusön. His father, my grandfather, determined to take care of the two children himself without remarrying, and had an elderly relative come daily to handle house chores and look after little Tusön.

Father was diligent in helping his father with the farming. For ten years they worked together and they were rewarded for their efforts. By then Father was nineteen, a proper age for a man to marry, but because he was still young he could afford to wait and he said that first Grandfather should remarry. Initially Grandfather put his foot down and said no, but by and by he gave in.

Father searched in all directions for an excellent match for Grandfather and learned of a young widow from the P'ungch'ön Cho clan. He considered utilizing a go-between but ultimately visited the family himself and after exchanging greetings with the father of the widow he explained the purpose of his visit. The father thought it preposterous but mulled it over.

“May I ask, then, your father's age and how long he has been alone?”

“He is thirty-nine years of age, and widowed for ten years.”

“And may I ask why he has not taken a wife in all that time?”

“Well, at the time of my mother's passing I was nine and my sister was three and he insisted that if a stepmother and the children don't get along there will be no peace in the family and so it was best that he remain unmarried.”

“I see. In that case, who kept house and brought up you and your sister during those ten years?”

“A distant relative came by every day to take care of the house, and she did a good job of it, and now my sister is a big girl and I have taken care of myself and if only Father's remarriage is successful, then we will be one happy family and all under heaven will be well.”

“How old are you, young man?”

“I am nineteen, sir.”

“In that case, why not marry first and serve your father, and *then* think about what's best

for him?”

“I am still young and in no hurry, and I believe my father should first remarry, and that is why I have taken the liberty of paying you a personal visit, sir.”

“Now listen, young man. Granted my daughter is a widow, but at age twenty-three she could be a good match for *you*; the age gap with your father is considerable.”

“If that is what you believe, esteemed sir, I will say no more and take my leave.” So saying, Father rose and prepared to bow and bid farewell.

The elder Cho rose in his turn and broke his silence. “I’ll visit the inner quarters and discuss this with my wife and daughter, then you and I can talk more. Why not sit and wait for me.”

The elder Cho returned after forty-five minutes with his wife and daughter and introduced them to Father. “We have decided to do as you wish. You may go home and return with your father, we will have a ceremony here in our home, and you can then escort your stepmother to your home.”

Father expressed his gratitude with countless bows to the Cho family, then returned home.

His father was ecstatic at the news. “How shall we go about this?”

“In short, we go tomorrow to their home and then bring Stepmother back with us.”

The following day Father and Grandfather, accompanied by a horse, sedan chair, and carriers, visited the Cho family, who had prepared for the ceremony and the feast to follow. They spent the night there and returned home the following day. The stepmother was a wise lady indeed and with the Chang family of four being of one heart and mind, the family fortunes revived and the light shone brightly in the eastern sky.

Father’s First Marriage

The year Father turned twenty-one he began a search for a bridal candidate and was introduced and betrothed to the twenty-two-year-old daughter of a schoolteacher named Kim from Wörho; he married her in February of the following year. But less than a month after the wedding she came down with an illness that left her bedridden and in the care of a physician, dependent on the chamber pot and all manner of medicaments; her condition deteriorated to the point that she gave up hope.

She spoke quietly to Father. “My mother died of a similar malady after suffering much hardship. How sorry I am that my prior connection with this world has left me helpless in this way. How regrettable that I have met such a nice and gentle husband but am ultimately unable to enjoy the happiness and comfort of the Chang family. I feel I am less than human, an evil that has visited this family with misfortune and calamity, and this evil body of mine must expire as quickly as possible. Please send me home. I wish to die in the care of my father and stepmother.”

She held Father’s hand, her eyes dripping tears, and wished him the blessing of a wise woman for his next wife. The wailing of the couple was heard by Father’s parents, who

attempted to ease their distress. Several days later she was transported to her family home in the sedan chair, Father riding horseback next to her.

They arrived at Wörho at sunset, and teacher Kim and his wife emerged to receive them. Far into the night Father and teacher Kim went back and forth discussing what to do next. Father slept briefly and was up again at dawn. After breakfast he looked in on his wife, took her hand, prayed to heaven for her health, and bid her farewell. Turning his horse in the direction of Songhwa, Father set off, stopping at an eatery for lunch and a bowl of *makkölli* before arriving home as the sun was setting. His father and mother greeted him. Father was a strong and worthy man, but how could he not feel uneasy as the next two years dragged along, his wife's illness ever on his mind? But my grandparents worked heart and soul and with the help of Grandfather's younger brother they managed the household in harmony. Every now and then Father made the journey to Wörho to spend a night comforting his wife.

"I beg you, please spare yourself the trouble!" she would plead.

One morning a messenger arrived with the news that she had passed away in the middle of the night.

Father took leave of Grandfather and the next moment mounted his horse, arriving at Wörho at nine that night to be greeted by teacher Kim and his wife. Father wept as he caressed the head and bosom of his wife, who lay like a sleeping maiden. In his mind he began a poem in her honor.

Oh my poor woman, only twenty years of age!

A flower withered heartlessly, a handful of dirt in the end!

At nine the next morning they proceeded to the Kim family's hillside burial plot, set the coffin in the grave and, forlorn, paid their respects to the departed, then made their way back home in midafternoon. Father's poem concluded as follows:

Poor young wife from the Kim family!

Whence did you come and where will you go?

A flower blooming and withering is the work of nature

Yet how came you to be a handful of dirt on the spur of a hill in springtime?

Father's Remarriage

And thus was Father bereaved at the age of twenty-four. Grandfather asked Grandmother to keep ever ready a supply of brew for supper, at which time father and son would discuss plans for the future with the primary goal of dismissing wild-eyed schemes and focusing on the farming, while Grandmother maintained peace and quiet in the home.

Father for his part looked every which way for a new bride, a daunting task in that this time he probed into the wife-to-be's upbringing and health as well as the particulars of her family history. At that time suitable candidates for a twenty-six-year-old widower were scarce, and even if a young lady were to come to his attention, what could be done about the age gap between them?

One day Father met Im Naktong, known by his title *chwasu*, at the home of a certain

Kang, also a *chwasu*, near Sugyo Market. After Father offered the customary greetings to his two elders, Kang *chwasu* served them a libation.

Im *chwasu* said to Father, "I have wanted to see you and I am happy at long last for this opportunity. If you can spare the time tomorrow, might you stop by my humble abode?"

"Gladly, sir," replied Father. "I shall pay you a visit tomorrow, then."

Back home Father reported to Grandfather, who was ecstatic. "He must have something in mind, so you had best pay close attention."

Early the next morning Father rode his horse to the home of Im *chwasu*. Im presented himself in person to greet Father. "You're a man of your word," he said, taking Father's hand. "I am greatly pleased."

Exchanging preliminaries about the extremes of the weather, they sat at their leisure until the midday repast was brought to them by a maid. After allowing the meal to settle, Im *chwasu* broached the subject at hand.

"The reason I had you visit. . .well, I have heard from a confidant that you lost your wife and are seeking to wed again. It so happens that my eldest daughter is seventeen and a half and we are looking north, south, east, and west for a suitable match, but thus far without success. The world is not lacking in young men from rich families, and such men put on a good appearance, but they tend to be the sinister ones who go for concubines and cause family discord and I am quite worried about this. You, on the other hand, lost your mother at a young age and have since been on the frontline in establishing your own household, and I doubt you would have ulterior motives. As I expected, you have proved yourself worthy to be my son-in-law." Allowing these words to sink in he finished with, "What do you say?"

"Sir, your offer is quite unexpected and it would be most difficult for me to give you an immediate answer. I should like to return home and report to my Father and then return with my answer."

"What use should there be of your good father's approval? This is after all *your* matter, and what matters most is your answer. May I ask you to wait here while I enter the ladies' quarters and have my daughter step out into the garden so that you may regard her?" And with that he disappeared, only to reappear a few minutes later with a beaming smile. "Have yourself a good look."

Presently there appeared a maiden fair as the moon and pretty as a flower. The sight of her strolling through the garden and enjoying the flowers captured Father's great heart and sent it topsy-turvy. A short time later she picked a flower and went inside. There had been no exchange of words but rather a heart-to-heart encounter. That the maiden had plucked a flower and taken it inside with her was in Father's mind proof positive that she had accepted him, albeit in the impromptu scenario framed by Im.

Moments later Im reappeared and tapped Father on the shoulder. "And so, what is your verdict?"

"I am exceedingly grateful," said Father. "I am a lowly farmer and in no position to refuse to wed your precious daughter. My gratitude for this huge and most unexpected fortune is difficult to express in words, but in my heart I will be forever thankful."

“And so we are right on track and may consider the matter virtually decided. Go home and report to your father, set the date, and let us know.”

Bidding farewell to Im, Father returned home and reported to Grandfather, who was exultant. “Our family will once again flourish!”

What would be the most auspicious date? For this, Great-uncle consulted with teacher Pak Tosun. “Not this year,” said the teacher. “The best date for the couple would be April 15 of the coming year.” And so the date was decided. Who now would confer with the Ims? After pondering, Great-uncle volunteered.

“This is a matter of great significance for both families,” said Im in response to Great-uncle’s explanation, “and we dare not move in haste. So please do take your time with the preparations.”

April 15 arrived and Father, fully prepared, went to the Ims and upon conclusion of the ceremony returned with his bride. The clan relatives greatly welcomed his homecoming, and among the immediate family none more than Father’s stepmother, who made a big fuss saying the family was flourishing. At the time, she was expecting the baby who became my Uncle Ŭnghwan. Three days later she and the new daughter-in-law took their places beside each other and began to come together heart and soul, from then on each yielding to the other and both devoted as one to family matters large and small. Once again we were one happy family and all under heaven was well.

It was not long until on March 10 of the *mujin* year [1868] Step-grandmother delivered the baby who would become Uncle Ŭnghwan, and then on April 20 of the *keisa* year [1869] the new bride who would become my mother gave birth to my eldest brother, Insŏng. You can imagine the joy of our family, thanks to the two mothers who had each produced a son for the first child, and if that weren’t enough they each received a gift from the in-laws. The two women helped and cared for each other, there being no conflict between them but only harmony. And the males in our family got along just as well with one another. Our clan and indeed all those around us marveled that there could be no finer family.

History of the Songhwa Chang Clan

The Chang clan of Songhwa originated in the person of Chang Kyŏlsŏng. This may require some explanation. During the Shilla Dynasty a prominent Daoist scholar from Tang China, Chang Paegik, visited the king of Shilla, who venerated his scholarship and hired him as a tutor for his children. The venerable teacher had three sons—Indong, Andong, and Kyŏlsŏng. Kyŏlsŏng was the youngest. As a child he was resistant to studying and thereby earned himself an expulsion from home, after which he exerted himself in military drills and became a master instructor of soldiers. The elder Chang and his wife later came to care dearly for this son of theirs and depended on him in their senior years. When the venerable teacher settled down in what is now South Ch’ungch’ŏng Province he named the area Kyŏlsŏng and in time it became a county.

Our Family's Ruination

Between the *kebo* [1894] and *ülmi* [1895] years my family's prosperity was marred by an unfortunate event that fell over us like a dark cloud draping the sun. The port of Namp'o in Hwanghae Province opened around this time and was home to a thriving trade in grain. My eldest brother Insöng began trading in grain and frequented Namp'o but this venture ultimately failed. He then was involved in the gold exchange at Sugyo Market and earned a good return.

At that time Chang Kihyök was both the magistrate of Songhwa County and--thanks to the good offices of Yi Yongik, the Chosön Minister of Finance--provincial superintendent of gold mining in Haesö, another name for Hwanghae Province. So many others had already involved themselves in gold mining. One of them was a certain Yi Kyusön of Onjöng, in Songhwa County, who had amassed a fortune from gold mining but was a libertine.

Elder brother Insöng was a good friend of Chang the county magistrate, who was like a brother to us in that he was a direct descendant of Indong, son of the founder of our clan. Brother always consulted with Yi Kyusön in matters of gold mining. There was in Songhwa a member of the Kang clan, known to everyone as *söndal*, who had leased a mine but accumulated mostly mistrust due to the enormous debt he incurred. When Kang no longer had the means to operate the mine he learned that the county magistrate in his capacity as superintendent of gold mining supported gold mining enterprises but would not trust a person like him. And so it was that one day Kang came to see my brother Insöng to disclose a plan and plead with him to arrange a meeting with the magistrate.

My brother replied, "Sir, please rest assured that I will go into town tomorrow and visit the county magistrate and tell him your story. So you may take your leave now."

The following day he went to town and relayed Kang's words to the magistrate.

The magistrate responded, "How could I lend money to a penniless libertine like Kang *söndal*, knowing full well I would never recover that sum?"

"Even so," said my brother, "he has invested in gold mining, and I believe it to be only reasonable to assist him if it is your desire to support gold mining."

The magistrate responded, "I shall trust in your judgment. But you should understand that the funds I make available to this man belong to our country and not to me personally, and I shall be executed if I fail to recoup them. It is a grave matter. If I do help this Kang, can you personally keep an eye on him so as to avoid any failure?"

"As your honorable self is aware, I have no direct experience in the mining business, and so how would it be if my humble friend Yi Kyusön were to run the business for Kang?"

"Well, another libertine. How about this, then? Your good self supervises Kang *söndal*, Kang remains the lease-holder, but Yi takes care of the day-to-day business and reports directly to you. What do you say?"

My brother Insöng said, "In that case I will visit Kang and Yi and have them understand what you and I have spoken of. I will then return and report to you. How would that be?" So saying, he bid farewell to the magistrate.

The next day Brother saw Kang, conveyed the magistrate's plan, and secured his

agreement. He then visited Yi to explain the progress he had made; Yi met him with a grand welcome and was most pleased. When Brother went back to town three days later and reported the two men's interest, the magistrate replied, "Since we are of one mind on this matter, I shall give you a letter that guarantees an unlimited loan."

The letter was addressed to Kam Sŭngmu, the magistrate's deputy in charge of the gold exchange at Sugyo Market. Kam and the magistrate basically used government funds in the performance of their official duties. Brother took his leave of the magistrate and the next day reported to Kang and Yi and went to Kam to deliver the letter.

Kam said, "I see. You may return with them and take possession of the funds."

The following day Brother along with Kang and Yi went to the gold exchange and asked Kam for 5000 *nyang* as an initial payment and Kam obliged. Brother would be in charge of the money and bookkeeping.

Kang was now renewed for all the world to see. He had built a mountain of debt over a long period, and his creditors now came in droves calling for their money back.

Brother had to explain to the creditors, "Kang *sŏndal* is operating the mine with a loan from the government; he is not in a position to do anything for whomsoever he owes money. But if we mine gold enough to repay the government and are left with a profit I will pay you back. So please do not worry."

That was indeed the truth. The creditors stopped their cajoling and wished for a good harvest of gold. And three months later, as Kang had planned, the Pokch'on gold mine was born with two sluices that each extended downhill for several miles. A stream fed into the sluices, which began where three mine shafts had been dug to the depth of a tall man's height. Most of the miners were needed to haul water that seeped into the shafts, and a total of 32 men worked in four shifts of 8 men each, distributed in groups of 2, 4, and 2 among the three shafts, respectively. There were in addition some 125 day laborers. Add those who hauled the ore out of the shafts and those who sifted through it for gold and you had a daily count of several hundred men.

On April 5 of the *kihŏe* year [1899], the day that work commenced on the mine, the county magistrate personally made an appearance along with his counterparts from other regions. The gathering of their sunshades at the entrance to the mine was something to behold. Magistrate Chang, here in his capacity as superintendent of mining, looked majestic. Kang's golden opportunity had finally arrived.

From the first of the three shafts 160 *nyang* of gold was leached out for Kang *sŏndal*, of which 102 *nyang* was distributed among the day laborers. The news circulated throughout the country and Pokch'on reigned ascendant in Songhwa. Anybody was welcome to have a look, but the government made sure no other shaft was dug nearby.

Every day from April through July several hundred nuggets were extracted, with which Kang was able to pay off his debt and become rich. But then for ten days straight from the end of July into early August there was heavy rain. The stream nearby swelled into an ocean and surged into the Pokch'on gold mine, making the shafts several times deeper and flooding the sluices. Several hundred miners scattered every which way.

Late in August Kang announced that he was suspending operations for the time being and was willing to sell the mine to any interested buyer for one million *nyang*. The only ones with access to that kind of money were the county magistrate and my brother Insŏng. After consulting with the magistrate, who voiced his support, Brother purchased the mining operation from Kang for 150,000 *nyang*, payable by himself and the magistrate in two installments, the first half in six months' time and the remainder in a year. To rebuild the two long sluices Brother and the magistrate had to recruit several hundred workers a day; this was not a problem, it being the slack season for the farmers. In two months they were able to resume operations. On November 3, for the first test of the mine shafts, they sifted through the deposits in the sluices, but this time they found no gold. Where in the world had all the gold gone from those shafts that had yielded hundreds of nuggets? The locals said the mountain god had played a trick because no offering had been made, or else it was because Kang *sŏnda's* fortune had remained with Kang alone. That night Brother and the magistrate went up the mountain and offered a prayer to the mountain god. Funding was not an issue because the money came from the government. Subsequently they tried several dozen more tests but with meager results. Still, they continued to hire several hundred men daily.

Wild rumors began to circulate that Chang Kihyŏk the county magistrate and Chang Insŏng, both from Songhwa, had embezzled government money. To make matters worse, Yi Yongik, the Minister of Finance, who controlled government funds, was branded a traitor by jealous, disloyal subjects and proceeded to exile himself in Russia. The capital dispatched a force to capture the magistrate, and Brother went into hiding in P'ungch'ŏn. In the absence of the Songhwa County magistrate, the Chang'yŏn County magistrate served there concurrently. The Chang'yŏn magistrate issued a warrant for Brother's arrest and a contingent of soldiers arrived at our home. They found no Brother, only an empty house. The soldiers reported to the magistrate, who sent them back along with his secretary, who sold off Brother's house and farmland. The news was conveyed to us by my Uncle Ŭnghwan. Those were lawless times, and although I wanted to go to the capital and petition, I was prevented by lack of funds.

Six Generations of Family History

My great-great-great-grandfather had only a single son, who likewise had only a single son. But my great-grandfather had three sons. The eldest son was childless, the middle son was my grandfather, and then there was the youngest son. Our family was affluent and my great-grandfather and grandfather were especially learned. My great-great-great-grandfather sat for the state civil-service examination in Seoul several times but never passed. Great-great-grandfather suffered the same fate. Great-grandfather did pass the preliminary exam but not the second round. At that time our family was befriended by a "man of excellence" in Seoul, who let it be known that one of the adjudicators was a very close friend; he said this as if expecting something from Great-grandfather. Disgusted with all the men of excellence in Seoul, Great-grandfather came home and promptly took off on a sightseeing excursion among scenic mountains and rivers throughout the land. Upon his return he stayed in his

room with his eyes closed.

Great-grandmother took pity on him and said, “My dear husband, please open your eyes and consider what is taking place around you.”

“You poor woman, you don’t know a thing. I will know when to open my eyes!” His eyes remained closed.

Great-grandmother was left to take care of household matters as well as raising the three sons by herself. The family fortune dwindled and the three sons all moved out but remained needy. Great-grandfather died at the age of forty-nine, after which Great-grandmother lived out the rest of her days with my grandparents.

Maternal Grandfather Im Naktong *chwasu*

In Songhwa there lived not quite one hundred members of the Sōhae Im clan. They were a minority clan but were known to adhere to propriety in their behavior. My maternal grandfather was from a poor family and after a basic education in the *Ch’ōnjamun* [Thousand Chinese Characters] primer at the village school he devoted himself to farming. From the age of sixteen he operated a hot springs, and at age twenty he was appointed to the position of head of local administration in his Songhwa County ancestral home, and took on the title *chwasu*. He was a man of clean fingers who avoided entanglement with friend and foe alike.

In the *pyōngin* year [1866] the central government ordered officials nationwide to recruit militias to fight the French navy on Kanghwa Island. In Hwanghae Province 300 men gathered in response to the summons but no one was willing to risk his life to lead this army. Indignant at this state of affairs, Im *chwasu* offered his services to the county magistrate, who reported this to the provincial governor, and ultimately Im led a force of 300 to military headquarters in the capital. But by then the French ships had been sunk and hostilities had abated.

The military officials asked Grandfather and his men, “What now are your wishes?”

He answered, “We have none. When the country needed us we came to help.”

“We understand, but still, don’t you all want something to take home with you?”

“Sir, if you insist, please give whatever you may to the men. I myself need nothing,” replied Grandfather.

And so the military officials rewarded the men with various titles—*sōndal*, *onijang*, *kōmch’al*, *ch’ōmsa*, and the like—but they were titles only, and Grandfather returned with the men to Songhwa. Among these militia men who were bestowed titles for volunteering to defend against a foreign force was none other than the gold miner Kang *sōndal*. Back at home Grandfather summoned his offspring and instructed them never to visit the capital, for country hicks like himself were of no use to the Yi Dynasty.

Grandfather Im *chwasu* resumed his duties as head of local administration. Even in the countryside there was a distinct “nobility,” the *yangban*, and the position of head of local administration was predicated on correct behavior. And so it was that among the local clansmen a promising young man named Im Chihwan came to Grandfather’s attention. Young Im had a problem: he was not registered in the village census, the reason being that

his mother's name had been expunged from it due to her remarriage. My grandfather Im *chwasu*, head of local administration, recommended at a village meeting that Im Chihwan's name be added to the census, but the majority of the villagers were opposed, because of the mother's remarriage. Pondering the situation, Im *chwasu* came to the next meeting armed with a dagger as a hardline measure and again recommended the young man for inclusion in the census. And again he was faced with opposition by the villagers. It was then that he flashed the dagger and issued a threat. "I shall give all of you one last chance. This dagger will decide for any naysayer." A silence fell over the villagers. And then a youth named Chang Tongok announced his support for Grandfather's suggestion and Kang *chwasu* did likewise, and with the support of the three men Chihwan's name was added to the census.

Chihwan later became head of local administration, with the title *chwasu*, and was well known in the county. He was utterly upright, to the point of remonstrating with the county magistrates when they did wrong. Three such incidents resulted in Chihwan's exile.

The first occasion came about when he learned that the magistrate was swindling the people. "Honorable County Magistrate," said Im, "you are casting a greedy eye and I fear you will face a revolt by the villagers. You should return to the capital at once."

"What right have you to ask me that?" said the magistrate.

To which Im responded, "The county magistrate should be the protector of the villagers of Songhwa, not a thief to his subjects. You should do as I suggest, leaving your command tally here."

The outraged magistrate flung the command tally at Im, took off to the capital, and reported to the authorities that the tally had been seized by Im. The authorities punished Im with a year-long banishment to a nearby village for the crime of tampering with an official command tally. The second incident was similar and brought the same term of banishment. The third incident involved a new Songhwa County magistrate. This man came from a lofty family in Seoul and was serving his first government post. He too was a cheater and extorted the people's belongings as if he was operating in a no-man's land. Im Chihwan *chwasu* attempted several times to reason with this magistrate but the man remained arrogant.

Finally the outraged Im brandished a club and shouted at the man: "On several occasions I have offered you suggestions--why in heaven's name do you not listen?" And then he added, "Why not simply give up your command tally and leave?"

"Who the hell are you to be talking about listening?" roared the magistrate.

To which Im retorted, "This club is perfect for a Seoul *yangban* like you. So which shall it be? Relinquish your command tally and leave, as I have suggested? Or enjoy a taste of this club first?"

The magistrate pondered every which way before muttering, "You bastard! I will go back to Seoul all right, and my first order of business will be to detain and then kill you." With these words he tossed his command tally to Im and returned to the capital, where he bandaged his head and reported to the authorities that that Im bastard in Songhwa had cracked his skull open with a club. And for that Im earned a three-year banishment to Kanggye in North P'yŏngan Province.

The Ch'angwŏn Hwangs, Clan of My Maternal Grandmother

The majority of the population of Munhwa County were of the Ch'angwŏn Hwang clan, and numerous Hwangs took part in a rebellion, led by the traitor Yu Hŭnghyŏk, that arose near Kuwŏl Mountain. After Yu's revolt spread to Kaesŏng and failed, Grandfather Im foresaw that harm was on the way if the Hwangs got caught, for the authorities were tracking down the partisans. But despite his grave concern the rebels were not traceable. This was because Yu had burned the roster of participants at the time of the failed revolt.

Reading at My Village School

When I was six my father converted his study to a family "reading room" to educate me and hired a teacher named Kim and provided a house for him and his wife and daughter and covered all his expenses. The girl happened to be the same age as me and loved to play, but she had no interest in reading.

Back then I was referred to by my childhood name of Ch'ŏnmyŏng, and it was for the sake of me and my playmate that my family supplied everything for the teacher's family. The reading room lasted a year but then was discontinued, since I did not develop an interest in reading. Moreover, my mother was opposed to it. Having lost three sons, she treasured me all the more and wanted to let me go my own way.

We had a dog, Wŏlwŏl, born the same year as me. Wŏlwŏl was a dear companion to me and the other children. When it died in its ninth year my friends and I held a grand ceremony. After this observance Father consulted with Mother and they decided to send me to the village school operated by the Chang clan of Taedong. So there I was, reciting the *Ch'ŏnjamun* at my advanced age while the other children cackled in glee. No longer did I think about playing; instead I focused on reading, thereby drawing praise from the clan. In two years I completed the *Ch'ŏnjamun* and read three other primers for children—the *Kyemong p'yŏn* [Primer], the *Tongmong sŏnsŭp* [Selected Readings for Children], and that part of the *Ship'al saryak* [Eighteen Concise Histories] dealing with Kyoji Nam and Wŏlsang-*ssbi*. You might wonder what the good of all that was. I could memorize and recite what I read but I didn't understand it. And so the clan held a meeting and that's when they invited Pak Tosun to be the village teacher. Pak was an observant man and made no move for a time, but before long he started lashing and grilling the children. Then he started telling stories, explaining that "what you are reading are stories of the past and the present, nothing more and nothing less." The children took to his storytelling and all of them became eager to read.

One day Teacher Pak called on me, asking, "My little Ch'ŏnmyŏng, how far have you read in the *Ship'al saryak*?"

"Sir, I've read up to Kyoji Nam and Wŏlsang-*ssbi*."

"Really? Then tell me, what do those two mean?"

"I have no clue, sir."

"Well, then, you're no different from a blind man attempting to read a Buddhist sutra.

As I have told you children, what you are reading are words that reflect a person's thought. Kyoji was an area in the south of Zhou China, and Wōlsang is the name of the person who ruled that area. Tomorrow why not start over in the *Ship'al saryak* from Chapter One, line one, about the emperors?"

From that time on I would go to school in the morning and kneel before Teacher Pak and greet him, asking if he had passed a restful night. Teacher Pak would beckon me saying, "Ch'ōnmyōng, come closer and let's read about the Heavenly Emperor. First of all, who is this Heavenly Emperor?" And then he went on for some time about the Earthly Emperor and the Human Emperor. Then he opened the *Ship'al saryak* and said, "This is the section I've been talking about. Try to digest it and tell me if you don't understand it clearly." And then we moved to a question-and-answer session, which I found quite exciting.

As soon as I understood the context of the stories in the *Ship'al saryak*, I was able to sound out the words after Teacher Pak explained their meaning. Then I would add the appropriate verb endings and he would correct me as necessary, keeping the syntax as simple as possible. Studying for three years under teacher Pak, I learned how to write my humble name in Chinese.

I was unable to forget him, ordinary though he was, and all my life I kept him in my heart, a person of talent and broad-mindedness. I learned so much from him about Sun Tzu's *Pyōngbōp* [On the Art of War] and the future of Chosōn. He would say, "If you happen to be deep in the mountains, or if you're feeling lonely, forlorn, and despairing, you must know how to control your mind: repeat to yourself three times, 'Focus with strength and honesty!' This will calm your mind, and in your mind's eye you can see the future, even if you're suffering in the wilderness."

From the time my family was ruined and I decided to leave home I would recite this mantra three times whenever I felt lonely or worried or was disheartened at an unsatisfactory outcome. Decades of enjoyment from reciting this mantra at difficult times enabled me finally to lighten my heart. *I am the reflection of my mind!* How many times I experienced that realization!

I respect Teacher Pak as my savior. After him I studied under several other teachers, but I found them boring for the most part. Attending the village school until age fifteen helped me to write my name well enough, but I can't say I mastered anything in particular.

Working as a Clerk

My family went bankrupt, and six months before his death Father directed me to work for Yi Kyusōn in Onjōng. I served him as a clerk for three months. When Father passed away I returned home to help out my elder brother. Two years later Mother passed away. Father passed at the age of sixty-one on February 28 of the lunar calendar in the *shinch'uk* year [1901] and Mother passed at the age of fifty-two on November 28 of the lunar calendar in the *kyemyo* year [1903].

Working as a Gold Miner

My elder brother was heartbroken after Father's passing and he fell ill. Our household of seven was poor, and with no other way to make money that I could think of, I went to work at a gold mine. I continued to work there after Mother passed, but in time I found the work to be uninteresting and I quit.

Leaving Home in March of the *Kapchin* Year [1904]

I had always planned to leave home and see the world, but not while Mother was alive, and now suddenly she was gone. A month after she died I left and traveled in the vicinity of Kuwöl Mountain. Early the following March I visited Shin Ŭngjung *chinsa's* home in Panjŏng-ni and stayed with him until early August, studying this and that.

Shin *chinsa* and his family and home were very well provisioned and he treasured me as he would a grandson. He once told me that if instead of wandering around I were to study at his home, then the moral training and experience in household management I would gain would open up a way "to rule the nation and put the world at peace." But I was doubtful.

Around the time of the Tonghak Peasant Army uprising in the *keabo* year [1894], Pang Wŏnjung, assistant head of the Tonghak parish, served as a teacher in a neighborhood near Shin *chinsa's* residence. Shin *chinsa* considered Pang a criminal, but I thought of him more as a man of the world. Pang used to say that if in doubt we should go to Chinnamp'o to see where the world was heading.

One day I happened to hear a traveler just returned from southern China regaling Shin with accounts of his journey. This prompted me to contemplate a journey there myself. At the same time, an older cousin, Im Paeha, while proselytizing to me about Christian teachings, urged me to consider further study at a Christian middle school in P'yŏngyang. And so I reckoned I would either study at that school if I fancied it, or I would travel to southern China. With that in mind I returned home for the Ch'usŏk festival and saw my elder brother, older cousins, and grand-uncle. After staying for two days at my elder brother's, visiting Teacher Chang and Ch'oe Tojŏng in Onjŏng, and taking in a market day in Anak Township, I returned to Shin's home. Subsequently I spent a night at Ch'oe Taejun's inn in Ŭgyang'ŏl-li and met more Hwanghae people in Tutkae.

One of those I happened to meet in Tutkae was Yi Kyŏngsu, who used to stay with us for days at a time when my father was alive. I was especially happy to see a familiar face in my travels. Yi suggested that a great opportunity awaited a young man like me if I could spend some time in Hawai'i, a U.S. territory, then travel to the American mainland and study. He added that with a command of English I would be able to obtain a high-ranking post and make a grand fortune. I immediately agreed to this proposition, for I had been hoping all along for such an opportunity.

I registered at the East-West Development Company and whom should I find there but Pak Ch'ŏnyong from Anak, who was the same age as I. He was delighted to see me and

declared me his friend. He told me he was a married man who had left his wife at home. Why would he have wanted to do that? I asked. Well, he said, he had been introduced to gambling by thugs from back home and had ended up in debt to them to the tune of several thousand *nyang*; it was a source of misery and hardship for his family. But, he continued, he didn't believe the thugs would seize his assets in his absence and so he hit on the idea of leaving home for several years in order to avoid having to pay them off. His mother, widowed at a young age, had raised and educated him, but he could not help running off because of the calamity he had wrought upon his family. I likewise explained to him my family's circumstances and my own situation. We swore to each other that since we were the same age and of the same mind we would study in America and return home together. But to judge from the tears he shed whenever he thought about his mother and his loving wife, Pak must have had a tender heart—how could such a person manage the adversity of life in America? To my way of thinking, a grown man should not let family affairs interfere once he has firmly charted his course in life.

At Namp'o, our point of departure, we were joined by seven other men. One of them, a man named Ko from the Chŏlla area, posed a question: "Since we are crossing the wide ocean to a foreign land we should unite as one. Why don't we follow custom in this situation and form a brotherhood?" And after further discussion it was so decided.

The eldest among us was Ko, and the next eldest was a man of the Yongch'ŏn Kim clan. Once again I found myself the youngest in a group. Ko, though, was eliminated from the journey by virtue of failing the physical exam required by the East-West Development Company, disqualified by his poor eyesight. This was truly unfortunate in that he spoke Japanese, English, and Russian, having studied early on in southern Manchuria, Vladivostok, and Tokyo; he could easily have been our leader. Before we left, Ko instructed Kim in earnest: "I beg you to fill in for me, look after your younger brethren, and guide them in the right direction so that they will triumph and return home in glory."

And so it was that on September 8 of the *kapchin* year [1904] we bid farewell to Ko at Namp'o, boarded a cargo ship, and set off. As the ship rounded Pibal Island we sang a farewell song: "*Pibal Island, dear Pibal Island, goodbye dear Pibal Island! Please be well until we meet next year at the third moon!*" And then we shed tears.

Kim, second oldest of our brotherhood after Ko, was lacking in education and not fit to be our leader because he very jealous and self-interested. At the time of our departure from Namp'o I was given a packet of documents by an East-West Development Company clerk with instructions to deliver it to the Kobe office. I was also told to make sure none of the eight of us disembarked at any Chosŏn port, and to report to the ship captain if I faced resistance to this policy. So involuntarily I ended up as an overseer. I was in a fix and knew not what to do, but Pak Ch'ŏnyong offered to help me and so I carried out the mission successfully. During our voyage Kim, shaking his head, griped, "You're the youngest and you have no authority--how on earth could you take on this important mission without consulting me?" Pak defended me saying, "It's the clerk who is to blame, not Inmyŏng. Big brother, I think he can use your help!" But Kim flew into a rage: "I'm breaking our oath of

brotherhood, so don't call me 'big brother!'" And then he started cursing. Pak *sōndal* from P'yōngyang then had his say: "I agree with big brother. Chang is the youngest and he has no experience with the world and no knowledge of Japanese. I'm good at Japanese, so we brothers will be reunited if you entrust me with the business." After he had carried on at some length I responded: "I fully understand your concerns, big brothers. But I feel it's not worth quarreling over a trivial matter, especially on our way to a distant land. My duty is simply to deliver this envelope to the Company office in Japan and to make sure none of us gets off the ship along the way when it docks." At this Kim became even more infuriated: "I'm getting off in Inch'ōn. I can't stand your uppitiness. I will go no farther on this trip." I said, "Big brother, I will be forced to report to the captain that you want to get off because of this trivial matter." Pak *sōndal* chimed in: "Go ahead. How can you report to him when you can't speak Japanese?" I replied, "I was told by the clerk that the Japanese captain speaks Korean." In that case there was no more to say, said Pak and Kim. They told me to be their guest but never again to call them "big brother."

At Inch'ōn Kim asked, "Let me get off the boat, will you?"

"I have no authority other than to report to the captain, so let it be," I replied.

"Who the hell do you think you are?"

"I'm nothing special."

"Just you wait until we get to Hawai'i!"

"In Hawai'i we will have no other choice than to go our separate ways, so please do not call me names!"

At Inch'ōn the ship took on seven more men and a clerk asked, "Which one of you was put in charge at Namp'o?" When I said it was I, he handed me another envelope to deliver to the Kobe office. After the ship left Inch'ōn I happened to stroll the deck and meet the younger brother of a certain Kang *sōndal* from Seoul; he said he was the same age as I and we proceeded to talk at length. When the ship docked at Mokp'o one of the seven who had boarded at Inch'ōn wanted to run away. I said to Kang *sōndal's* brother, "If that kid tries to run away I will have to report him to the captain." He said, "Before you do anything..." And then he went to the kid and grabbed him by the collar and held him tight. "You little rascal, why are you trying to sneak off?" I had no problems at our last two ports of call, Mokp'o and Pusan.

When the ship docked at Kobe, two clerks from the Company office came on board and asked who was in charge of the group from Namp'o and Inch'ōn. I said I was and they asked for the envelopes. I handed them over and thus my duties were completed.

After I had eaten lunch at the Company office a clerk came up to me and asked, "Who will be your leader here in Kobe?" Upon my recommendation Pak *sōndal* was chosen. As dinnertime drew close the clerk returned and took Pak with him so that he could bring us our meals. The rest of us merely sat and ate. After a day of this, Pak grew resentful. "You recommended me for a lousy job," he said, shaking his head. "Why would you want to do that unless we are enemies?" I responded, "If you don't care to do it, we can tell the clerk to find someone else, so please don't worry."

We rested in Kobe for fourteen days. When after three days Pak raised hell about being a meal-delivery slave, I consulted with the group. Everyone agreed to pitch in, working in pairs and taking turns. Pak *sŏndal* was given a break since he had already taken his turn.

The first pair to deliver the meals consisted of Pak Ch'ŏnyong and myself. The clerk asked us about the change in the meal-delivery procedure and we explained.

While we were in Kobe the number of Korean emigrants on our ship grew to 205 and the number of Japanese emigrants increased to 700. During the voyage the two groups began feuding. Quarreling developed into fighting and there were quite a few minor injuries on both sides, until the crewmen declared a ceasefire. The Japanese swore at us and said, "Wait until we get to Honolulu!"

On November 2 we landed in Honolulu, on the island of Oahu, and I went to work at a farm on that island.

I Decide to Believe in Christianity

When we had arrived at Kobe and reported to the Company office we found the Reverend Hong Sŭngha propagating Christian teachings there. The Reverend Hong was the son of a low-level official from Namyang in Kyŏnggi Province. He had high hopes for a government career, but he never obtained so much as a minor position and eventually he entered the church and became a minister. At the start of Korean emigration to Hawai'i the Methodist Church decided to dispatch a minister and selected him. He preached in Hawai'i but decided to return home, citing his health and incidents involving the New People's Association. Along the way he stopped in Kobe, where he stayed for a time at the Company office and preached to the Korean emigrants. One day he summoned me and said that his son was the same age as me. He also said that he had preached in Hawai'i but decided to go home for health reasons and had made a detour to Kobe. And so it was that I learned from him firsthand about Hawai'i. He told me he wanted me to be a Christian and prepared for me a certificate stating that I was a recent convert. He said to give the certificate to a certain minister in Hawai'i as a letter of introduction, and to attend church every weekend to listen to the sermon and take part in Bible study.

Speaking of Christianity, my older cousin Im Paeha was a Christian and was forever trying to bring me into the church, but opposition from my father and elder brother made this impossible. But by now I felt I was free to do as I pleased and I became a believer.

When I arrived at Ewa Farm in early November of 1904 I found several hundred Koreans there. Among them was a group that preached Christianity and a group that tended to oppose it. Kim Yŏngshik, minister of the Church of Jesus Christ at Ewa Farm, a man from Anak in Hwanghae Province, was very kind to me. In March of 1905 I was baptized at this church. I worked diligently in the sugarcane fields at Ewa Farm for ten months, through August 1905. And then at the beginning of September I went to Honolulu to study.

School Days

I studied in Honolulu from September 1905 until June 1906, when I went back to Ewa Farm for the harvest season. I returned to Honolulu in early August and on the thirteenth of that month I landed in San Francisco, California. I wanted right away to find work in railroad construction and so I went to where the Japanese were staying. A new rail line was being constructed and I found a job as a digger. I worked hard at this job for three months. Then in November I moved to Sacramento, where I was accommodated by the Taedong Education Association—which would become the Taedong Save-the-Nation Association—and attended school.

I stayed in Sacramento for about fifteen months, until February 1908. By then I was suffering from a terrible boil on my neck, for which I was treated for seven weeks at NW Hospital in Reno, Nevada. Seeing little improvement in my condition, I returned to Sacramento and then was admitted to Fresno Hospital for surgery. My health improved to the point that I was able to work at a farm for several months and re-register at the school in Sacramento.

In April of 1909 I left for Chicago. That summer I worked at the Mieu Farm in the Chicago area, then went to Sherry, Wisconsin, for a year to study at the Northwest Collegiate Institute. The boil reappeared in July 1910 and I returned to Chicago for treatment at the Presbyterian Hospital. Unable to return to school in September 1910, I worked instead. Ever since then I've had business on my mind, but thus far have had no success. I have no one but myself to blame for this and know all too well that the fault lies with me.

Selling Ginseng in South America

In April 1913 I left for South America to sell ginseng. I passed through the Panama Canal and ended up in Peru for a year. It was a most interesting and profitable time. From Peru I went back to Panama, then headed to Brazil in May of 1914. But my plans for that country did not work out and I had to admit failure. So why not take a trip to Europe? I told myself.

Accompanying me on that trip was Yi Ŭngch'il, a middle-aged man twenty years my senior. In May of 1914 we departed from Brazil and landed in Southampton, England, where we stayed for the month of June. At the end of June we went to Paris, and two weeks later to Germany, and two weeks after that to New York City, arriving there July 29. By then, World War I had begun. Germany entered the war on July 23. Our ship had left Germany on July 22—how lucky we were! If we had delayed our departure by a day, it could have cost us quite a fortune, not to mention a great deal of hardship. In New York we took stock of our funds—we each had a thousand dollars. Yi went to Chicago. I did some sightseeing in several cities on the East Coast, returned to Chicago for a brief time, then left again for South America. But it was wartime and I had to cut the trip short because of the danger of travel: a German naval vessel had attacked a Mexican merchant ship. I spent about six months in the American South, mostly in Texas. With Mexico undergoing a civil war, traveling in that country would

have been difficult, and so I just had a look around near the border.

That winter, on December 23, 1914, to be precise, I returned to Chicago. In January 1915 I began work at the Greenwood Inn in Evanston, Illinois, wanting to save up so I could see the world's fair in San Francisco. I worked with two buddies of mine, Kim Söngsu and Cho Chisu, and we made an agreement to go into business together. This meant I would have to give up going to the world's fair. I had wanted to see the fair and look around for business opportunities in California, but I changed my mind and stayed in Chicago for the time being. And then Cho Chongjin joined our venture. That marked the birth of our Agriculture and Commerce Loan Association.

In March of 1917 I was engaged to Cho Chongjin's sister Todam [Dothan Joe] back in Korea. At that time it was difficult for Koreans to acquire a visa, and so she journeyed to Shanghai in an attempt to leave for America without one, but the effort failed. In March of 1919 she obtained a visa and arrived in San Francisco. On March 25 she arrived in Chicago and on April 12 we were married.

In January 1920 we disposed of an inn we had been leasing, the Shangmu Inn, and moved to Evanston, where I returned to work at the Greenwood Inn. Corea was born January 29, 1920, Rose on January 26, 1921, Samuel on December 24 of the same year, and Lily on April 6, 1923.



Life at the Greenwood Inn

From February 23, 1920, to June 30, 1952, I spent thirty long years in the greater Chicago area. Rose was born at Evanston Hospital, Samuel and Lily at St. Francis Hospital, and Corea at Chicago Wesley Hospital. At the Greenwood Inn our family life had been my first priority. We bought a new house on Chicago's West Side and lived there for several years. We managed life as a couple for ten years and then our marriage ended in divorce on November 19, 1931.

In February 1929 we sent Corea, Rose, and Samuel to a Christian school in Hawai'i. In February of 1932 Todam went to Hawai'i and took the three of them along with Lily to Korea. Rose, Samuel, and Lily returned to Chicago in August of 1938. In January of 1939 Todam returned with our oldest, Corea,

to Chicago and a month later went with all four children to Los Angeles. Since then Todam and the four kids have been based primarily in Los Angeles. Samuel came to Evanston in July 1940 to study. He was followed by Rose and Lily, who arrived around Thanksgiving of 1940. In the fall of 1941 Samuel went to an armed forces training camp in York, Pennsylvania. In February 1942 he returned to Evanston and volunteered for the military; I signed for him because he was underage. Corea was married in 1940. Todam remarried in 1941, which was why Rose and Lily had come to Evanston--they had no place to live. In 1941 both girls went to New York City. Lily married Kim Ch'angha, and Rose married Yi Kwangjun. Samuel completed four years of military service, from May 1942 to February 1946.



A Chosŏn Person in America

Activities

When I landed in San Francisco on August 13, 1906, the Taedong Education Association arranged railroad construction work for me and other Koreans who arrived on the same ship. I thereby became a member of the Association. The Sacramento branch, being the birthplace of the Association, enjoyed a certain amount of authority and, in the eyes of its members, importance. I served as a secretary of that branch. In 1907 Kojong, the Kwangmu Emperor, was dethroned and the status of my homeland plummeted. What could I do? Nothing came immediately to mind. Finally I concluded that the best I could do was form a guerrilla band that would operate in northwestern Manchuria. I started by recruiting men I knew from

Hawai'i, including Chŏn Towŏn and Pak Chaeok. Chŏn had served in the emperor's army and Pak had a wealth of knowledge. And then from the mainland several dozen men, including Ha Sangok and Kim Kyŏngnam, agreed to join us. But we needed financing. I consulted with Kim and we decided that our band of several dozen men should work for the money we needed to reach Manchuria, and then rise to the occasion. And so we began working at the Brown corn farm near Sacramento, but we were fired after a dispute with the owner. We had to return to Sacramento, our spirit for the great cause sucked dry. I pondered more but could find no other way and so I focused on my civic duty of secretarial work for what had been renamed the Taedong Save-the-Nation Association.

It was in early 1908 that the boil on my neck had begun to torment me, and after the seven weeks of fruitless treatment in Reno and my return to Sacramento I had found relief through surgery at Fresno Hospital. I worked for two months at a fruit farm in Fresno Town and that winter, through March of 1909, attended a program at Fresno Elementary School.

In April I had gone to Chicago and spent the summer working, and in October I had gone to the boarding school in Sherry, Wisconsin, for a year. After the Japanese annexation of Chosŏn in August 1910 I mulled over the situation and again concluded that we needed a guerrilla army. Coincidentally Kim Changho was looking for a military school where he could study. We were of like mind and pledged to raise several hundred men for a guerrilla army to fight in northwestern Manchuria and if necessary die for our country. I communicated with Ch'oe Chŏngik, who was based in San Francisco and was a driving force in the Korean National Association. With Kim I completed a first round of fundraising in California and collected some two thousand dollars from the Koreans there. Kim then went to the East Coast. I wanted to hear from him before I departed and so I waited and waited from one day to the next, until the days grew into weeks, but there was no news and I never did hear from him. It was frustrating and pitiable.

Chang Kyŏng had contacted Yi Pŏmsŏn, commander of the Righteous Army, and Yi Pŏmjŏn, former minister to Russia. I learned later that Chang had gone to great lengths to arrange for Kim Changho to go to Russia, where Yi Pŏmjŏn was still based. The plan was for Kim to secure funding from Russia and then join commander Yi in northwestern Manchuria to recruit the army. It turned out that Kim had gone to Vladivostok for a year but had accomplished nothing, and then returned to the East Coast and gone into hiding. How could anyone consider such a person a man of consequence? The result of this was that I, the secretary of recruitment for our volunteer army, and Ch'oe Chŏngik, in charge of publicizing our activities, lost all credibility. I considered the situation and then launched a second round of recruitment, but failed. And so I decided to go into business and support the national cause with money instead.

In 1911 I left Chicago with five hundred dollars in work earnings, planning to grow rice in Texas, but I made it only as far as St. Louis, where I did some peddling but in six months' time ended up blowing all my money. Returning to Chicago, I ran a Korean inn for a year, then went into business making and selling rice cakes with Chang Kyŏng and Yu Hŭngjo. In 1913, with Yi Ũngch'il, I went to Panama to sell ginseng. From South America I left for Europe, and from Europe I went to New York City, arriving on July 29, 1914.

From 1915 to 1919 I was occupied with operating an inn and a loan association, but I failed in both. From February 23, 1920, I worked at the Greenwood Inn, and at the same time I helped with house chores at home as well as volunteering in the Korean community. From 1929 to 1952, when I left for Los Angeles, I was a fervent member of the Tongjihoe chapter in Chicago. As I recall, the date of my arrival in Los Angeles was August 2, 1952. I regret to say that during the five long years from 1952 to August 2, 1957, I accomplished nothing. I contributed nothing to the Korean community, which made me feel like a loser.

My Children

Samuel married a woman named Yi and they had a pretty daughter, Patty. Corea married a man named Kang and they had a daughter and two sons. Rose married a man named Yi and

they had two sons. Lily married a Kim, but divorced him and remarried, this time to an Yi. She lamented having no children and adopted a year-old boy and raised him.

Reasons for My Lifetime of Failure

1. My behavior, originating in ignorance and stupidity.
2. My gullibility, deriving from my lack of good judgment of others.
3. My ignorance of finance and lack of transparency in money management.
4. My tendency to daydream and to indulge in illusion instead of applying myself to reality.
5. My wasting time in idle talk and fruitless speculation; because I did not know how to conduct myself, in the eyes of others I behaved like a madman.
6. My ambiguity in speech and behavior, which earned me the mistrust of others.

As I have mentioned, I am to blame for my failures. But at this point there is no use in lamenting, and from now on I should focus and be more prudent.

History of Koreans in America

The immigration to Hawai'i in 1902 was followed by the formation of the New People's Association, which marked the start of Korean society in America. The Reverend Hong Sŭngha was the primary advocate for the formation of the Association. It was political in nature, and was joined by U Pyŏnggil, An Chŏngsu, Song Hŏnju, Yi Chŏngnae, Im Chun'gi, and Yi Kyodam.

These men and others met in secret to name the society and convene a new government. The Reverend Hong was designated President, An became Foreign Minister, U was Home Minister, Song was Minister of Finance, Im was Minister of Agriculture and Commerce, Yi Kyodam was Minister of Education, and Yi Chŏngnae was Defense Minister. Conflict developed and the Association members began bickering over such issues as whether a man was a Seoullite or a P'yŏngyang person. Their disputes leaked outside the Association, presenting the anti-Christian group with a great opportunity.

These nonbelievers went far and wide making a great fuss: "The Jesus crazies are cooking up treason!" My impression at the time was that people did not believe what the outsiders said but tended to trust the more vocal Christians. This was the situation of the first generation of Korean immigrants in Hawai'i. Ever since then the Christians have rarely resorted to the framework of a social organization to discuss issues of public concern. Two exceptions were a young-adult group within the church community in Honolulu and on Ewa Farm, and a friendship society centered in the person of Chŏng Wŏnmyŏng, an interpreter. Motivated by his troubled relationship with a woman, Chŏng had left the Methodist church. I heard that he and several Presbyterian believers would worship in his office on Sundays, and that he held social gatherings at his house on Saturdays.

In Honolulu the Pak Wŏnsŏp Inn was favored by the Seoul Hoegwan Christians, and the Pak Chŏngun Inn was frequented by the P'yŏngyang people. Such was the situation in the

early days of the Koreans in Hawai'i.

History of Koreans in North America

San Francisco was the start of the Korean community on the mainland. At that time, An Ch'angho and Chang Kyöng were in the area. Their trip was arranged by Kim Yuno, who had mentored both men and had great expectations for Korea's future.

Who was Kim Yuno? He was the first son of Kim Söngsöm *chwasu* from the village of Songch'ön, Chang'yön County, Hwanghae Province, birthplace of the new Christian churches in Korea. The elder Kim was wealthy and a man of great character, and his clan was powerful and well known in Chang'yön. He utilized this background to foster Christianity and groomed many ministers from Songch'ön who would one day be famous. Kim Yuno was instructed by his father to be a dominating figure in the church. Realizing from the outset that Koreans lacked freedom under the American missionaries in the Songch'ön area, he became a thorn in their side and was forced to leave the church. His younger brother P'ilsun became a doctor at the Chejungwön [present-day Severance Hospital] in Seoul.

And Chang Kyöng? He was of the Indong Chang clan and a native of Ŭiju, the second son of Chang *chinsa* and child of a concubine. His father noticed the young child had outstanding talent and cherished him more than he did the offspring of his lawful wife. Outraged by mistreatment at the hands of his older half-brother, Kyöng sold off his share of the family farmland and went to Seoul, but found no opportunities for a country fellow such as himself. He decided to enroll at Paejae Academy and became a Christian convert. As luck would have it, he met Kim Yuno and explained to him his background, situation, and needs. Kim took stock of Chang's character and talent and offered him lodging at his home. He suggested that Chang and other young men study in America and then work to promote the future of the country. Chang had a wife by then and when he left for America she remained with Kim's family and subsequently with Chang's parents and later accompanied An Ch'angho on his trip to America.

And An Ch'angho? He was born in Yonggang, South P'yöngan Province. He was an early believer in Christianity and an active learner of New World culture as exemplified by America, and emerged as an influential figure in the Independence Club branch in P'yöngyang. He went to Seoul to voice concerns about government corruption and about graft involving Kim Inshik, the Chüngsan County magistrate. But as a country man he had to depend on the Christian church and follow developments in America. An happened to meet Kim Yuno, who arranged for a meeting with Chang Kyöng, and the two young men instantly became close. Under Kim's direction An decided to study in America. An and Chang, practically brothers by then, stayed at Kim's home. Chang went first to America and An departed later with Chang's wife.

At that time in China, under the Qing Dynasty, there was an organization called the Protect-the-Emperor Society, led by Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao, as well as an organization called the Revolutionary Alliance, led by Sun Yat-sen. In San Francisco Chang Kyöng became

friends with some Chinese people who introduced him to Kang Youwei, and he and Kang exchanged letters.

One day An and Chang had a discussion at the Oakland train station about the situation in Chosŏn and about revolutionary measures. An, influenced by Sun Yat-sen's views on the nobility in China, favored ending the dominance of the hereditary aristocracy that was centered in Seoul; instead the nation should be led by those in An's native P'yŏngan Province, in the northwest of the Korean Peninsula. Chang opposed the idea: granted, revolution was important, but not at the expense of bloodshed. Instead of a painful revolution why not continue the Yi Dynasty but add to it a new democratic government featuring a parliament? He went on to cite Great Britain's famous constitutional monarchy, as well as France's collapse after its revolution, which had borne little fruit. An protested that he intended to continue the mission started by Hong Kyŏngnae. Subsequently these two men who had so quickly become close turned into enemies, with Chang a protect-the-dynasty type similar to Kang Youwei and An an overthrow-the-dynasty type like Sun Yat-sen.

When two men disagree on a matter each tends to turn his focus to his own mission. And so it was that Chang left San Francisco for Los Angeles and proceeded to set up headquarters in Pasadena, where he recruited comrades such as Pang Sagyŏm, Yu Hŭngjo, and Kim Mirisa. An for his part founded the Friendship Society in San Francisco, with Kim Sŏngmu, Im Chun'gi, Yi Kyodam, and Yi Chŏngnae.

It was Chang Kyŏng who founded the Taedong Education Association. At that time, the Friendship Society was based in the north of California and the Education Association was based in the south. This was a dire time for the motherland: the nation was collapsing and the people seemed lost. In San Francisco An renamed the Friendship Society the Mutual Assistance Society (MAS); through it he hoped to realize the ideology of Sun Yat-sen and achieve a republic based on democratic politics that would lead ultimately to universal harmony.

Chang for his part renamed the Taedong Education Association the Taedong Save-the-Nation Association, along the lines of Kang Youwei's organization. In 1905, after Japan forced Chosŏn to sign the treaty by which it lost its diplomatic sovereignty, An went back home to continue his activities, while Chang journeyed to Shanghai to establish a branch of his Association there. Although their beliefs had diverged, both men contributed to the future well-being of the Korean people.

What happened to Kim Yuno? Before going to America he had sent his comrade Song Sŏkchun there. Song, arriving in San Francisco by way of Hawai'i, found that An and Chang had split up. He ended up helping An and worked in the MAS office. But when Kim went to San Francisco in 1904 he was denied entry. Perhaps overly optimistic, he hoped the authorities might yield, but it was wishful thinking: the days passed with no results and he had to return home. He passed away not long after and his family fortune was squandered. How sad that he ended up a grumbler! I lamented the passing of this visionary individual. And I cried for myself, a young Chosŏn man living abroad.

If only he had been admitted to America and been able to involve himself in the affairs

of the Chosŏn people. Perhaps in that case An and Chang would not have split and would instead have remained united as one. Kim was a man of great caliber who could easily have guided An and Chang, who for their part would not have dared oppose him. As for Song Sŏkchun, my impression of him in Hawai'i was that he was not a born leader of men.

On January 8, 1907, An Ch'angho returned home. Believing that if you want to catch a tiger you have to enter its den, he decided it was the right time for him to go back. Why? Well, he had been accused of plotting a rebellion by traitors such as Yi Wanyong and Song Pyŏngjun, who were prowling about the Chosŏn court. In the meantime the Mutual Assistance Society in the U.S. was managed by Song Sŏkchun.

On September 24, 1907, Chang Kyŏng went to Shanghai and formed a chapter of the Taedong Save-the-Nation Association and launched the *Tonghwa Monthly*, a newspaper. By secret arrangement with the Min clan, he delivered a letter from Kojong, the Kwangmu Emperor, to Yuan Shikai, asking for the hefty sum of 20,000 *yuan*, but the request was unsuccessful.

When Chang left America he entrusted Mun Yangmok with full authority to manage the Save-the-Nation Association. How Mun worshiped Syngman Rhee and Pak Yongman! But he turned out to be distrustful of Chang, and this resulted in the failure of the Association. There were several other factors, one in particular: Rhee did not share the same ideas as An and Chang; rather he had ideas of his own. And sadly the Association dissolved. Taking the type used for printing the *Taedong Gazette*, Mun went to a library named the Chunghŭngjam and there he printed Rhee's *The Spirit of Independence*. And so it was that with Mun's help Rhee was able to have his book printed. But the next thing anyone knew, Rhee had left secretly for Korea. Realizing he had been manipulated, Mun felt like the proverbial dog watching a chicken on the roof; he was greatly disappointed. For at that time he was considering a major purchase, perhaps a house. Was this his reward for his years of public service? And so he decided to run a ginseng shop and offered day-to-day control of what was left of the Association to Ch'oe Chŏngik, who accepted with delight. Now that Mun had all the time in the world, with Ch'oe's agreement he renamed the organization the Korean National Association, served briefly as its chairman, and advertised himself as such when he started his ginseng shop.

The Mutual Assistance Society had been kept in good standing by Ch'oe Yusŏp, office manager of the Society and a newspaper editor. But Ch'oe had a weakness for wine and women, unlike An Ch'angho and Chang Kyŏng, and was always preoccupied with seeking his next feast. Ch'oe himself had about as much zest as cold water, and the lack of a full-time staff resulted in the weakening of the Korean National Association.

What else should we remember about Ch'oe Yusŏp? For one thing, he had the good fortune to have met Pak Yŏnghyo, thanks to whom he had obtained a position as a county magistrate. Ch'oe was from Ūiju and had worked as a clerk at an inn in Inch'ŏn before meeting Pak. But as county magistrate he ate and entertained himself so well he was ultimately removed from office. It was then that he had gone to America and managed the Mutual Assistance Society. He also met An Ch'angho's widowed sister-in-law and married her. When

he wasn't enjoying himself with food and drink he researched business prospects with an eye to making a windfall, which led him to join with An Sökchung in an enterprise in Los Angeles. His closest friend was Sö P'ilsun, who helped him a great deal in his capacity as a ginseng broker.

In 1911 Ch'oe, using the building occupied by the Korean National Association as collateral, took out a loan with which he started a potato farm in Stanton. The price of potatoes plummeted that fall and the crop was never harvested. Ch'oe lost several thousand dollars and had to resign his position with the Association. Later he and Sö were able to clear the debt. He then left for Polynesia to sell ginseng and earned a whopping profit, whereupon he returned to America and thankfully was able to repay the loan. He then returned to Korea.

As for Mun Yangmok, he made a fortune selling ginseng, found a wife, and had a happy family with two children. He never resumed public service, focusing instead on home and family.

The End of the Save-the-Nation Association

While in Shanghai Chang Kyöng received unfortunate news about the Association. This convinced him that with the intensification of Japan's scheme to annex Chosön, the fall of the Yi Dynasty and the collapse of Chosön were imminent. He returned to San Francisco in May 1909 after contemplating ways to revive the homeland. He then went to Chicago to join his wife and discussed plans for the future with his comrades Pang Sagyöm, Yu Hongjo, and myself. At that time there were only a few dozen Koreans in the Chicago area. Having no place to meet, we rented a house in the southern part of the city. There we were able to meet frequently and have a good time.

Chang Kyöng later proposed establishing an East Asia Revolutionary Movement and wrote a book called *My Steely Blood*. This volume was a call for the people of the new East Asia to depart from autocratic monarchy and win freedom. In it he wrote: "Japanese subjects! Dethrone your Emperor and take ownership of yourselves. The people are the foundation of the nation, and the king is the servant of the people. How is it possible for the servant to mistreat and despise the master?... Japanese subjects! You must first rise and dethrone the Emperor, reform and take ownership of yourselves, and guide East Asia!" This pitch was identical to that of a Japanese association that in Korean was called the Mogyöl sauhoe. Seeking funds with which to publish his book, Chang found no source other than himself.

He proceeded to travel around Polynesia as a ginseng salesman and, sadly, died in Singapore of fever, at the age of forty-one. His passing left me regretful about the manuscript of *My Steely Blood*, as well as that of a book about the history of Chosön written by Chang Habyön [Chang Chiyön], who had entrusted this manuscript to Chang Kyöng in Shanghai. How heartbreaking that Chang had to leave this world before these books saw the light of day. The only ones who had seen his manuscript were Pang, Yu, and me. And so it was that he died in a foreign land, having lost everything in his possession.

His death notice in a Chinese-language newspaper in Singapore came to the attention

of his family, who had no option other than consigning his body to cremation in that distant place. His wife subsequently contacted the authorities in Singapore and learned he had been ill for several days at an inn and had died alone at night, his body found by the maid the following morning. The maid had notified the manager, who had reported to the authorities, who in turn contacted the Chinese community. It was the Chinese who arranged for his cremation. His belongings and money were gone. His death was announced in the newspaper, but his wife and children were not contacted and his body remained in Singapore.