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**Inscription on Buddha at Eun-jin**

FRONT

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| 稽古高麗光宗之十九年己巳沙梯村女採蕨于盤藥山西北隅忽聞有  童子聲俄而進見則有大石從地中聳出心驚恠之歸言其女壻壻卽告  于本縣自官覈秦上達命百官會議啓曰此必作梵相之兆也令尙醫院  遣使入路敷求掌工人成梵相者僧慧明應擧朝廷擢工匠百餘人始事  於庚午訖功於丙午凡三十七年也尊像旣具欲安道場遂千餘人並力  齊運而先頭至連山地南村二十里因名其村曰牛頭也慧明雖成神像  方以未立爲慮適到沙梯有雙童子戱造泥土爲三同佛像卽平地而先  立其本積沙土而次立其中又如是而竟立其末慧明熟視大悟欣然還  來一如其規乃立厥像盖童子卽文殊普賢化爲指敎云佛像身長五十  五尺五寸圍三十尺耳長九尺眉間六尺口角三尺五寸火光五尺冠高  八尺盖方廣十一尺小盖六尺五寸小金佛三尺五寸蓮花枚十一尺或  塗黃金或飭紫金於是乎四方風聞萬姓雲集敬禮者如市故名其前流  曰市津也立畢天雨大注洗滌體像瑞氣盤欝至三七日眉間玉毫之光  照曜乾坤內中國僧智眼望氣從來而禮之曰嘉州有大像亦東向而立  光明同時相應云名觀燭也自是之後祥瑞之氣時從梵相出直透半空 |

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BACK

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| 外八表緇素之徒一邦貴賤之輩無不敬奉焉者昔在唐亂賊兵至鴨綠江此像化  爲蘆笠僧蹇衣渡江衆知其淺驅入水中溺死者過半矣唐將以釰擊之斷其笠子  而所戴盖冠自爾破缺其標宛然可知其爲國之誠國家太平則滿身光潤瑞氣盤  空凶亂則遍體汗流手花無色  朝廷遣官祝辭曰敬設消災國泰民安云云自古風俗盡誠尊崇無不陰隲禱其萬  事則各隨其願此亦報應之明效也古蹟所記多有破落難以悉解正門法堂初設  於洪武十九年丙寅重修於萬曆九年辛巳居土白只康熙十三年甲寅僧智能改  修雍正十三年乙卯僧性能改修徐潭朴信等所造鐵網云耳佛像塗灰則僧信摠  在前城築雜以土石自爲頹落至明道場便作糞穢之所邑底老人慨然於破壞之  獘爲化主乾隆庚申改築石堞兼於床卓亦皆一新云爾銘曰長身屹屹方冠峨峨  層三而連丈六之加千佛之宗萬像特靈效所著冥應靡忒有禱莫違無願不從潜  運化權黙輸神工日月明竝天地德合四方風聞萬姓雲集傾財破産竭誠殫力燈  燭煇煌紙錢堆積惠我邦家恤我愚蒙傑然之姿卓爾之容前古所無後今唯有於  休尊像與世同久壬午六月令內司遣人脫綱 |

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TRANSLATION OF THE INSCRIPTION TABLET, EUN-JIN BUDDHA, KOREA

FRONT

Looking back to ancient times we find that in the year Eul-sa, being the 19th year (A.D. 996) of the reign of King Kwang-jong of the Ko-ryŭ dynasty, a woman of the Sa-jé hamlet was collecting bracken among the P'an-yak hills, when from the north-west nook she heard the voice of a boy. Presently she approached the place and saw a big stone protruding from the ground. She was frightened and amazed and returning home told her son-in-law, who reported the matter to the magistrate. The latter having made an official inquiry sent a report to the Throne and the officials were ordered to meet and deliberate. Their decision was that the stone was certainly intended for an image of Buddha. The high Department of Physicians was then ordered to send messengers throughout the eight provinces in search of artists to fashion it into the image of a Buddha and the monk Hyoè-myŭng answering the call, the Throne selected over one hundred stone cutters to assist him to begin the work. The work was thus begun in the year 968 and completed in the year 1004, thus covering a period of thirty-six years.

When this holy image was completed a place was sought in which to erect it and the united strength of over one thousand men was employed in transporting it. Now because of the head having first reached the place which is near Yon-san and [page 54] some 20 li from the south hamlet, that village is therefore called “Bull's Head.” Although Hyoé-myŭng had completed the image he had begun to worry over its not having been set up when one day he saw twin boys who were playing at making with earth the image of Buddha in three sections. On level ground they first put up the base or lower section, and building a mud embankment around it, they stood on this and built up the middle section, and so on to the last. Hyoé-myŭng watching them was greatly enlightened, and joyously returning to the image, erected it in accordance with this example. These twin boys were none other than the Buddhas of Knowledge and Wisdom, who had transformed themselves in order to give instruction.

In height the body of the Buddha is 55 ft. and 5 in. It is 30 ft, in circumference. The ears are 9 ft. long. The distance between the eyebrows is 6 ft. The mouth is 3 ft. 5 in. and the cheeks are 5 ft. The hat is 8 ft. high. The slab of stone on the head is 11 ft., and the smaller slab is 6 ft. 5 in. There is a small gold Buddha 3 ft. 5 in. in height. The stalk of the lotus flower is 11 ft., plated with yellow and dark red gold.

The fame of these events spread far and wide and worshippers by tens of thousands gathered like the clouds, so vast being their numbers that they made the place to resemble a market and this gave the name of Si-jin (Market Ferry) to the ford in front of the image. When the image was finally erected the heavens poured forth a heavy rain which cleaned the Buddha and a holy light appeared to envelope its body. About three weeks later there was seen a luminous light resembling jade shining forth from between the eyes which illumined heaven and earth. And the Chinese monk, "Sagacious Eye" (Chi-an) having seen the light was guided by it to the image. Worshipping he said:— “In Ka-ju (China) there is a great image which also stands facing the east and from it reflects a light which coincides with the reflection from here. [page 55] It is called Kwan-ch'ok (Reflecting Candle Image).” From that time on the holy and propitious light was often seen shining forth from the image straight into and beyond mid-heaven. Among all the black-robed classes (monks and priests) and the rich and poor masses of the entire country there was not one who did not reverently respect it.

Once there was war with the Tang dynasty and a multitude of the foe's troops arriving at the Yalu river, the image transformed itself into a straw-hatted monk and girding up its garments about it forded across the river. The army of the enemy, thinking the water shallow, attempted to cross, but falling in the water, more than half perished. This so greatly angered the general that he struck the monk with his sword, cleft the hat, and damaged the inner cap. The evidence of this is still visible. This shows how devoted it is to the dynasty. Whenever peace reigns in the country the propitious light shines bright from its entire body and is reflected in mid-heaven. But whenever the people are in a disturbed state perspiration is to be seen flowing from all parts of the body and the colours disappear from the flowers in its hands.

BACK

Here came the officials of the government reverently praying that evils be dispersed, peace prevail in the nation and the people enjoy quietness. And from former times it has been the custom never to refuse secret aid when sincere worship and honour were paid. Of ten thousand things prayed for, it is universally known that not one deserved thing was ever refused, but favours were freely bestowed. But as the accounts of many of its miracles have disappeared it is difficult for us to record them.

The Mani temple was built in 1386. It was rebuilt by the layman Păk-chi in 1581. In 1674 the monk Chi-neung again rebuilt it. The monk Sung-neung had the honour [page 56] of again rebuilding it in 1735. The iron chains were contributed by So-dam and Pak-sin. The lime plaster on the head was done by the monk Sin-jong. There was once a wall of stone and earth about it, but it fell into decay and disappeared and the most glorious platform became a place for heaping up refuse. An old man, grieved at the ruin of the place, became a solicitor of funds to restore it, and in the year 1740 a stone wall was built and the alter and utensils were renewed.

The colossal body so dignified, and the cap so lofty! The three sections joined together are higher than six heights! The chief of a thousand Buddhas and the most spiritual of ten thousand idols! Its revealed benefits and secret favours have never ceased. Things prayed for were never denied and things wished for never refused. It exercised secretly the perfect power of Wonder and silently piled up divine merit. As brilliant as the sun and moon, and as virtuous as the heaven and earth, its fame is known everywhere and multitudes gathered to it like the clouds, selling their possessions and breaking up their property in the single desire to do reverence perfectly. Lamps and candles gleamed brightly and money was heaped up in front of it like earth. It gave grace to the royal house and pity to the foolish multitudes. The substance of its perfection and its exaltation were like its towering head. Never before was there its fellow with like dignified appearance and holy countenance and it will be difficult for one to appear in the future. Oh beautiful, thou idol! Thou shalt last as long as this earth stands.

(The inscription ends with the names of the persons who composed and cut the inscription on the tablet and the date 1743(?), followed by the names of sixty-seven persons who contributed the funds for the work).

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**Korea’s Colossal Image of Buddha.**

By Rev. G. H. Jones. [George Heber Jones]

In a deserted nook in the mountains which mark the boundary between the provinces of Chung-chŭng and Chŭlla there stands the colossal stone Buddha of Korea, surrounded by desolation and abandoned to the ravages of time. A long cherished plan to visit and inspect it has been realized by the writer, and the following account has been prepared in response to your kind invitation. Prefatory to the account of the trip, I would call your attention to two things which must impress the observer in connection with monuments in general throughout Korea.

First of all, the interest in them is dependent — as is the case with monumental relics generally — upon a knowledge of their history. It is rare that we find a monument which possesses such noteworthy features that, divorced from its historical associations, it attracts the passer by. Of course there are monuments in the Far East, which for their own intrinsic worth repay the visitor, but in this feature Korea cannot begin to compare with China or Japan, and is necessarily a disappointment to the tourist. For Korea, like every other nation, has its great monuments. There are scattered throughout the land memorial marks which stand for historical tragedies and comedies, for the rise and fall of royal dynasties, for religious, political, commercial and racial conquests, for the great deeds of great men, and sometimes for the foolish deeds of foolish [page 58] men. It is foreign to the purpose of this paper to give examples of each of these classes, though it might be done. Suffice it to say that to-day, to the great mass of the Koreans, these monuments stand voiceless and meaningless because their history is unknown or inaccessible and the oral traditions concerning them have wandered so far from the path of truth during their journey through time that they no longer shed light in the darkness which surrounds them. A large field and an interesting awaits scholars at this point. Already the Hon. H. N. Allen has placed us under a debt of gratitude in preserving for us in the earlier volumes of the *Korean Repository* some account of the interesting places about Seoul. Let us hope that one of these days native scholars will take this matter up and that these memorials will once more become vocal of the events, ideas and institutions for which they stand.

The second matter of which I would speak is the disappointment which awaits a person visiting Korean monuments, due to the decay and ruin in which they are generally found. They seem to have been abandoned as useless and valueless. Left to be the sport to time and of the elements, to crumble into dust and disappear in the wind. This is certainly an anomaly among a nation of ancestor worshippers. Take, for instance, the pagoda monument of Seoul — a beautiful specimen of carved marble of which any city might be proud and which has stood in the heart of the city for seven hundred years. Three centuries ago it became the object of the destructive fortune of war, and the victorious Japanese, attempting to destroy if, succeeded in pulling down the upper part. The debris lay in the square about its base, and it would seem that one of the first things the Koreans would do on regaining possession of the city would be to restore the monument. But the debris was left where it had fallen for three hundred years undisturbed. Houses gradually encroached on the square on which it stood until one builder, becoming more bold than the others, finally erected his house around the monument, leaving it standing in the centre of his inner court, which was not more that twenty feet square. And here it was left until 1895, and to visit it you had to go along filthy alley-ways, squeeze your way through Lilliputian doorways, [page 59] before you could reach it. It is certainly a matter for congratulation that this condition of affairs has been remedied in the case of the Seoul pagoda, and the work might well be taken up in connection with other places.

Among the really great monuments of Korea the colossal stone Buddha of Eun-jin occupies a foremost place. About it centre most interesting tradition and legend; its manner of construction makes it a genuine curiosity, and its size constitutes it a real wonder. It is a memorial of religious conquest, and our interest is increased when we reflect that to-day it stands for the glory and the fall of Korean Buddhism.

It will be in order to give first some account of the journey necessary to reach it and the locality in which it is located.

(1) THE JOURNEY.

This colossal image is erected in the prefecture Eun-jin, in the southern part of the Chung-chŭng province. To be exact, the monastery in which the Buddha stands is 400 *li* south of Seoul (130 English miles) and may be reached either by pony or by chair from Seoul in four days. We left the Capital in November and on bicycle took the great southeastern road down the Peninsula through Su-won to Kong-ju. The road itself is a fine one and we enjoyed this part of the trip very much until near Kong-ju, when some heathen stole our pump and the bicycle was rendered useless. (Moral―take along an extra pump with your bicycle). The road is a very interesting one. At Su-won you find one of the prettiest walled cities in Korea, and the accommodation at the inns is not altogether bad. Near by is the tomb of a former crown prince, who lived about the middle of the eighteenth century, and whose history makes this tomb the monument of a great tragedy. Upon this crown prince, whose name was Chong-hon, has recently been conferred the posthumous title of emperor. The mausoleum is well worthy a visit for its beautiful groves.

Between Su-won and Kong-ju we strike the A-san battlefield, where was fought the opening land engagement of the Japan-China war and where you can still trace the course of the conflict. On this section of the road the inn accommodation [page 60] is execrable. Arrived at Kong-ju we again can get fair accommodation for Korea. Kong-ju is a very interesting city, but we spend only one night there and keeping still to the direct south along the road to Chun-ju, a day’s journey, as Korean ponies travel, brings you to the monastery. It was our good fortune to take another road down the valley of the Keum river to Kang-gyŭnri, where we found Rev. F. W. Steadman, who gave us much assistance and as we were thus only twenty-five *li* away from the Colossus this was most convenient.

Another possible way of reaching the Colossus is to go by steamer to Kun-san. From there to Kang-gyŭngi is only 90 *li* and there is a steam launch in which the distance may be made.

(2) HISTORY OF THE LOCALITY.

At Kang-gyŭngi we are in the prefecture of Eun-jin in which the image stands, this prefecture being a small border district between the provinces of Chung-chŭng and Chŭlla. It lies in the valley of the beautiful Keum-gang, or Embroidery River, and first came to notice historically in the time of the ancient kingdom of Păk-che (B.C. 17-A.D. 660), during which time the district was known as Tok-geum Kun. We are told that it was a great commercial centre of Păk-che, so it must gave played no small part in the introduction of foreign things into that kingdom. After several changes in its name it was incorporated into Sil-la when that kingdom overthrew Păk-che, and given the name of Tŭk-eun. In 1019 a slight change of the characters, which did not change the sound, was introduced, and this remained its name until 1419, when the present name of Eun-jin was given to it. In this new name we find some interesting hints of a historical character. The first syllable “Eun” is of course a relic of the old Silla name of the district. The new syllable “jin” is part of the name of an ancient district which was abolished in 1419 and its territories incorporated in the new prefecture of Eun-jin. The name of this old district was Si-jin-hyen. In its name “Si” means a market or place for trade; “jin” means a ford or ferry-place; “hyen” indicates a magistracy of lower grade. This name indicates the character of the [page 61] place, which was a port of trade, a great commercial emporium famous in those ancient days; and that the region has not lost this character to this day the great markets at Non-mi and Kang-gyŭngi bear witness. It was to the ancient Si-jin that the warlike and quarrelsome merchants of Păk-che resorted fifteen hundred years ago to carry their trade. And that it was a port of much importance is indicated by an old inscription which, describing the merchant junks anchored there, said that the ships usually lay so closely packed in that their masts and rudders were one inextricable mass. And to this point, in those days so long gone by, must have come the merchants of China and Japan, sometimes for trade, sometimes accompanying the envoys of their countries, sometimes bringing warlike expeditions which wrought havoc far and wide.

But the special interest these facts have for us in connection with the great Buddha lies in the fact that it may have been here that Buddhism itself first entered Păk-che. Buddhism was a foreign importation, being sent to the peninsular kingdoms by the Eastern Tsin dynasty of China (A.D. 317-19) and effecting an entrance almost simultaneously at two points―in the north into Ko-gŭ-ryŭ and in the south into Păk-che. Of this latter event the native historians tell us:― “In the year A.D. 384, the barbarian monk Maranant’a came from Tsin. King Chip-yu accorded him a most courteous and ceremonious reception and Buddhism was established as the national religion.” We do not know at what point the monk-missionary landed, but it is not so unlikely that he may have come to this well-known port, and that one day among the ships making up that inextricable mass of “masts and rudders” at Si-jin there may have come the imperial junk of Tsin bearing the “barbarian monk Maranant’a” with his images, incense, bells, books and vestments to plant in Korea that cult which was to dominate the people for a thousand years, thus landing close to the place where in later years the greatest monument that Buddhism possesses was to stand. And two hundred years later (A.D. 550) there probably embarked from this port that band of Păk-che priests sent by their king to carry to the mikado of Japan the golden images of Buddha and the triad of precious ones, the sutras and sacred [page 62] books, and to give the faith of Buddha to the Sun-rise Empire. And it is said that these relics exist to this day and are preserved in the city of Nagano in Japan.

How appropriate then that in a region so rich in Buddhistic fancies, legends and lore should stand the most notable existing monument of Korean Buddhism. While we cannot recover from the past the reasons which caused the Buddhist hierarchy to locate the colossus at this point, we certainly agree that the locality has been most fitly selected.

(3) THE MONASTERY.

The colossal Buddha is at Kwang-ch’ok-sa, the Monastery of the Candle Lights. This name was given to the temple by a Chinese monk who once visited the place and claimed that in China there was a duplicate and that the name of its monastery was Kwan-ch’ok-sa, as we learn from the inscription. As we approached it from the valley below, through which runs the great overland road from Seoul, the sight was a striking one. High up on the hill side, on a plateau possibly 300 feet above the valley, was the monastery, its buildings clustering about the idol, and above their roofs rising the head and shoulders of the image, white and shining in the sun, its wide open eyes staring down at the beholder and well calculated to impress the superstitious with awe. The whole is in a sort of niche or nook in the hillside, the formation of the hill resembling a screen.

We crossed the valley by narrow and uncertain paths overgrown with weeds, for, as mentioned in the case of the pagoda at Seoul, the Koreans have made no attempt to keep up or save this memorial from ruin. Not even its sanctity as a god has availed to save it from the ravages of time. A crooked path led up to the plateau on which the image stands and we soon found ourselves among the buildings of the monastery and at the foot of the idol. The buildings were once very extensive, having been built on a grand scale in 1386, and restored and rebuilt several times since. Only a few of these buildings are standing to-day and the solitary poverty-stricken monk gives no hint of the day when officials with royal commissions, throngs of black-robed priests, and [page 63] the *hoi polloi* in innumerable multitudes gathered here like clouds. The busy port of Si-jin brought merchants and pilgrims to the shrine from the Three Kingdoms. Its fame was widespread and the roads that led to it were broad and well trodden. To quote:― “Devotees sold their possessions and inheritances in order to do reverence perfectly. Lamps and candles gleamed all about it and the coin of the realm was heaped up like dirt. It gave grace to the royal house and pity to the foolish multitudes. The substance of its perfection and its exaltation were like its towering head.” Thus it was once; now all is solitude and ruin. The star of India has paled before that of China. Confucius has as effectually supplanted Buddhism in Korea as any purely human teacher can hope to do. This was illustrated by an incident at the monastery. When we first arrived there it looked as though the place was deserted. In one of the rooms, however, we found a village school-master with some young-men pupils. He told me that he needed a quiet place free from interruption, so he had come to the “Candle Light” and installed himself there. In the room where he was holding forth were the paraphernalia of the temple worship, and yet this did not embarrass him in the least. This well illustrates the relation of the two cults in Korea. Confucianism looks down with supreme contempt on Buddhism and ignores its presence. Buddhism looks with condescension on Confucianism and tolerates it in good nature. The Confucian teacher needs a quiet place in which to instruct his pupils, so he appropriates the best room in the nearest monastery. The Buddhist monk receives him with politeness, acknowledges the social and political superiority of Confucianism and gives him the best room in the temple.

(4) DESCRIPTION OF THE IDOL.

Outside the main building of the monastery, on a level earth platform, stands the great image. It is an ingenious utilization of natural rock. It consists of two immense boulders, which stand detached from the bed rock back of them by about twenty feet. The lower one is about eighteen feet high and thirty-eight feet in circumference. The front of it is chiselled to represent the flowing skirts of a standing Buddha, and [page 64] from beneath these chiselled robes the toes of its bare feet are seen peeping. It rises out of a basin-like pedestal. On top of this boulder there is another one, possibly twenty feet in height, which has been cut to represent the shoulders, neck and head of the image. This part has been very carefully chiselled and highly polished, so that seen from a distance on a bright sunny day the effect is striking and has given rise to the legend that when the workmen had finally succeeded in erecting it there came a great rain from heaven and the heavy deluge of water from on high so cleansed the image that its body became glistening and white. The face is very flat, giving it the appearance of a monstrosity, but this is not unusual in idols, where superiority over man is generally represented by some monstrous deviation from the normal state. In the eyesockets there are black discs, probably of slate, for the eyeballs. Between the eyes is the usual disc of brass, the symbol of the Buddha’s wisdom. Of this it is said that three weeks after the miraculous washing there was discovered a light shining forth from between its eyes, which filled earth and sky with its radiance, and guided by this light pilgrims from distant lands found their way to the image. Thus was the shining of a gold-plated disc on a sunny day magnified into a supernatural light reaching to distant lands.

The ears of the image are immense and have perforated lobes which hang down to the shoulders. The arms are separate stones cemented to the body. The right hand is held at the girdle with fingers pointing downward, while the left hand is held upright and carries a metal lotus flower grasped between the thumb and forefinger. From the top of the skull rises a round superstructure of stone to represent the coiffure. It is plastered with white lime, is about six feet high and slightly tapering. ‘On top of this rests a great stone slab fully ten feet long and seven feet wide, which is carved and has brass bells and ornaments pendant from the corners. It resembles a college mortar-board hat. From this rises another cone three feet high, carrying a smaller stone slab, the whole terminating in a spike apex.’

This gives a most striking figure of over fifty feet in height. Our figures are necessarily approximations, but they will be found to be about the size of the piece. In height is [page 65] shorter than its fellow in Japan, which is sixty-five feet, but we must not forget that the Korean Colossus antedates the Japanese one by 250 years and, it is not altogether unlikely, may have suggested it and its superior height. Its weight is enormous. Its situation is not without some art, for it has the appearance of some colossal figure, a Korean Cyclops, as it were, who has strolled down the hill-slope as far as the temple and has paused in the midst of the buildings for a moment to give some instruction, the position of the arms and hands lending themselves readily to this fancy. It is to be regretted that the terrace in front is so small. No good view of the image can be had and it will be almost impossible to obtain a good photograph.

There is a dressed-stone altar in front, but it bears no sign of having been used in many years. There is also a huge stone lantern near by, such as is common in the temples of Japan. Also stone tablets, bearing an inscription with an account of the image. These are of a comparatively modern date but probably carry most of the matter contained on any original tablets that may have been put up here. The fate of these original tablets is a mystery. It would be interesting to know what has become of them, as well as of the stone inscriptions of the Ko-ryŭ dynasty, which perished five hundred years ago. They seem to have disappeared from the earth and we have only left the stone inscriptions of the present dynasty.

(5) HISTORY AND LEGENDS OF THE COLOSSUS.

For the history of the great idol we are dependent on the tablets at the monastery itself and on the information to be culled from the *Yŭ-ti Seung-nam*, an historical geography of the country, written four hundred years ago. First of all is the main tablet, which was probably written in the year 1743. The date it bears is a little uncertain, for it carries the year-name of the last period of the Ming dynasty of China, which perished before the Manchus in 1644. In their devotion to the memory of the Mings, Korean scholars to this day date their literary works in the last year-period of the Mings. This is very confusing, for though the first year of the period was 1628, and, if numerals were used, we could easily calculate [page 66] the year, yet the Koreans give only the sexagenary name of the year, which recurs once every sixty years, so that we are at a loss to know which cycle is meant. The date here given is “Syung-cheng chai kyei-hai.” This “Syung-cheng” is the name of the last year period of the Mings and began in 1628. “Chai kyei-hai” is the second “kye-hai” year after 1628, which would make it 1743. It will be seen that the inscription is a comparatively modern one, written long centuries after the erection of the image, but we are able to compare its statements with those in the *Yu-ti Seung-nam*, which dates from 1478, and as these substantially agree it is evident that the traditions have been preserved on the tablet.

The tablet gives the date of the erection of the image as A.D. 1004, which seems correct. Concerning the origin of the Colossus the following legend is told; It is said that in the year 966 a country woman was gathering bracken on the slopes of the Pan-yak hill, where the image stands, when she was startled by hearing the voice of a boy calling to her. For a moment she was too frightened to move, but her terror passing away, she went to the place whence came the voice and found that a great stone had sprung high up out of the earth at that point. Hastening to her home she told her son-in-law of the mysterious occurrence, and he immediately went to the prefect and laid the matter before the magistrate. The latter on investigation found the story correct, or at least found the great stone broken out from the hill-side, so he sent an account of it in a memorial to the king. The story was a matter of great wonder to the court and the entire officiary of the realm was ordered to deliberate on the event and furnish his majesty with a solution of the mystery. Their conclusion was that the stone was a Buddha and should be carved into Buddha’s likeness and reverenced as such. This commission to sculpture the stones was committed to the High Department of Physicians. No explanation is given for this peculiar task imposed on the doctors of the Korean court. Possibly it was assigned to them because of the fact that their occupation deals with the marvellous and the supernatural, and they were thus supposed to be better qualified to undertake the task than other men. The High Department of Physicians having scoured the land in search of a sculptor with the requisite [page 67] talent for the great work, finally selected the monk Hyei-myŭng, of whom we know nothing except in this connection. To him was assigned the work and in it he was assisted by one hundred stone cutters.

It took thirty-seven years to complete the task, which we can well believe. In the inscription mention is made of moving the head twenty *li*. From this obscure reference it would appear that the stone for the upper part of the idol was brought from a distance and was not found on the spot. The problem of raising this great mass, weighing many tons, was a most serious one to the monk-sculptor, and for a time he was in doubt as to how it could be accomplished. The following is the story of the way the matter was solved:― “Now though Hyei-myŭng had succeeded in fashioning the stone like to the god, yet he was at a loss to find means for erecting the huge mass. One day, however, as he was entering the Sa-chei hamlet his attention was attracted to twin boys who were playing at making a mud Buddha three stories high. He quietly stood and observed them and found that on a level space they first put up the lower part of their work and then, building a mud embankment, from this proceeded with the middle part of their work and having finished this the same process enabled them to put on the head. The lesson was not lost on Hyei-myŭng, who thus discovered the solution of his problem. Full of joy he returned to the work and following the example of the boys succeeded in raising the image.” What this account actually stands for it is hard to tell. It seems to indicate that the monk made use of scaffolding in getting the stones up, and apparently that this was the first time such a process had been used in Korea. This, however, ―that the idea of using scaffolding was then first discovered in Korea seems incredible. It may have been that the scaffolding itself was reinforced or supplemented by an embankment of earth, for Korean scaffolds of green timber tied with straw ropes are not adapted to support the immense strain which must have been put on them when the upper part of the image was raised.

We have already indicated the popularity of the shrine in ancient days. The statement in the inscription, however, that it was due to the thronging multitudes at the shrine that [page 68] the district got its name of Si-jin is clearly an anachronism, for the place was known by that name centuries before the image was chiselled. The great Colossus was the object of an unbroken stream of pilgrims, and many a poem was written concerning it. One of the most famous of these is by Yi-săk, who lived about 1358. This poem says:―

A hundred *li* to the east of Ma town

In Si-jin is the Monastery of the Candle Lights.

There is the great stone image, the Buddha.

I came. From out the earth I came.

On my high head is the snow colour.

Before is the great plain.

Where the farmers reap the grain they offer on my altar.

And when from my brow the perspiration flows

Then sovereign and ministers alike quake with fear,

And this is no legend of the lips,

But is woven into the nation’s history.

The poet has thus preserved for us with a few dashes of his brush an animated picture of the scene and the supposed personality and thoughts of the colossus god. The reference to the perspiration of the image points to a very common superstition among the Koreans that in times of impending national or dynastic calamity the body of the idol is found to be covered with sweat and the brilliant colours disappear from the lotus flower it carries in its hand. This latter portent has been visible for several centuries now, without particularly disturbing the people or alarming them. It is the sweat that they dread to see. There are of course many legends clustering about the image. One of the most common of these is in explanation of the cleft in the head-gear, which is quite visible. There are two versions of this legend, the one in the inscription being as follows:-

“Once there was war with the Tang dynasty and our foes came as far as the Yalu river. Here, however, they were detained by being unable to discover a ford. One day the idol transformed itself into a straw-hatted monk and, gathering its skirts about it, came across the river in plain sight of the Chinese army. This made the Tang troops think that they had discovered a ford and, attempting to cross at the point the image was seen at, more that half their number lost their lives [page 69] by drowning. This so angered the Chinese general that he struck the monk with his sword, intending to kill him, but only succeeded in making a cleft in his hat. From this time the head-gear of the idol was seen to be broken. This is an undeniable fact.”

But this “undeniable fact” will not bear inspection. The Tang dynasty of China came to an end a hundred years before the image was erected, so that the inscription is convicted of another bad case of anachronism. The popular version is more plausible in some of its details and certainly avoids the anachronistic pitfall. The usual form, as related to travellers, is that in the time of the Japanese invasion (1592-97) the invaders arrived on the banks of the Keum-gang, opposite Kang-gyŭngi, but were unable to cross, the river being frozen over. Halted for a few days by this they at last discovered a Korean of gigantic stature crossing on the ice at a certain point. The Japanese immediately marshalled their forces and essayed to cross, but the attempt was a fatal one, for the ice broke under them and many lost their lives. The man of gigantic stature proved to be the Colossus, and the Japanese, when they did get across, sought revenge by trying to destroy the image with their cannon. They had succeeded in injuring the head, when the idol sprang up into the sky out of their reach.

One of the prettiest stories in connection with the Colossus is the fable of the Mole, in which is embodied the homely truth that a man should not seek to marry above his station. The fable is as follows:-

Once upon a time the Mole gave birth to a marvellous daughter. In beauty she surpassed all others, and the proud father determined that he would take for her husband only the greatest being in the universe. He thought long before deciding who was the greatest being in the universe, but finally concluded that it must be the Sky.

So one day to the Sky he went with the offer of his daughter in marriage. The Sky expressed his high appreciation of the honour proposed for him and said that he had heard of the wonderful beauty of the Mole’s daughter, and certainly the only mate for her must be the greatest being in the universe. Now though many thought that the Sky was the greatest being in the universe yet it was not so, for the Sun [page 70] is certainly greater that the Sky. For without the Sun to illumine and lighten, the Sky becomes but invisible blackness. Only the Sun was a fit mate for the Mole.

So to the Sun went the Mole. And the Sun after expressing his delight at the honour proposed for him modestly called the attention of the Mole to the Clouds which daily covered his face and wrapped him in darkness. Against them he was powerless; for they were superior to him, and in them alone would the Mole find a worthy mate for his daughter. Then to the Clouds came the Mole, but they promptly pointed out that they were but the plaything of the Wind, which hourly drove them helter-skelter across the sky, making sport of them at its own sweet will―surely none but the Wind might aspire to wed the maid. Seeking the Wind the Mole made offer of his peerless daughter. But the Wind was obliged to decline in favor of a greater, saying: “It is true that all bow before my power and acknowledge my greatness, all except that stone Colossus of Eun-jin. He alone defies me and though this many a year I have smitten him hip and thigh, still he stands, and to him I must bow as my superior. My marriage with Miss Mole would be the robbery of the Colossus of his heaven-destined bride. Go to the Colossus and make him your son-in-law.” So to the Colossus came the weary Mole and told him the state of the case and asked him if he would wed his daughter. “Gladly would I do so and highly honoured would I be in the marriage — were I the worthiest being in the universe — but there is one greater than I for whom the peerless daughter of the Mole is destined. It is true that I am greater than the Wind, who is greater than the Cloud, who is greater than the Sun, who is greater than the Sky itself. But underneath my feet there is a little mole, and day by day he is burrowing away, preparing a pit into which I know I shall one day topple. I stamp and I press with all my might on his head, yet in vain. The mole is my conqueror and one day he will lay me low. Only he of all in the universe is worthy of your daughter. Go make him your son-in-law.” And the Mole came back to his hole in the ground and declared how all the universe united in testifying that the Moles are the greatest of all.