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The Village Gilds of Old Korea

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[\*The spelling gild rather than the more common one of guild is adopted by nearly all writers upon this theme; e.g. H. Spenser. C. Gross Ph.D., Prof. W. J. Ashley, Prof. F.W. Williams, Mr. Troumlin Smith Dr. L. Brentano and others.] [\*\*This Paper consists of extracts from a more exhaustive study of the data in hand than the requirements of the Society allow.]

There are many economic, social and mutual benefit societies in Korea. It is fair to say that Korean people have a genius for organization. In a list of societies whose constitutions and records are in hand the following varieties are noted; family and clan societies, neighborhood and brotherhood gilds, societies for providing aid at weddings, funerals, in sickness and in controversies. Others have for their object the conduct of periodic feasts or picnics. There are many lottery organizations whose functions are limited to the membership, craft gilds, merchant’s companies and monopolistic gilds, labor organizations, village and district governmental societies, co-operative farmer’s gilds, organizations of villagers to guard the forests, to establish and conduct community schools and to help poor boys prepare for the government examinations.

This paper is limited, primarily, to the organizations to be found in the average Korean village and further to that type of village society which attempts to enforce membership on all in the community and exercises authority over the community. Another paper should be written dealing with the purely “Voluntary Societies in the Villages of Old Korea.”

The data in hand consists of the constitutions, rules and records of twelve village gilds which attempt to govern the respective village from which they were secured. Some [page 14] additional light has been thrown upon them and their practises by the records of a score or more of voluntary village societies and by conversations with informed villagers.

As samples of such records two are here quoted in full:

REGULATIONS OF THE TAI TONG KEI

(LARGE VILLAGE GILD) IN KWANG CHOO.

(Kwang Choo is a place of fifty houses about 20 milles from Seoul.)

The foundation of a gild is harmony of mind on the part of the people. How, it may be asked, can they remain in harmonious mind without obeying the doctrine of faithfulness? Because of this consideration faithfulness may be called a constant accompaniment of harmony. Whenever people aid each other at marriages, funerals or sacrifices they show love and helpfulness and this certainly is the foundation for the establishment of a gild and making the doctrine of faithfulness to prevail.

It is a common custom of villages to furnish mutual protection against fire and flood.

In this village there was a gild in bye-gone days but one or two of the members did not attend to their duties properly and so it was discontinued long ago. But some of those, who regretted that the gild was abolished, have agreed with some others to collect money for the establishment of the gild and they plan to prepare some exact regulations for the gild. It is expected that all the members will love and help one another according to the dictates of these regulations. As the object of this gild is to secure love for parents, respect for elder brothers, loyalty to the king and confidence among friends it is earnestly hoped that the members will bear this is mind and never depart from the original purpose for which the gild was established. Will it not be a thing to cause admiration if all the members perpetually carry out these articles and never fail to give diligent heed to their duties in the gild?

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ARTICLES.

The object of this gild is to forward the doctrines of love for parents, respect for elder brothers, loyalty to the king and confidence between friends.

All members must trust and love one another and live in harmony.

New members must obey the regulations and keep them always.

Each new member must pay a gild fee of 50 nyang.

Gild funds, collected from members, shall be put out at monthly account.

It has been decided to choose only three *so im* (officers).

When there is work to be done in the gild the low members must do it.

If any one join the gild for marriage and funeral benefits he must pay a fee of 100 nyang.

Any one entering the gild for funeral benefits only shall pay 50 nyang on account of funeral benefits.

A *so im* who attends diligently to his duties in the gild shall not be dismissed or changed.

Should a member have a marriage or a funeral in his house within one year after the organization of this gild no gild money shall be given him but subscriptions shall be made for him by the members.

When an announcement of a funeral or a marriage comes to the gild after the expiration of the first year it must be reported first to the three *so im* and then a benefit of 90 nyang shall be remitted.

Any problem of any kind that comes up in the gild shall be decided after it has been reported to the three *so im*.

If any member absents himself without cause of from an assembly of the gild when some matter is being discussed he shall have a low punishment imposed upon him.

On all meeting days of the gild the three *so im* must come first to the gild and record the members coming early or late. [page 16]

If a member is late on three meeting days he must pay a fine of five nyang.

When funds are put at interest the borrower must provide the names of three non-members as guarantors.

It has been decided to purchase a wedding outfit with gild money that it may be used when there is a marriage in the village.

It has been decided that mourning outfits shall be bought at the time when funerals are held.

When a member living in another place has a death in his household the gild shall grant him 10 nyang instead of the mourning outfit.

When a member does a wrong thing in the gild be shall be examined and punished.

The *so im* must not privately forgive wrong doers among the members when they are supposed to be punishing them.

When one of the parents of a member dies all the members must go and condole with him in his mourning and each member must present him with some part of a mourners outfit.

When an extra tax is collected from the members by the magistrate it shall be paid by the funds of the gild.

Disobedience to a rule of the gild will bring a high punishment upon the member.

When a member begins to talk before the three *so im* at a meeting of the gild for consultation regarding something that has happened in the gild a middle punishment shall be imposed upon him.

No members shall be allowed to sit in the places reserved for the three *so im* and certain other elders.

If business prevents a member from attending a meeting on gild day he should send a petition to the gild before the day of meeting and ask the *so im* for leave of absence. In such a case no punishment shall be dealt out to him.

If a person creates a disturbance when a meeting is in progress a low punishment shall be imposed.

When there is some work to be done at the gild and a low [page 17] member is sent to do it his food expenses shall be paid from gild funds.

If trouble arises in the village from fire, floods or thieves all the members of the gild must assemble and render aid to the village.

When the gild members all assemble to help the village in time of trouble any one who is absent shall be expelled from the village after he has been severely punished.

AMOUNTS OF FINES.

High fine … … … … … … … 25 *nyang*.

Middle fine … … … … … … 12 〃

Low fine … … … … … … … … 7 〃

OFFICERS.

1 *Chon Ui.*

1 *Kong Oan.*

1 *Yu Sa.*

REGULATIONS USED IN THE YE CHOONG KEI.

REPORT OF THE CONSULTATION OF THE YE CHOONE KEI IN …………

We live together in this neighborhood enjoying ourselves in a peaceful and prosperous manner, each following his own profession or calling. For us the most important thing is kindness and harmony for we cannot live without them for even a single day. We belive that kindness and harmony are the product of love and righteousness.

When we are conducting some undertaking, such as a marriage or a funeral or indeed any other affair, and whether it be hurried or deliberate some of us fail to proceed in the proper way. There are two reasons for this; some because they have no power or money and some because they ignore the ceremonial methods.

In our village are many different persons; old and young, superior and inferior, wise and stupid, strong and weak. These [page 18] meet together at various times in interviews and discussions. In most meetings where there are important matters relating to the village to be discussed the persons who have power suppress the humble, the rich mock the poor and the young jeer at the aged. Because of such things the problems cannot be settled.

In consideration of the above matters and in order to preserve kindness and harmony we have consulted regarding the interests of the old and young and established this society which is called the Ye Choong Kei.

The objects of the gild are as follows:—

Any person who has to meet the expenses of a funeral or a marriage will be aided by subscriptions and collections of money and rice from each of the village houses.

Further matters relating to the repairing of the road and sacrifice to the spirit of the mountain will be arranged for in the same manner.

Besides these things, any person who commits an offence against the moral law will be made an example for the rest by the punishment of severe blows with a whip, by requiring a monetary fine or by being expelled from the village.

Also we have organized a society for preserving pine and other trees that are growing in the forest so that we may have them for future use. We have decided that anyone who cuts them shall be punished.

We sincerely hope that all of us will make up our minds to observe these regulations and not commit a single offence. Thus love, righteousness and politeness will become the sources of all virtues and our descendents will follow us into the regions of truth and goodness.

Date ………

Place ………

Te Choong Kei.

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BYE LAWS FOR FUNERAL RITES.

An intimation of a funeral that is to occur must be sent to the gild house stating whether the deceased is father or mother of the member.

No intimation shall be received except in the case of the death of the member himself or his father or mother.

Anyone who makes a mistake in writing the intimation shall be fined 10 nyang,

If anyone gives false intimation he shall be expelled from the gild after being punished with thirty blows.

Members of the gild shall make subscriptions after the matter has been investigated.

The headman of the village shall be the collector of subscriptions.

Each house shall give one *toi* of rice and ten *nyang* in money.

One of the members shall be chosen to go to the house where the funeral is to occur to condole with the mourners.

Ten persons from the membership shall be chosen to protect the funeral bier.

Each of the protectors shall be given five *nyang* for food.

Anyone of the protectors who fails to come on the appointed day of the funeral shall be given twenty blows.

The headman of the village shall be the leader of the protectors.

The *Ho Sang Cha Chi* shall be given ten *nyang* for food.

Any of the members who refuse to make a subscription when the collection is taken shall be punished with thirty blows of a whip and fined 50 *nyang*.

Five persons shall be chosen to welcome the funeral when it returns.

Each of the five welcomers shall be given five *nyang* for food.

Any of the welcomers who fail to come on the day appointed shall be given ten blows with a whip. [page 20]

Information shall be delivered to each member when a notice of death arrives.

Anyone who delays in delivering the information shall be fined 10 *nyang*.

The information concerning the death shall be sent to the headman of the village first.

If the headman delays in delivering the information he shall be given thirty blows.

If the headman spends what has been collected he shall be given thirty blows.

Any of the protectors of the bier who do not attend to their duties shall be given thirty blows.

Any of the welcomers who do not attend to their duties shall be given twenty blows.

If the headman spends what had been collected he must pay it back in full after he has been punished.

BYE LAWS RELATING TO WEDDINGS.

An intimation of an intended wedding must be sent to the gild stating therein whether it be the member’s son or daughter.

Intimations shall be accepted only in the instances of son, daughter, grandson or grand daughter or of the member himself.

An intimation should be sent ten days before the date of the wedding.

Any person who makes a mistake in writing an intimation shall be fined ten *nyang*.

If anyone makes a false intimation he shall be expelled from the gild after being punished with fifty blows.

The members of the gild shall makes subscriptions after an investigation has been completed.

Each house shall subscribe one *toi* of rice and five *nyang* of money.

The head man of the village shall be the collector of the subscriptions.

Intimations of weddings should be first sent to the headman. [page 21]

If the headman delays in circulating the notice he shall be punished with thirty blows.

After the intimation has been sent to the gild a notice shall be forwarded to each member.

Any one who delays delivering the notice shall be fined ten *nyang*.

If the headman spends what has been collected he shall be fined 50 *nyang* and given thirty blows.

On the wedding day one of the members shall be sent to the house to congratulate the owner.

On the wedding day six strong men shall be sent to the house to attend to business.

Each attendant shall be given 2 1/2 *nyang* for food.

Any one of the attendants who does not come on that day shall be given 10 blows and fined ten *nyang*,

Any one of the attendants who does not attend to his duty shall be given ten blows.

Any one who does not pay his subscription or who delays paying it shall be fined 50 *nyang* and given 30 blows.

Any one who spends what has been collected shall pay back the amount besides being punished.

BYE LAWS OF SACRIFICE TO THE MOUNTAIN.

The date of sacrifice shall be appointed after harvest during the tenth month.

The object of offering sacrifice is to implore peace for the village and a plentiful year.

A lucky day shall be chosen for the sacrifice.

The date shall be postponed if any unfortunate incident occurs in the village such as a death or other impure matter. Another date shall be chosen when it is postponed.

The sacrifice shall take place one month after the date is settled.

No guest shall be allowed to stay in the village after the date is settled. If he stay one night after settling the date he [page 22] shall be forbidden to leave until the day of sacrifice. Any guest shall be free to leave after the sacrifice has been offered.

Any one who sends a guest away before the day of sacrifice shall be fined 50 *nyang* and given 30 blows.

The preparation for the sacrifice shall be made by the villagers in turn annually.

The house where the preparation is made ought to be pure and neat.

It is forbidden to take money, grain, hemp or silk in or out of the house of preparation.

If there is any disrespect or carelessness in the house the date of sacrifice shall be postponed. When the date is postponed the expenses of the next preparation shall be paid by the house of the former preparation.

Each person in the village must come up to the mountain to pray on the day of sacrifice.

The things prepared for sacrifice are as follows:—

1 ox 3 plates of glutinous rice cake

5 kinds of fruit 1 plate of cabbage pickle

50 herrings 5 fine mats

1 plate meat broth 10 coarse mats

3 bottles of clear wine 1 incense stove and one incense box

3 jars of thick wine 3 pairs of large wax candles

1 sacrificial table 2 pairs of candle sticks

1 awning 10 torches

The expenses of preparation shall be met by collecting money from every house or by funds remaining in the treasury of the gild.

Any one making a disturbance or behaving disrespectfully shall be given thirty blows and fined 100 *nyang*.

After sacrifice the food shall be eaten by those offering it. The remaining food shall be divided equally and sent to every house.

The headman of the village shall collect the money for the expenses of sacrifice. [page 23]

Any one who delays in giving the collection shall be given 10 blows.

If the headman spends what has been collected he shall be given 50 blows and fined 200 *nyang*, besides paying back what he spends.

BYE LAWS RELATING TO MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS.

One person from every house must come to work at the time of repairing the road. The expenses shall be met by funds remaining in the treasury of the gild. 2 *nyang* shall be given to each person for food.

Any one who is absent at the time of repairing shall be given 10 blows.

The notice of repairing shall be delivered by the headman of the village. If the headman delays in delivering the notice he shall be fined 50 *nyang*.

In the season of ploughing and hoeing the fields the work shall be shared by all. Harvesting shall also be shared by all.

The expenses of this work shall be met by owner of the fields.

BYE LAWS RELATING TO THE PRESERVATION OF PINE TREES.

We plan to keep pine-trees growing in the forest in order that they may be used hereafter. Any one who cuts down a large pine tree shall be brought to the Magistrate and punished. If he cuts down from one to ten young trees he shall be given 50 blows and fined 200 *nyang*. If he cuts down large branches of pine trees he shall be given 30 blows. For cutting small branches he shall be given 15 blows. Any one who cuts down a large tree, not of the pine variety, shall be given 30 blows and fined 100 *nyang*.

If any one makes an arrangement with the wood cutter he shall be punished equally with the cutter. [page 24]

Any one who shakes the leaves from the pine trees and collects them shall be fined 50 *nyang*.

When there are pine grubs coming out in the forest the villagers must destroy them before they become abundant. One person from every house must take a part in the work of destroying the grubs for three day periods in turn. Any one who is absent at the time of destroying the grubs shall be fined 20 *nyang*. Any one who comes at that time must bring his food with him.

BYE LAWS RELATING TO THE RECEIPT AND

USE OF MONEY RECEIVED FROM FINES.

Fine money shall be received in monthly installments during ten months. Interest on fine money shall be charged at the rate of twenty percent increase on the amount borrowed.

Any one who wishes to borrow on monthly installments must provide three guarantors.

Any one who does not pay the installments for more than one month shall be charged more interest. If he does not pay for three months the guarantors shall pay the debt.

The date of receiving installments will be the 15th of every month.

The expenses of matters that arise relating to the village will be defrayed from the monthly receipts.

BYE LAWS RELATING TO PUNISHMENTS AND REPRIMANDS.

Any young man who does not respect the elders shall be given 20 blows.

Any one who insults and fights with others after drinking much wine shall be given 30 blows.

Any one who oppresses weak persons and beats them shall be given 10 blows.

Any one who does not come on the date the gild is opened shall be fined 10 *nyang*. [page 25]

Any one who gets drunk and beats others on the date of the gild meeting shall be fined 50 *nyang*.

Any one who does not obey his parents shall be expelled from the village after receiving 50 blows.

Any one who disagrees with his brothers and quarrels with them shall be fined 100 *nyang* and given 50 blows.

Any one who does not respect his friends and quarrels with them shall be fined 30 *nyang* and given 30 blows.

Any one who insults and mocks this organization shall be fined 50 *nyang***.**

Any one who harms the village by wrong doing shall be expelled from the village.

Any one who commits a great offence against the moral law shall be expelled from the village and brought to the magistrate for punishment.

List of those who may claim help in the case of a marriage or a funeral

Mr. Yi, his father Mr. Nam, his granddaughter

Mr. Kim, his mother Mr. Mah, himself

Mr. Chee, his son Mr. Moon, his father

Mr. Chi, his daughter Mr. Pak, his mother

Mr. Kang, himself Mr. An, his son

Mr. Tai, his grandson Mr. Chyeng, his daughter

List of those to whom subscriptions will be given.

Mr. Yi’s house Mr. Chyeng No Mi

Mr. Cho Pok Nam Mr. Han’s house

Mr. Kang’s house Mr. Yi Kap Dol

There is a notable lack of uniformity among Korean villages in the matter of government gilds. Many villages do not have such gilds. Most villages, however do have a village assembly which chooses and is presided over by its headman. And when a village gild is established this assembly is ordinarily swallowed up by the gild; then the gild constitution becomes the code of laws for the village and the gild president may become the village headman. In at least one instance however, [page 26] there seems to have been a dignified man nominally holding the post of *Chon In* (village headman) and also a *Yung Ui* or Gild president who was the acting headman of the village. Various villages have worked out this matter of the relationship of the village assembly to the village gild in various ways. We presume that the gild is the more developed and complicated type of popular village government. The primary idea of the Korean *kei* or gild is the use of money for mutual benefit purposes and when adopted by the village community as a whole it adds these mutual benefit features to the purely governmental activities of the ordinary village assembly.

Although the village government gild is probably lacking in a majority of Korean village the village customs which a study of these gild records reveals, are universal and the village head-man is an always present feature.

The writer has talked with a number of villages who admitted that the functions of the gild as revealed by a study of the records in hand were fully undertaken by the members of their respective communities and they have pointed out his home or introduced me to the village headman and the place of meeting but said there was no such gild in the village.

The village headmen go under various titles. Some of these are honorific and need not be discussed. The highest ranking headman is a *Myen-chang* or *Myen-chung*. He is the headman of a *myen* or as we should say in English a county. While the *Myen-chang* was originally elected as spokesman by the leading villagers from all the villages in the *Myen*, assembled in his presence by order of a government magistrate, this office has not always been at the disposal of the popular assembly in the past and the *myen-chang* is to become a regularly appointed government official. [\*Third Annual Report (English) of the Government of Chosen.]

Another kind of headman is called a *Ye Chang* or head of a *ye*. The *ye* being a district or township. There is also the *Tong Chang*. The head of a *tong* or village. The term which [page 27] the writer has most frequently met in the these records is *Chong Ui* He is ordinarily the head of a tong. When a headman is called *Yung Ui* or *Yung Choa* it is probable that he is president of one of these village gilds and in that capacity is acting as village headman.

These variously named headman are indistinguishable to the ordinary observer and are all chosen by the leading men of the community over which they preside.

For instance *Mul-Ami* is a considerable village on the river not far from Seoul. It was in close contact with the central government offices and therefore the record showing the independent action of the village assembly is doubly interesting. The following quotations show how their headmen were secured:—

“Decision of the Conference held in the Year—Kap Cha, 1865.

The following decisions were made at our conference and recorded as follows: —

It is very important that we should select two officers, one to be the common headman (Choong-In) and the other to be a special headman (Pyel-Im). It is the business of both of these men to see that the affairs of the village and the government are properly carried out.

It is a very difficult thing for us to secure a headman because when one is appointed he does not want to take the position but insists on resigning whether or no. There are so many taxes to be collected and the money is spent so easily. Because of these considerations we consulted over the matter and decided that the appointment of our headman will be reported to the magistrate after one is selected. Then he will be forced to attend to his duty.”

Signed CHON-UI.

CHOONG-IN.

The expression, “Choose” or “Select” is used eight times in these records in connection with securing gild officers.

The selection of gild officers is made by the villagers assembled in their gild. Four instances can be cited. [page 28]

Moreover the village gilds undertake to control and correct their own officers in a very different spirit than is shown by Koreans in the submissive attitude generally assumed to toward Government officials.

Provision is made for the punishment by the gild of an officer; who fails to attend to his duties. Six different places may be cited.

If a gild official is guilty of a great wrong he is turned over to the Government. In gild number fifty three the *so-im* who misused gild funds was promised severe treatment. He was to receive thirty blows with a whip for using funds he collected for a wedding or a funeral and fifty blows for appropriating funds collected for a sacrifice. There were also fines imposed for these transgressions.

The village gild outside the South Gate of Seoul ordained that any officer who failed to come to a meeting of the *Tai-Pang* when there was business to be considered should be expelled from the society.

The question as to who constituted the membership of the gild which thus chose and controlled its officers becomes a relatively important one.

Among the twelve sets of records in hand there are a number of instances in which a portion only of the village community have held consultations and taken the initial steps in organizing or reorganizing a village gild.

In the *Kwang Choo* regulations the following sentences appear in the introduction;

“In this village there was a gild in bye gone days but one or two of the members did not attend to their duties properly and so it was discontinued long ago. But some of those who regretted that the gild was abolished have agreed with some others to collect money for the establishment of the gild.”

Document number twenty six [\*When Gild constitutions are referred to by number the latter indicates its position in a file of gild records collected by the writer.] opens with the statement.

“The object of this circular is to afford the information that [page 29] certain persons in the town have nothing to rely on and have therefore decided to establish a gild in order that they may help each other in trouble.”

In number thirty five appears the clause.

“Certain gentlemen who reside in this town have decided to establish a town gild.”

One page of the gild book of the *Kak Sin* Society has the names of thirty two of the leading men of the place written as the reorganizers of their gild.

The first thought that comes after reading these quotations is that these four gilds at least were limited to a part of the resident villagers but in the *Kwang Choo* regulations there are, among other broad stipulations, some regarding the fighting of fire, flood and thieves on behalf of the entire village. Number twenty six requires every house in the village to be registered on its roll and in number thirty-five it appears that the “Certain gentlemen” mentioned are organizing the gild on behalf of the poverty-stricken *villagers at large*. At *Kak Sin* the terms for gild and village and those for members and villagers are used without discrimination and at certain times each household is required to make subscriptions upon orders coming from the gild. In these four places gild membership or at least the jurisdiction of the gild was not limited to a portion of the local villagers. A further consideration of the material at hand bears out the conclusion that the village government gild was generally co extensive with the population or at least included the heads of all households.

At *An Sung* “some well-known citizens” established the gild but the regulations provide for, “All the people of all the villages” taking part and further state that, “If any of the people refuse in any particular to obey the regulations their wrong doing shall be reported to the magistrate’s office after they have been severely punished.” One of the sections reads, “The names of the inhabitants of every village must be recorded on the roll.”

One of the uppermost reasons that a gild was desired in [page 30] some village outside the South Gate of Seoul, whose name we do not know, was that the young did not show proper respect to their elders and the gild was considered a suitable weapon for bringing the body of young men in the village to becoming manners. “We in the Orient,” wrote the organizers, “formerly followed the laws of ceremony and were advanced but these features have been driven away and lately there is no difference between the old men and the young men. How can we help but be very sad?” This gild also identifies itself with the entire village by announcing that if any one transgresses this law (of respect for elders) the village people will assemble and punish the transgressor with thirty blows of a whip on the back. The gild further legislates certain actions for all the residents.

When gild number fifty-three assembled there was sometimes difficulty to decide questions because of the mixed character of the assembly. There were, “Old and young,” “Superior and inferior,” “Wise and stupid,” “Strong and weak,” “Those who had power and the humble,” “The rich and the poor.” A reading of this document makes it quite plain that the entire neighbourhood belonged.

Interesting information as to the number and kinds of meetings held by these gilds; the names of officers and their duties; the methods of punishment and the offences dealt with; the means of securing and handing finances and the interrelation of branches might be compiled but the limits of this paper require its restriction to the functions of these societies.

The village gild is frequently the agent for carrying on the complete system of village goverment.

The introductory circular to number twenty-six contains the words, “It,” the gild, “will also provide regulations governing everything that is done in the village.”

Paragraph eleven from the regulations of the *Ye-Choong-Kei* at *An Sung* suggests that the gild took all things that occurred within the village under its jurisdiction. This paragraph reads.

“The three officers assume their duties monthly in turn [page 31] and make a monthly record and report of matters that occur in the town and in the gild. They shall report all to the Five *Kang Soo*, who shall decide all questions of lighter import. When a question is of too great importance for the five *Kang Soo* to decide they shall refer the matter to the *Tong Chang*. Should the matter be of too great weight for the *Tong Chang* he shall report it to the *Chip Kang*. Thus all the people in the village will be subject to the authority of the *Chon Ui* and be governed by his orders.”

The village gild pays two kinds of taxes to the central Government. We note that four of the twelve organizations, whose records we are considering, collect assessments from individual residents or secure them from some other source and pay taxes to the government or government officials on behalf of the community as a whole.

The constitution of the *Kak Sin* gild says that when high or low Government officials come to the place each house must subscribe two *mal* of unshelled rice and three *chun* in money. It also states that such officials shall be given their morning and evening meals with the cost of tobacco and wine.

In *Mul-Ami* the gild paid out funds to Government officials on a long list of pretexts, some were for the personal needs of the officials and some were for purely governmental purposes. We copy a few of the more striking ones;

“To purchase husks and sediment of grain for feeding the cattle offered every month to the magistrate.”

“The cost of meals for the writer (*ajun*) in the magistrates office during five months of every year.”

“The customary offering to the servants of the census bureau.”

“For expenses when the magistrate’s writer comes with drivers and coolies to examine the people. (Five *tone* for the drivers, five *tone* for the coolies and the balance for the writer.)”

“In lieu of a uniform for the writer in the magistrates office.”

“Expenses for drink for the servants of the office of the royal funeral bearers at the time of roll call.” [page 32]

“Customary offering to the magistrate once in four years to feed his yellow dog.”

“Customary offering for feeding the magistrate’s pigs, etc., etc.”

It is no surprise to find in the introduction to these regulations from *Mul-Ami* the statements, “The village is poverty stricken……… We are unable to support ourselves because of the taxes.”

In addition to the above type of taxes paid by the gild we observe that the gild was an agent for collecting and remitting private taxes. The *Kwang Choo* regulations contain the statement;

“When an extra tax is collected from the members by the magistrate it shall be paid by the funds of the gild.”

The *An Sung* regulations read,

“All inhabitants in all villages are accustomed to delay the payment of their land and house taxes to the Government office, therefore it has been decided that new regulations shall be made saying that the chief district justice (the *Chon Ui*)……… shall take charge of collecting the taxes in all the villages……… also that house land taxes shall be collected up to the first of the twelfth month of each year. However as some of the people find it very difficult to finish paying the taxes before that time the *so-im* of the town shall take charge of the balance of the taxes. It is earnestly hoped that all the people in all the villages will be careful not to cause the magistrate to make trouble and will for this reason pay up their taxes before the people of other districts do so.” Not only did the gild collect and remit the taxes in this latter village but it even advanced the tax of certain villagers who were in hard circumstances.

In *Yong In* the tax list was kept along with other gild records by gild officials. This gild also has an officer known as the tax collector.

Among a number of local public works undertaken by these societies is the keeping of the local roads in repair. [page 33]

These roads are seldom more than good sized cow paths running upon the dykes or on the ridges between fields in such places as the whim of local circumstances has chosen to locate the bounderies of possessions. The central Government has at times done some thing to build roads for royal progresses. These however, were too frequently between the palace and the site of a royal ancestral tomb and only incidentally of commercial and practical benefit. Local magistrates occasionally did something in bridge building and sent orders to villages to repair the roads in their locality but in general all activity in this particular line was left to the autonomy of individual villages. The keeping of these local highways or the local section of a through highway in repair was generally considered the concern of the village assembly or gild but in only one of the sets of records before us is this function mentioned. It reads as follows:

“One person from every house must come to work at the time of repairing the road. The expenses shall be met by funds remaining in the treasury of the gild. Two *nyang* shall be given to each person for food.”

“Any one who is absent at the time of repairing shall be given ten blows.”

“The notice of repairing shall be delivered by the headman of the village. If the headman delays in delivering the notice he shall be fined fifty *nyang*.”

The maintenence of the live timber near the villages was often undertaken by separate voluntarily organized tree protecting gilds. The writer has the written regulations of three such in hand and while it is probable that this function may have ofter come under the province of the village gild, as in the case of road repairing, only one speaks of it in its regulations. It has already been quoted in the sample given.

Four of these twelve sets of records speak of helping at fires as a function of the gild, making the following stipulations:

“All gild members must assemble and render aid when fire [page 34] breaks out.” In *Kwang Choo* a member was liable to expulsion from the village if he did not do so.

Gild number fifty four provided a grant from gild funds for a member whose house had burned down, and in the records of gild number twenty six it reads. “The materials that shall be given from each house when a calamity of fire has occurred to one of the members shall be:

One wooden pillar.

Certain additional specified pieces of timber.

A certain number of bundles of straw.

A certain number of bundles of straw string.

A given amount of money for building expenses.

A certain number of measures of rice.

“It has been decided that each of the members must come with a workman and help rebuild the house of a man who has met calamity from fire.”

Three of the documents speak of aid when danger or disaster from floods arise. In *Kwang Choo* and in the gild outside the South Gate of Seoul all members were required to assemble and help the village at such a time.

These gilds ordinarily organize the villagers for united resistance to marauding bands of robbers for there has been a great deal of organized robbery in Korea. Especially in Winter and in years of scarcity bands of robbers are numerous.

All gild members must assemble, when robbers come, and aid in driving them away.

The conditions under which the alliance, number fourty, was organized is an illustration of this condition in a pronounced form. The community seems to have been divided between the robber group and the village group and neither was without blame in its actions.

It is customary in villages for the gild to concern itself with all cases of a criminal character and settle minor ones without taking them to a Government official. But when the transgression is of sufficient flagrancy for the officers of the gild or [page 35] the assembled body of villagers to conclude it should be punished more severely than they are ready to undertake the criminal is handed over to a Government magistrate. The general wish of the gild is to facilitate the magistrate in his duty of keeping order and to undertake only such services as are otherwise left undone.

In the administration of justice and keeping the public peace the gild resorts to the following methods of enforcing its will;

It assembles the entire community to act on cases of lawlessness among its membership. It imposes monetary fines, whippings and expulsion from the village.

A system of policing and self government by means of dividing the community into five or ten house groups was at one time copied from China and universally employed in Korea. There are still instances of its use in the practises of these village societies and in other gilds. In an ancient Chinese classic, the *Chou Li*, which describes conditions under the *Chou* dynasty some centuries before Christ, this scheme is outlined. [\*Journal of the American Oriental Society, vol. xxxi, Pt. ii, 1911, Pg. 192. Article by Prof. K. Asakawa, Ph.D. entitled “Notes on Village Government in Japan.”] It provides for the division of households into groups of five with one of the householders appointed as leader and responsible to the village headman for the acts of the members of the five households under his jurisdiction. mention is made of this system of administration on the stone drums in the gateway of the temple of Confucious in Peking. These drums are said to be the most ancient monuments in China. [\*Guide Book to Peking containing translation of the writing on the stone drums of the Confucian Temple.] In Japan this system has been embodied in the local governments and was generally enforced during and after the reform of 645 A.D. [\*Journal of the American Oriental Society, vol. xxx, Pt. iii, 1910, Pg. 267. Article by Prof. K. Asakawa, PhD. entitled, “Notes on Village Government in Japan.”] On the continent of Europe and in Old England also are to be found evidences of [page 36] the same method of keeping the peace in local communities. [\*Pamphlet entitled, “Two Chapters on Mediaeval Guilds of England,” Pgs. 13, 14. Prof. R. A. Seligman.] It is interesting in the light of these facts to read the following from the regulations of document number seventeen;

“It has been decided to form an organization uniting houses into groups of five for mutual protection. This is according to the instructions of the mayor (*Pu-Yung*) and the imperial order.”

“When a person living in a group of five houses commits a wrong he shall be severely punished. If the wrong doer does not take his punishment the *tong-soo*, leader, of the five houses in which he lives shall be punished in his stead.”

“If rowdies cause trouble without having just cause for doing so all the people in the group shall help to drive them away from the town and report the matter to the government office.”

“It has been decided to forbid drinking and gambling and if any one commits a sin he shall be reported to the government office and the *tong-soo* of the house where he lives shall be punished, etc.”

The officers whose names are attached to this document are all of them dependent on popular choice for their posts. A number of well informed Koreans have told the writer that this system was at one time quite generally enforced in Korea by order of the Central Government. In the village of *An Sung* a number of hamlets were scattered around a larger central nucleus, in all containing one hundred houses with about five hundred people. In order to properly control the outlying districts a plan similar to this system was adopted. It reads as follows;

“It has been decided to select a number of the members and place some in every village as private inspectors of the people. Each of these officers shall have oversight of ten houses and if any of them fail to report the wrong doing of those under their inspection the responsibility shall be thrown [page 37] upon the *Cha-Chi* of the gilds. Wherefore it is hoped that all the inspectors will attend faithfully to their duties.”

“It has been decided to send gild members to the surrounding villages in this district and there establish village gilds. Yu Yer Pak shall be sent to the northern part of the district to take charge of the villages in that direction.”

“It has been decided to send a *Cha Chi* to *Yun Chon* village where there are twelve houses and examine the residents to see if they pass their time quietly without creating distributions. If so they shall receive a special reward but if not all the people from all the villages must assemble and consult as to how the people in those houses should be punished.”

It will be noted that in both of the latterly quoted places the policing of the towns was a main object in view.

The functions thus far discribed are such as are ordinarily considered within the sphere of a municipal or village government. There are some of a mutual benefit character which are also accomplished by these societies.

For example the rendering of aid at funerals. The Confucian emphasis on the ceremonial in funerals demands the expenditure of so much time and money that it is practically impossible for any but the wealthy Korean to conduct one of these ceremonies in a commendable manner. This fact has given prominence to those organizations which undertake to command the attendance of a body of mourners and promise a grant of funds in aid at such times. Funeral and marriage benefit societies are numerous in Korea and while only six of the twelve whose records we have, speak of affording aid at funerals it is probable that in every small village represented on the list the members of the gild have constantly given aid to each other at these times of “Gladness and annoyance” as they are called. In the larger villages such as *Mul-Ami* the village government assembly was probably supplemented by a number of voluntary *yun ban* or funeral societies in the accomplishment of this function. These societies would be organized by members of the same trade or artizan’s organization or commercial [page 38] gild. Sometimes a group of neighbors form one and most frequently brotherhood or friendly societies of men of kindred mind undertake to aid each other in this way. The author has a number of the records of each of these types of village organizations. Various Christian churches in Seoul are said to have recently established them among their respective groups of members. In the small country villages the entire community organized into its village gild seems to have undertaken the task of thus co-operating in these times of financial stress.

A grant of money or rice is given to the member at whose house a funeral is to be held. This grant is sometimes made from funds that have been gradually accumulated from fees and regular dues as an endowment or it may be made by taking up a subscription, at the time of the funeral, from each gild member. Taking and giving funeral benefits is in some instances optional with a gild member, depending on the nature of his membership. Aid in the matter of articles of mourning outfit is sometimes granted.

The gild requires that its members shall go to the home where death has come and condole with the household.

Men are provided to aid at the funeral.

Men to go forth and ceremonially meet those returning from a burial are provided.

Proper forms of announcements must be followed.

The gild provides a funeral director.

The gild may pay the expenses of the men it sends to aid at a funeral.

The same kind of financial burdens that come with funerals are attendants upon wedding ceremonies, although not quite so heavy, and the presence and aid of many friends is also a desideratum. Three of the twelve societies under consideration definitely speak of rendering aid at weddings.

Grants of money or rice are made from the gild treasury, or subscriptions of rice and money from each fellow member are promised. Some gilds loan a regular wedding outfit which it keeps [page 39] on hand for the use of members on such occasions. A gild representative is ordinarily sent to ceremonially offer congratulations on the wedding day. Strong men, probably palanquin bearers, were promised as aids on the wedding days in one society. Proper forms of announcement must be followed and in gild number fifty-three, at least, the wedding benefits are restricted to the marriage of the son, daughter, grandson and granddaughter of a member or to the member himself.

Travelers in the interior of Korea have noted that the farmers work in considerable groups at the busy times of the year. Such groups may be voluntary organizations known as farmers gilds having written constitutions such as the twelve we are considering, or as in the case of number fifty three this work may he done under the direction of a village government organization. The constitution of this society reads.

“In the season of plowing and hoeing the fields the work shall be shared by all. Harvesting shall also be shared by all. The expenses of this work shall be met by the owners of the fields.”

In gild number fourty the document reads.

“It has been decided to render assistance in times of trouble and when public or private controversies arise.”

Also in gild constitution number twenty-six the first paragraph reads.

“Certain persons in the town have nothing to rely on and have therefore decided to establish a gild in order that they may help each other in trouble.”

The expression “In trouble” in this latter clause may not mean as much as in the first quotation but the frequency of the practise of utilizing organized groups of people to stand by each other in the securing of justice, collection of debts or in resisting collectors of debts, sometimes in securing protection from the oppressions of officials of the Government and in many similar coercive acts, more or less commendable in their intent, lead the student to interpret these clauses as showing that the village gild is sometimes used us a weapon in individual community quarrels. [page 40]

The records of some of the commercial and craft gilds as well as of friendly societies describe in detail the methods pursued by the membership at such times.

In discussing the religious features, that seem to be rather prominent in village gilds, there are two lines of consideration suggested, one is the use which the gild makes of the sanctions of the Confucian cult and the other is the worship of the tutelary spirit of the village.

Five of the twelve documents speak of conducting community sacrifices to “The mountain,” to “The guardian spirit of the mountain” or, to “The spirit of the mountain.” Number thirty-five speaks of collecting its outstanding loans and holding a feast in the Autumn at the same time that the other four have their general sacrifices and feast. Three speak of holding their sacrifices in the Fall. Two specifying the tenth month. The third of holding theirs in the Spring and Autumn.

Part of the expenses of the sacrifice were met from gild funds and part from subscriptions of members in the village of *Yong In*. A sorceress was empolyed. Three hundred *nyang* from the gild treasury was given and each member of the village had to subscribe three measures of rice.

In *Kak Sin* the expenses were met by enforced subscriptions from each household and in gild fifty three appears the ruling.

“The Expenses of preparations shall be met by collecting money from every house or by funds remaining in the treasury of the gild.”

Villagers were required not only to take a part in the subscriptions but in the sacrificial service as well. One specifying a punishment of ten blows on the back for absence. After the sacrificial ceremony was over the food was eaten on the spot by the villagers or taken to their homes. Gild number fifty-three has the fullest description of the system of village sacrifices Its regulations may be noted in the second of the two sample constitutions given in this paper.

The gild acts as an aid to the Central Government by providing [page 41] the local administration in villages which the national Government failed to give.

The inability of the old central Government of Korea to establish and maintain a system that secured the proper administration of affairs in local communities, especially when they were at some distance from provincial capitals or magistracies, constituted one reason for the existence of the system of village self government societies. The perusal of the documents in hand shows that four at least of these societies originated or were reorganized under conditions of pronounced lawlessness. Moreover a purpose of securing peace and harmony is prominent in the records of nearly all the rest of the villages herein represented. The constitution of the gild at *Yong In* starts out by saying.

“The cause for these regulations is that towns in various districts lack fixed regulations and the people therein have found it very difficult to decide cases arising among themselves, wherefore the citizens in every town ought to assemble and consult about establishing an organization called a town gild and furthermore they should help each other so as to prevent those evil practices which are happening in every place.”

The constitution of the *An Sung* gild begins.

“The purpose of this article is to say that the people of the town have no regulations handed down from generation to generation and spend their time in wine drinking and making disturbances in various places. The five or six hundred people living in the one hundred houses of the villages are in trouble and the town is in the verge of being broken up. Because of these things some of the well known citizens have decided to establish a town gild in various parts that those making disturbances may be tranquilized.”

At *Kak Sin* the introduction reads:

“In its purpose of government the monthly gild has gradually failed and this is a cause for regret. The village of *Kak Sin* has degenerated more and more. Wherefore the government [page 42] officials have made frequent visits and much trouble has resulted to the village. Various persons have denounced innocent residents to the officials and both the officials and the false accusers have taken their money. The villagers have not been respected . . . . . . . Wherefore this Constitution has been written and hereafter the people will meet with bad fortune or good fortune according to their acts.”

Frequent notice has been taken of gild number fourty where the people in various villages were bothered by bands of thieves. The introduction reads.

“By the regulations of this alliance it has been ordered that some virtuous and elegant men shall be chosen from the people of each of the villages as *Myen-Chang* and *Myen-Chung* and *Ye-Chang* and *Ye-Chung*. After they are chosen these elders must assemble all the people in the towns and consult about organizing an alliance against thieves.”

This latter gild record evidently comes from a place far distant from an official center. Each of the other three quoted is also from a more or less isolated village or group of villages but the one at *Kak Sin* is within reach of some official post By comparing these with the gild at *Mul-Ami*, which is a large village in the suburbs of Seoul, the difference in their problems will be noted. *Mul-Ami* and *Kak-Sin* are burdened by the demands of officialdom and are organized to act in concert in fulfilling the demands of and resisting officials. *Mul-Ami* pays twenty-four different kinds of taxes to officials and *Kak-Sin* is so unmercifully “squeezed” that no one will serve as headman. The other villages reap none of the advantages of such police regulations as are maintained near official posts and are therefore struggling to organize protection for themselves.

There is nothing essentially unpatriotic or of a rebellious nature in any of these records. Some of the communities are greatly oppressed by officialdom but the ideal of loyalty to the Government is always evident. Number forty alone furnishes suspicions of high handed proceeding not in keeping with the commendable spirit prevailing elsewhere. But however true [page 43] this may be in general, the village gild often resisted individual Government officials. Note the following paragraph from the *An Sung* gild.

“When some of the people from the village have a verbal request to make of an official……… All the people from every village must gather and reach a decision after consulting about the matter.”

“In *Kak Sin* a pitiful plight was reached and partly because of official oppression. The organizers of the local gild were of the opinion that it was because of lack of unity on the part of the villagers that this had come about. They said that happy conditions would be, “the result of the people in the village uniting their minds and helping one another……… then the village,” the wrote, “will be without trouble and the business of farming and handing merchandise will proceed peacefully, etc.” The opening sentences describe the sad conditions into which they had fallen.

“The village of *Kak Sin* has degenerated more and more. Wherefore the Government officials have made frequent visits and much trouble has resulted to the village. Various persons have denounced innocent residents to the officials and both officials and the false accusers have taken their money……… The village headman refuses to serve for he who assumes the office of headman will see his house and family meet misfortune and will have no place to complain about his difficulties.” That is to say he cannot get help from the Government for it is the Government officials who oppress him. After describing the effort to reorganize the regulations go on.

“When the Government officials come to the village we make no promise to provide them with anything but morning and evening meals and with the cost of tobacco or wine and if any official makes trouble by seizing a person’s money the latter should come immediately and report to the gild. To officials who move about the place when not on official business none of the above mentioned things will be given.”

It required some temerity to put in writing such a decision, [page 44] and affix their names to it but the thirty two leading men of the village, who composed the meeting for the reorganization of the gild, adopted the device called “signing in bowl,” that is, they wrote their names in a perfect circle. Thus there was no head of the list who could be called to account by a Government official.

The general government recognized and utilized the village gild system. In general the magistrates in all parts of Korea seem to have accepted *en toto* the system of the village gild and recognized its chosen headman as the responsible representative. The officials probably did not admit of any curtailment of their authority to depose or refuse to have dealings with any individuals who might be chosen to these posts by their respective communities, yet as a matter of fact, the village choice was in general accepted by the government officials. The books containing the constitutions of these societies were sometimes stamped with the government stamps in the general government offices at Seoul.