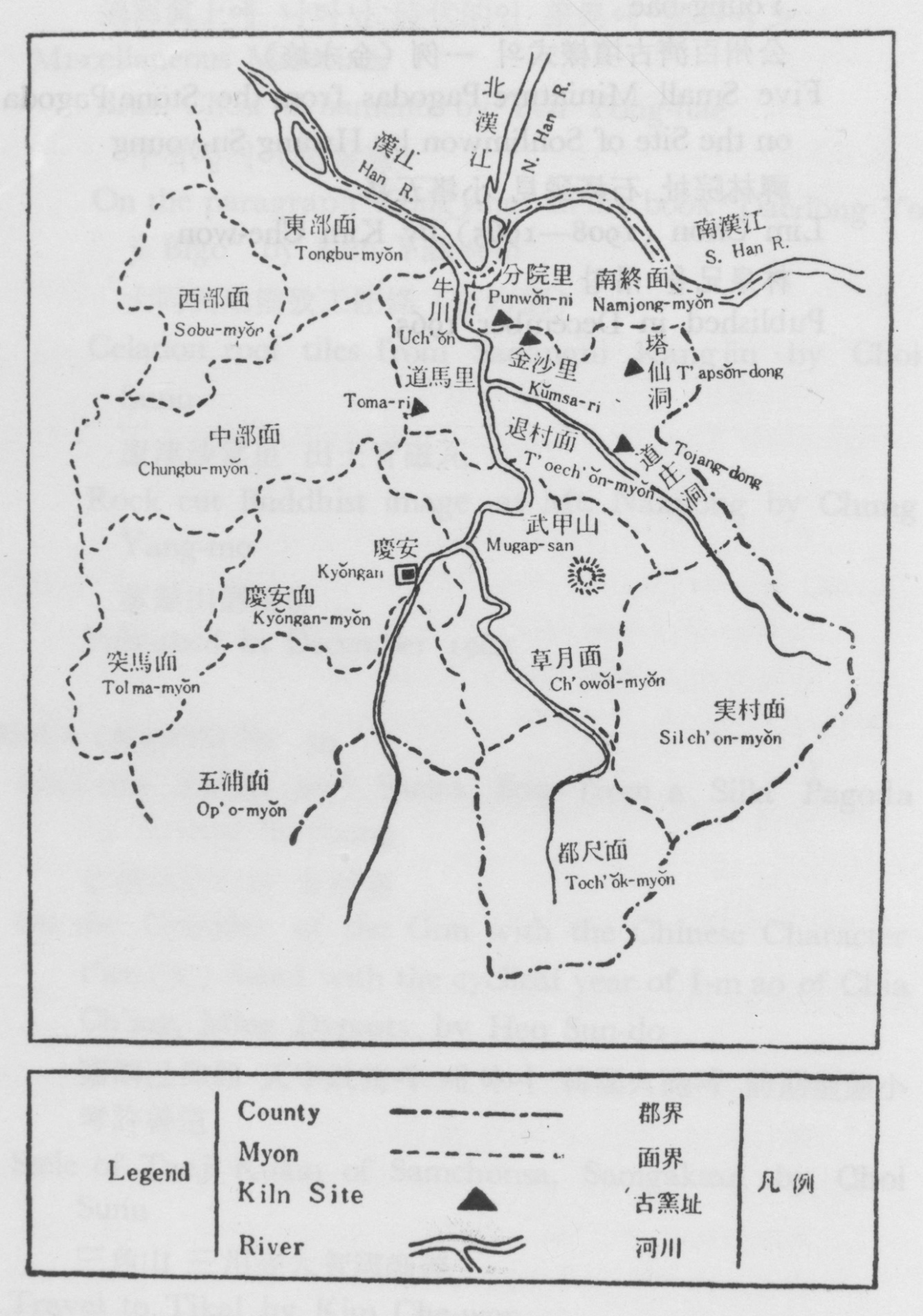
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**A STUDY OF THE PUNWON**

**by Kang Man-kil**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

During the early period of the Yi Dynasty (1392~1910), the handicraft industry in Korea was run almost exclusively by the court government. Most craftsmen were then employed by and registered with various offices and workshops of the government according to the types of work in which they specialized.

This government industry began to decline around the 16th century, or during the reign of Prince Yonsan (燕山 1495―1506) and King Chungjong (中宗 1506—1544), when many underpaid craftsmen deserted the workshops which were under government control. The Japanese invasion of Korea by Hideyoshi (1592―98) must be held responsible for the financial bankruptcy of the court government, which in turn was responsible for the underpayment or Jack of payment of the workers.

The nation-wide circulation of metal coins and the rapid progress of commerce and the private handicraft industry during the 17th and 18th centuries understandably discour-aged the impecunious government from investing any more money in this unprofitable industry.

Thus the court government of the Yi Dynasty could not restore its handicraft industry to the prewar level, except for a few sectors such as weapons ana porcelain.

Yet some bold private craftsmen ventured to challenge the government’s monopoly by producing such weapons as gunpowder, rifles and swords from the beginning of the 19th century. Although production of weapons was strictly forbidden by law, they not only sold their products at public market places but also opened wholesale stores and even organized mutual financing associations of weapon producers. [page 72] It remains to be examined, therefore, why production of chinaware for royal use was undertaken, not by private craftsmen like other commodities, but by government em-ployees throughout almost the entire history of the dynasty.

As will be explained in the following chapters, the production of china during the closing years of the Yi Dynasty by the government factory (or Punwon) was quite well-organized and specialized on a comparatively large scale. Nevertheless, scholars tend to disregard or underestimate the importance of the Punwon in the general history of the development of the handicraft industry of Korea merely because the industry in question was placed under government supervision.

One of the prime purposes of this article, therefore, is to make extensive studies on the management of the pottery industry by the Punwon during the 17th and 18th centuries, so that the role of the government workshop may be given proper evaluation in the history of the development of the handicraft industry in this country. For this reason, I have concentrated here on management and production, and have tended to disregard consideration of technical problems or artistic quality of the products.

**2. LOCATION AND FACILITIES OF THE PUNWON**

The royal porcelain factory of the Yi Dynasty was first called Sagi Ponjo So (沙器燔造所) and was placed under the direct control of the Saong-won (司甕院) or the Royal Kitchen. However, no proof has so far been found to verify the exact year when the first kiln was installed.

Okuhira Takehiko (奧平武彥) has said that “the first kiln was built inside the Kwanghi-mun (光熙門) or Sugu-mun (水口門) gate in Seoul, and was later relocated at Kwangju (廣州) in Kyonggi Province.” He quoted the clerks and [page 73] ceramists who worked during the closing days of the Pun-won. However, it must be pointed out that Mr. Okuhira’s quotations were based on an oral tradition which originated in the royal kiln since its relocation to Kwangju.

Meanwhile, another Japanese scholar, Zen jo Eisuke (善生永助), said that “the Punwon was first installed at Hull- yon-won (訓練院) in Seoul more than 500 years ago, in order to produce porcelain for royal use under the supervision of the Saong-won. Inaccessibility of sufficient materials and fuel made it inevitable for the royal household to move the kiln to Pukhan-san (北漢山), Kwanak-san (冠岳山) and then to Songpa (松坡), Tolma-myon(突馬面), Sil- ch’on-myon (實村面) and Toech’on-myon (退村面), in the county of Kwangju-gun. It was about 270 years ago when Punwon-ni, Namjong-myon (南終面分院里) of Kwangju-gun became the permanent location of the royal kiln.”

Mr. Zenjo made the above statements in his report of “The Pottery Industry in Korea,” prepared for the then Government-General of Chosen after a nation-wide survey he initiated about 40 years ago. But it is regrettable that he did not specify the reference materials on which his statements were based.

In my opinion, the royal kiln of the Yi Dynasty was relocated in the county of Kwangju as early as the 15th century, although it was not then officially called Punwon.

According to the Sejong Sillok Chir-ji (世宗實錄地理志) there were four kilns in Kwangju county alone, namely Polul-chon (伐乙川), Sosan (所山), Sokkulli (石掘里) and Ko-hyon (恙峴). Regrettably, the official records did not specify whether or not they were owned by the government.

However, Song Hyon (成俔 1439—1504) wrote that “the products of Kwangju were the most excellent of all ceramics in the country. Officials from the Saong-won used to be sent [page74] to the scene annually to supervise production of ceramics in Kwangju. During the reign of King Sejong, white ceramics were chosen exclusively for royal use.”

Song’s remarks lead me to believe that the four kilns mentioned by King Sejong’s official records were placed under the direct supervision of the Saong-won.

So far, there has been no historical record that called the kiln in question Pun won. However, it is certain that the royal kilns remained in the same county since King Sejong’s time. We can find several records to support my assumption. For example, the revised version of the Tongguk Yoji Sung Nam published in 1530, or the 25th year of King Chung-jong, states that “officials from the Saong-won went to the kiln in Kwangju in order to supervise production of ceramics for royal use. They used to be accompanied by painters.”

Yi Kyu-gyong (李圭景), a famed scholar during the reign of King Honjong (憲宗 1835―49) also wrote in his book that “the Punwon is the only official kiln in the country. It is located on a river bank in Kwangju-gun, Kyonggi-do, at a distance of 70 ri or 28 kilometers from the capital. It is supervised by the Saong-won.”

So far it has not been determined when the royal kiln which was relocated in the vicinity of Kwangju-gun began to be called Punwon and its products Punwon sagi (分院沙器) or “porcelain produced in Punwon.”

Mr. Okuhira decided that the word Punwon was first used in 1718, or the 44th year of King Sukchong (肅宗 1675―1720) when the relocation of Punwon to the upstream of Uch’on-gang in Yanggun-gun was officially recorded. In the aforementioned book he declared: “So far as I have studied, this is the first official record in which the word Punwon is used. I want to suggest that the history of ceramics of the [page 75] Yi Dynasty be divided into its earlier and later periods by the year 1718.”

This scholar based his suggestion on the fact that the influence of the culture of the Ch’ing Dynasty of China began to be felt in Korea during the reign of King Suk-chong, which coincided with the reign of Emperor Cheng-tsu (聖祖) of China. In other words, he seems to propose that the early part of the history of ceramics of the Yi Dynasty was under the influence of the culture of the Ming Dynasty, while the latter part was under that of the Ch’ing Dynasty.

However, he must have been wrong if his division of history was based not on the influence of Chinese culture, but the official record in which, he insisted, the word Punwon was first used. According to sources I have been able to discover, as early as 1625, or the 3rd year of King Injo (仁祖 1623—49), a plan to relocate the royal Punwon kiln was recorded. This predates the official record quoted by Mr. Okuhira by 93 years.

At least, it appears certain that the location of the royal kiln known by the name Punwon was finalized in the vicinity of Kwangju-gun and Yanggun-gun (楊根郡) prior to the 17th century. It must be noted here that the location of the kiln was determined, first of all, by its access to rich fuel sources of firewood, For this reason, the royal kiln had to be relocated from one forest to another almost every ten years, within the six myon (counties) of Kwangju-gun and one myon of Yanggun-gun.

Needless to say, firewood and kaolin constituted the most vital materials in the production of ceramics for royal use. Of them, kaolin was scarce except in some specific areas of the country which were quite distant from one another, such as Kyongju (慶州) in Kyongsang Province in the south and Sonch’on (宣川) in P’yongan Province in the [page76] north. For this reason it was impractical to move the kiln to kaolin producing districts.

However, it was much easier to find forests as fuel resources. In this regard, Kwangju was an ideal place because it had in its vicinity many forests, including Mugap-san (武甲山). The district also met many other requirements as the site of the royal kiln.

In the first place, it was famous for the superior quality of its kaolin. Moreover, it was close to the royal capital of Seoul, for which most of the ceramics were produced. Then there was the Han River, which was very convenient for transporting raw materials and products to ana from the kilns.

It would be very helpful for us to understand not only the changes in the quality and shapes of the ceramics produced at Punwon, but also the general progress of the pottery industry during the Yi Dynasty, if comparative and chronological studies of the products from the remains of each of the ovens discovered in the vicinity of Kwangju-gun make this possible. Although more than 80 kiln sites have been discovered in the district, very few records regarding relocation of Punwon have so far been made available. Besides, the historical records often disagree with actual discoveries made about the remnants of the ovens concerned. For this reason, I believe a successful determination of the relocation of the ovens in chronological order is a premature endeavor at the present time.

According to the historical records I have studied, the royal furnace was mentioned as being at Punwon for the first time when it was relocated in 1625, the 3rd year of King In jo. However, the record fails to mention the exact location of the old and new kilns.

The next appearance of the name in the records was [page 77] in 1667, or the 2nd year of King Sukchong. “The royal kiln used to be relocated every ten years because the firewood at the authorized fuel yard could no longer suffice the need for production of the royal ceramics before the end of the period. The present furnace has remained at the same place for 12 years. For this reason, it is recommended that it be relocated to a new place during the coming autumn or winter, for otherwise it will not be able to continue to operate next spring.”

The record also describes the environment of a new site recommended by an official from the royal kitchen. The report said: “A village called T’amnip-tong (塔立洞) is located near a mountain and by a river which is about 15 ri or six kilometers northwest of the present kiln. Although it is feared to be difficult to maintain a wide road in time of flood, the village provides enough space to build Punwon. Besides, the majority opinion of the ceramists is in favor of the move to this place.”

T’amnip-tong is now called T’apson-dong (塔仙洞) and located at T’oech’on-myon (退村面) of Kwangju-gun, where the remains of an oven still exist. However, the location of its predecessor has not so far been discovered. Perhaps it might have been somewhere near the present Tojang-dong (道庄洞), which is about 15 ri southeast of T’amnip-tong.

If the aforementioned record that “the relocation of Punwon took place every ten years” is to be regarded as reliable, there must have been at least four to five movements between 1625 and 1667. But I have so far failed to find any historical records to indicate this. Moreover, it is not likely that movements of Punwon were so frequent as the record of 1676 indicates.

Nevertheless, it is not difficult to imagine that the officials and ceramists had to overcome great inconveniences [page78] during each relocation of Punwon. For example, a report prepared by an official of the Saong-won in 1697(23rd year of King Sukchong) gives us a clear picture of the difficulties: “Not only the trees but also their roots in the vicinity of the Punwon are exhausted within ten years. This makes it inevitable to find a new location for the royal kiln. What is more lamentable is the fact that the denuded hills are cultivated as dry fields, which in turn makes it impossible to grow trees again. It is feared, therefore, that the Punwon will not be able to find a suitable wood supply for its relocation before long.”

Prior to the period under discussion, the Punwon used to be installed at a suitable place in the vicinity of the Sijang (柴場) or the royal fuel yard designated for the government kiln. When the firewood near the kiln was exhausted, the kiln was moved to a new place so that reforestation might take place in the old fuel yard. However, the field was transformed to dry field cultivation, so some other recourse had to be considered. For this reason the officials of the Saong-won made some recommendations to overcome this pressing problem in 1697:

(1) That the peasants who cultivated in the fuel yard be taxed a one year supply of wood for the kiln. They were supposed to provide the annual fuel before the end of each winter.

(2) That the peasants cultivating the burnt fields within the fuel yards be taxed with fuel for cultivation and rice for a household tax. The latter (rice) should meet the need of the officials of the Saong-won and the potters. The officials of Saong-won claimed that by this plan a twofold benefit was assured: that is to say for the kiln, savings on the expenses of fuel transportation and for the people, uninterrupted cultivation of land. [page 79] (3) That the Punwon could stay in a fixed location without moving the kiln every 10 years.

In brief, the planners wanted to keep the royal kiln at a fixed place, convenient for the transporation of kaolin and fuel, thereby saving much cost and trouble. Generally speaking, the handicraft industry, both government and private, was promoted during the period of the Yi Dynasty in a place where raw material was produced and not by such economic considerations as the marketing prospects or the convenience of transportation.

For this reason, frequent relocation of each handicraft factory was inevitable. And for the same reason, installation of each factory was rather temporary and the scale of the industries had to remain small.

This is one of the most important reasons for the slow development of the handicraft industry under the Yi Dynasty.

As for the pottery industry, the plan to keep the Punwon at a fixed place could provide a golden opportunity to expand its facilities to insure rapid progress. At the same time, it indicated that the government industry had already developed to such an extent as to demand a permanent location. It seems to me, therefore, that the inconvenience in connection with the transportation of fuel was only superficial.

However, I presume that recommendations for a fixed location of the Punwon were not implemented immediately. An official record prepared in 1718 (44th year of King Sukchong), or 20 years after the recommendations, indicates that the Punwon was relocated somewhere along the bank of the Uch’on River in Yanggun-gun. The record also indi-cates that half of the taxes collected from the royal fuel yard were allocated to pay the ceramists and the remaining half to purchase fuel for Punwon.

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Both banks of the river in question, which is a branch of the Han River, are now under the jurisdiction of present-day Kwangju-gun. But according to the Taedong Yojido (大東舆地圖), a map published in 1862, or the 12th year of King Choljong (哲宗 1850—63), the area about five ri from the confluence of the Han River with the upstream of the two smaller branches was under the joint jurisdictions of Kwangju-gun and Yanggun-gun.

Now the royal kiln was located near the bank which was under the jurisdiction of the then Yanggun-gun, which, I believe, coincides with the present village of Punwon-ni, Namjong-myon (南終面) of Kwangju county.

Therefore, we may presume that the royal kiln was relocated at the present Punwon-ni permanently in 1718, if the official record of the year is reliable.

However, another record prepared in 1720 tells us a different story. It reads: “The Punwon was moved to Oyang-dong (五陽洞) of Silchon-myon in the fuel yard in 1717. But it had to be relocated at Uch’on (牛川) in 1720 due to lack of fuel. Although Uch’on is not abundant in firewood, it is so close to a river that it may be expected to depend on commercial firewood.”

Uch’on is a small village which was then located halfway between the Uch’on River and Punwon-ni. The villagers now call it Sonae (소내), or Ox River. I presume that the exact location of the Punwon mentioned by the two different records was in fact the same place. For this reason, it is hardly convincing that the relocation was realized in 1718.

Meanwhile, the record of 1721, or the 1st year of King Kyongjong (景宗 1721—24), confirms that the royal kiln was relocated at Uch’on in the previous year, and that it purchased commercial firewood by the river.

However, a record of 1725, or the 1st year of King [page 81] Yongjo (英祖 1725—76), reads as follows: “It has become really difficult for the Punwon to obtain sufficient fuel because the firewood in the royal fuel yard in the vicinity of the six myons in Kwangju-gun and the one in Yanggun-gun has already been exhausted. For this reason, it was recommended in 1721 to relocate the Punwon at Uch’on and reforest the exhausted yard. But the recommendation has not yet been implemented.”

The record also reads: “Since the situation did not permit any more delay, lower officials were sent to select a new site for the Punwon. According to their reports Kaoge (加五介), Sindao-ri (新多五里) and Songjo-dong (聖造洞) of Chip’yong (砥平) are abundant in firewood, which may last five to six years.”

This indicates that the relocation was not realized until 1725 at least, and that it was planned to move the Punwon as far as Chip’yong, upstream on the Han River.

It is certain that the plan was not implemented.

The record of 1726 also complains of insufficient supply of fuel: “Since the Punwon is distant from the river by ten ri or four kilometers, thousands of yang (兩) or coins have to be wasted to transport firewood. For this reason, immediate relocation of the Punwon to Uch’on is recommended.” It may be safe to say that the plan to relocate the royal kiln in Uch’on was made as early as the last years of King Sukchong, but it was realized sometime between the reign of King Kyongjong and the beginning of that of King Yongjo. The record of 1732, or the 8 th year of King Yongjo, reads: “Ten years have passed since the Punwon was relocated in Uch’on and began to depend on purchased firewood transported by the river.”

So far I have introduced historical records regarding the relocation of the Punwon. But as was pointed out in [page 82] the beginning of this article, the available records alone are not sufficient to reconstruct the exact location of the royal kilns. Further studies remain to be done. I hope the excavations of the remains of the kilns will help to clarify this picture.

Studies on the scale of the facilities and the quality or quantity of the tools used by the Punwon may lead us to a more complete understanding of the development of the Punwon. However, the incomplete preservation of the kilns and the inadequate availability of historical records hardly enable us to do much.

We can find some specific terms in connection with the Punwon in a record prepared in 1676. They included kwan-chong (官廳), kaga (假家), kogan (庫間), mokcho (木槽) and mokp’an (木版). I presume that kwanch’ong was meant to be office buildings; kogan, warehouses to store raw materials and products; and kaga, temporary buildings. It is uncertain whether or not the pottery factory was included in kaga. The record of 1721 introduces us to a new term, kong-jak-ch’ong (工作廳), by which, I believe, was meant a factory where kaolin was refined, ceramics were shaped, and painters worked. Perhaps the kiln was installed in the factory. Meanwhile, the record of 1745 shows a third building type, puga (釜家), which was probably the kongjak-ch’ong, i.e. the factory.

Relocation of the Punwon was accompanied by construction of new houses, which, I presume, were roofed with straw. The construction work and expenses were the burden of the local governments concerned.

Meanwhile, such implements as mokcho (wood tub) and mokp’an (wood plate) were generally replaced every ten years. For example, in 1797, or the 12 th year of King Chongjo (正祖 1777—1800), they had to replace nine tubs, [page83] eight wide plates and three draining plates. The implements used to be contributed by the inhabitants of 12 communities in Kangwon Province. But the inhabitants of only four towns were told to contribute in kind, while the rest had to pay in coin due to excessive hardships for them to acquire and transport enough wood. The Seoul officials purchased the implements with the coins collected from the local people.

To be brief, the royal pottery was transferred to somewhere in Kwangju-gun as early as the 15th century. Although it is yet to be proved when it was first called the Punwon, or the branch house of the Saong-won, it is safe to say that it was already called by the name in the early part of the 17th century.

It is very likely that the royal pottery was placed under the direct supervision of the Saong-won from the beginning. But construction of a branch office was necessitated as the demand for the ceramics for royal use increased and the importance of on-the-spot supervision began to be felt.

Meanwhile, the royal factory relocated at Kwangju-gun had to move from one forest to another in search of fuel during its early existence. However, a permanent site was selected 011 a bank of the Uch’on River somewhere near the village of Punwon-ni around the early part of the 18 th century. Since such materials as kaolin and firewood were not locally available they were transported to the factory. This in turn presented new problems for the management of the royal kilns. The task to provide transportation expenses for firewood was one of the biggest problems.

**3. PRODUCING DISTRICTS AND PROCUREMENT OF WHITE KAOLIN**

Paekto (白土) or white kaolin was one of the most [page 84] important materials in the production of porcelain. Needless to say, the products of the Punwon have been regarded as the most excellent porcelain of all that created during the Yi Dynasty.

At the time, the producing districts and mining methods of the kaolin used by the Punwon must have been closely connected with the quality of the porcelain manufactured by the royal kiln.

Following the Japanese invasion of Korea, the kaolin producing districts included Wonju (原州)and Yanggu (楊口) of Kangwon-do, Kyongju, Chinju (晋州), Konyang (昆陽) and Hadong (河東) of Kyongsang-do, Sonch’on of P’yongan-do, Kwangju, Kap’yong(加平) and Ich’on (利川) of Kyong-gi-do, Sosan (瑞山), Ch’ungju (忠州) and Umsong (陰城) of Ch’ungch’ong-do and Pongsan (鳳山) of Hwanghae-do.

Products from these places were used by the Punwon. However, their quality and the periods in which they were used differed. Mr. Okuhira wrote that the kaolin of Kwangju used to be favored exclusively by the royal kiln prior to the era of King Yongjo, and that materials from other districts began to be used thereafter.

However, there are abundant historical records that kaolin from such districts as Wonju, Sosan, Sonch’on and Kyongju was already in use by the kiln even before the period under discussion.

I would like to discuss the kaolin from various districts.

A. KAOLIN OF WONJU AND SOSAN

It seems that kaolin from Wonju was used by the Punwon during the reigns of Kings Injo, Hyojong (孝宗 1650— 59) and Hyonjong (顯宗 1660—74). The record of 1636, or the 14th year of King Injo, states that the kaolin from Wonju reserved for the production of porcelain for royal use [page85] had to be appropriated for the production of vessels for the military because the inhabitants of Wonju had failed to provide their share of the materials for the purpose.

Excessive burdens on the part of the inhabitants of Wonju were responsible for their failure to meet the government order. It is said that they had to mobilize 500 miners and more than 200 horses to produce and transport their share of the kaolin.

This type of excessive burden was a common phenomenon for the inhabitants of the other kaolin producing districts, and was responsible for the frequent delay or shortage of supply of kaolin for the Punwon.

The afore-mentioned record does not specify the exact quantity of kaolin allocated for Wonju. But 500 miners and 200 horses are suggestive enough. Moreover, the kaolin from Wonju was never mentioned again in the historical records after 1660, or the 1st year of King Hyonjong, because of its quality deterioration.

Meanwhile, a considerable quantity of kaolin from Sosan was also used during the same period by the royal kiln. According to the record of 1658, or the 9th year of King Hyojong, a kaolin mine in Sosan, which had once been out of operation for some time, was revived in that year.

An official sent to the scene from the Saong-won to supervise the work was removed from his post for having paid 450 earth diggers with unauthorized rice and mobilized 281 new miners, to whom, he also paid 28 sok (石) of rice. Probably he lost his job for some irregularities. However, the record is enough to convince us that mining of kaolin in the district was under way on a comparatively large scale.

Like that of Wonju, the Sosan kaolin was not favored by the Punwon due to its rough quality. The latest uses of [page 86] the product by the royal factory were recorded in 1667 and 1670 respectively.

B. KAOLIN OF KYONGJU AND SONCH’ON

In 1660, or the 1st year of King Hyonjong, the kaolin of Wonju and Sosan was replaced by that of Kyongju because of the former’s bad quality. This record leads us to suppose that the Kyongju kaolin was used simultaneously or even before that of Wonju and Sosan. However, its rough quality and inconvenient location, i.e., a long distance from the royal kiln, seems to have discouraged the Punwon from ordering more of it.

Meanwhile, the kaolin of Sonch’on was used before that of Kyongju. The court diary of 1:682, or the 8th year of King Sukchong, records a report by an official of the Saongwon. The report reads as follows:

“A total of 250 sok of kaolin to produce porcelain for royal use used to be contributed by the inhabitants of Sonch’on since the year of Kimi (己未) of the sexagenary cycle. However, the Sonch’on product was later replaced by that of Kyongju because the governor of the province concerned (P’yongan-do) evaded complying with the request on the pretext of excessive burden on the populace.

“Now that a big royal party is imminent, and the quality of the Kyongju kaolin is inferior to that of Sonch’on and unsuitable for the production of the receptacles for the occasion, contribution of dried and pure kaolin of Sonch’on totaling 80 mal (斗말) was requested again in accordance with the precedence of the year of Chongsa (丁已). But the governor of P’yongan-do excused himself, replying that he was not in a position to impose such hardships on the populace again.

“Therefore, the Saong-won urged the king to tell the [page87] governor to reconsider his earlier decision, explaining that the local product was needed to produce the porcelain for the big occasion, and that the present allocation of 80 mal was not a large quantity as compared with the previous ones.

“Thus the king approved the request on the condition that it would be the last allocation for the inhabitants of Sonch’on.”

According to the above record, the kaolin of Sonch’on was first used for the royal pottery in the year of Kimi. Now the nearest year of Kimi before 1682 falls in 1679, the 5th year of King Sukchong; or 1619, the 11th year of Prince Kwanghae (1609—1623).

Meanwhile, the year of Chongsa falls in 1677, the 3rd year of King Sukchong; and 1617, the 9th year of Prince Kwanghae. In this case, the year 1677, when 80 mal of Son-ch’on kaolin was allegedly sent to Seoul contradicts the year of 1679, when the local kaolin was allegedly used for the first time by the Punwon.

If the local material was first used in 1619, there should have been other records pertaining to the uses of the Son-ch’on kaolin between 1619 and 1682. However, so far no such record during the period has ever been discoverd. For this reason, I presume that the above record of Kimi was a mistake and that the kaolin in question was first used sometime between 1674 (the last year of King Hyonjong) and 1677.

The contribution of Sonch’on kaolin was temporarily discontinued because of the alleged harm inflicted upon the inhabitants of the district, although its quality was superior to any other in the country. I presume that the mining conditions of the district were somehow worse than those of other districts.

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Nevertheless, the superior quality of the kaolin imposed more hardships on the inhabitants of Sonch’on, for the material continued to be used by the royal pottery. For example, in 1688, or the 14th year of King Sukchong, when the king’s mother died, the production of special receptacles to be buried with the deceased and to be used for the religious services thereof was necessary. Since inferior kaolin was not suitable, the inhabitants of Sonch’on and Kyongju were ordered to contribute their products for the occasion.

By the period under discussion, the kaolin of Chinju and Yanggu was used for the production of ordinary receptacles, while that of not only Sonch’on but also Kyongju was contributed for special occasions.

To be brief, the kaolin of Sonch’on was the most excellent of all such materials used during the latter period of the Yi Dynasty. The next best quality was that of Kyongju.

C. KAOLIN OF YANGGU, CHINJU, AND PONGSAN

Although the kaolin of Chinju and Yanggu was inferior in quality to that of Sonch’on, I presume that it was mined in greater quantity because it was used for the production of ordinary vessels.

The quality of the Yanggu product seems to have been, comparatively superior to the rest, except for those of Sonch’on and Kyongju. In 1704, or the 30th year of King Sukchong, the mining of Yanggu kaolin was suspended because the pits were too deep to continue the work. For this reason, Pongsan kaolin had to be used. But it was so hard that it had to be mixed with the Yanggu product in order to prevent excessive damage to the vessels.

The suspension of mining in the district of Yanggu was necessitated, I presume, by over-production. Nevertheless, the officials of the Saong-won could not give up using the pro- [page89] duct because of its good quality. For this reason, the court government had to concede several privileges for the inhabitants of Yanggu in order to appease them.

For example, they were exempted from their duties in the royal fuel yard in the district. Besides, the task of digging the pits other than the vein itself, and of transporting the product, was shifted to the inhabitants of the neighboring counties. Thus at least half of the entire requirement of kaolin was supplied by Yanggu.

Despite the many privileges granted by the court government, to mine kaolin was one of the hardest and even most dangerous kinds of work for the inhabitants of Yanggu. For example, Cho Myong Kyom (趙鳴謙), an official of the Sagan-won (司諫院) wrote from Yanggu in his plea to King Sukchong in 1714, “Less than 500 households are engaged in the mining of kaolin. They have to climb high and steep mountains in order to mine the mineral. Sometimes they have to chisel precipitous rocks to discover the veins. No single year has ever passed without seeing miners fall or be crushed to death.” Dangerous or not, the kaolin of Yanggu continued to be used by the Punwon until its last days.

What should not be ignored is the fact that the gradual worsening in the quality of the porcelain produced during; the period of the Yi Dynasty was closely connected with the quality of the prime material, kaolin. In other words, the kaolin of Sonch’on and Kyongju was first used during the early period. Then the Yanggu and Chinju products were substituted because the veins of the former were exhausted. Finally, the Pongsan kaolin, which was of the worst quality, was mixed with the Yanggu product during the closing days of the Punwon.

Meanwhile, the exact date when the Chinju kaolin was [page90] first used remains to be proved. The record of 1968 states that the kaolin of Chinju was not suitable for the production of receptacles for religious service because its quality was inferior to those of Sonch’on and Kyongju. This indicates that the product had already been in use by the period under discussion.

For example, the record of 1707, or the 33rd year of King Sukchong, reads as follows:

“The white kaolin of Chinju has been used by the royal kiln for quite a long time. Since the 10th year of the king, sending of the Saong-won official to supervise the production and transportation of the mineral has been discontinued in order to reduce the possible, harm inflicted upon the populace by the official from the royal factory. Instead, the local officials have been requested to supervise the mining and transportation of the product to the Punwon. However, the miners and ceramists have been so careless that the quality of the kaolin as well as the receptacles has been greatly reduced. For this reason, the Saong-won has decided to send its officials to the scene again to improve the quality and insure prompt delivery.”

As early as the beginning of the reign of King Sukchong the inhabitants of Chinju contributed a greater share of the requirements, along with their counterparts in Kyongju. By the 16th year of the king, most of the requirements were met by the two districts. By the 23rd year of the king, the veins in Chinju were already exhausted, which in turn made it inevitable for the Punwon to use kaolin from Ch’ungju.

“The Saong-won officials used to be sent to Chinju each autumn in order to supervise the mining of the mineral. The product would be stored at the producing district until next spring. When spring came, half of the product would be shipped to the royal kiln by chartered boats, in order to meet [page91] the spring requirements. The rest was shipped by tax boats to meet the summer and autumn requirements.

“However, the local officials complained that the veins were exhausted and that the expense to mine new veins and to transport the product to such a distant place as the Punwon was too heavy for them to bear. Besides, the boats carrying the white kaolin capsized on the high seas near Yonggwang of Cholla Province. For this reason, it was too late to mine and transport new kaolin at Chinju for the autumn requirements.

“Therefore, ceramists were sent to Ch’ungju and Umsong to evaluate the qualities of the products in those districts. Since the vessels produced by them were proved to be satisfactory, the mining at Chinju was suspended and replaced by kaolin from Ch’ungju.

“Since the Ch’ungju district had a bad harvest, only ceramists instead of the Saong-won official were sent to the district, in order to reduce any possible harm to be inflicted upon the inhabitants by the official from Seoul. However, the ceramists were not faithful to their duties. The quality of the material brought to the Punwon was not satisfactory. Moreover, the quantity was greatly reduced. As a result, many of the summer products for royal use were rough and even twisted.

“For this reason, a Punwon official was hurried to Chinju to renew the production of white kaolin in the district so that the spring requirements might be met.”

Although the kaolin of Chinju continued to be used until the end of the Punwon, its quantity was gradually reduced. For example, its contribution was reduced to 200 sok from 250 sok in 1713, or the 39th year of King Sukchong; and to only 80 sok during the reign of King Kojong(高宗 1864―1907).

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Kwangju was one of the best minor producing districts for kaolin, as was well illustrated by its being selected as the permanent location of the royal kiln. By 1746, or the 22nd year of King Yongjo, the products of Kwangju, Yanggu, Chinju and Konyang were regarded as the most suitable materials for the Punwon. By 1867, or the 4th year of King Kojong, 1400 sok of kaolin, or more than half of the entire requirements were produced in Kwangju.

However, no other historical records pertaining to the uses of Kwangju kaolin have so far been found. Perhaps the mining of the material in the district did not arouse the curiosity of historians because of its close location to the royal kiln. Or perhaps it was in fact out of use during the 17th and 18th centuries.

Other districts mentioned in the historical records include Ch’ungju, Umsong, Ich’on, Konyang and Hadong. However, neither the quality nor quantity deserve significant attention.

D. MINING AND TRANSPORTATION OF KAOLIN

The mining of kaolin was carried out mostly by peasants of the producing districts, who had to contribute compulsory labor. Sometimes the inhabitants of neighboring counties were also mobilized. In either case, the peasants were usually unpaid or underpaid, and had to provide their own provisions. According to the record of 1716, or the 42nd year of King Sukchong, all the peasants of Konyang were mobilized for the production of kaolin in that district. For this reason, they could not do their farm work in time.

The local officials or peasants of any kaolin producing district did their best to avoid the unprofitable task. The unpleasant obligation was often described as “unprecedented harm to this county” or “the greatest hardship, shared by no other districts.” ‘

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Meanwhile, the court government took various measures to compensate the peasants mobilized for the mining. Exemption from tax duties was one thing, and payment of salaries in small amounts was another. However, most of the miners had to contribute their labor for almost nothing as compared with the ceramists of the Punwon, who in a sense were wage laborers.

Generally speaking, the mining was supervised by the officials and ceramists from the Punwon. However, the dispatches were often suspended, especially at times of bad harvest or economic distress in the districts concerned, for the officials from the court government were notorious for their practices of irregularities or embezzlement.

In this case, the supervision was usually entrusted to the local officials or ceramists alone. This in turn caused degradation of the quality of the kaolin produced, or deduction of the quantity brought to the royal kiln because of inefficient management or embezzlement by the ceramists in charge of transportation.

For example, in 1697, or the 23rd year of King Sukchong, kaolin which weighed 270 sok at the time of departure was reduced to 114 sok when it was remeasured at the Punwon, Perhaps the embezzled kaolin was sold to a private kiln near the government factory.

Meanwhile, the kaolin produced in various districts was transported by either land, sea or river. However, land transportation was usually restricted to small quantities. For example, in the 39 th year of King Sukchong 10 sok of kaolin were sent on horseback from Kap’yong (加平), while 20 more were sent by boat the following spring.

Of course, there were exceptions, too. For example, more than 200 horses were mobilized in order to transport the kaolin produced in the Wonju district in 1653, or the 4th [page 94] year of King Hyojong; perhaps because Wonju was located far from any big river.

To be sure, transportation of kaolin remained a big burden for the inhabitants of the districts concerned.

The ones who suffered most from the task were perhaps the inhabitants of Yanggu, who also had to mine. They repeatedly sent memorials to the throne in which they ardently pleaded with the king to relieve them of the double burdens. Thus their burden was later shared by the inhabitants of Ch’unchon (春川), Hongch’on (洪川), Inje (麟蹄) and Nangch’on (浪川).

There were two types of boats used for the transportation of the kaolin: tax boats and private boats. The private or chartered boats usually rendered more efficient and prompt service than the government boats.

For example, in the 23rd year of King Sukchong part of the kaolin produced in Chinju was carried by chartered boats in order to hasten the transportation before the arrival of spring, while the rest went by government boats. Meanwhile, the kaolin of Pongsan was transported by the tax boats of Pongsan, Hwangju (黃州) and Chaeryong (載寧) of Hwang- hae Province.

**4. PRODUCING DISTRICTS AND PROCUREMENT OF FIREWOOD**

Firewood was also an indispensable material to produce porcelain. For this reason, the location of the Punwon was determined by the producing district of firewood as well as that of kaolin.

Since the royal kiln was first established, certain forests were designated by the court government for exclusive use by the Punwon. Such forests were called Punwon Sijang (分院 [page95] 柴場) or fuel yard.

Most of the fuel yards were located in the vicinity of Kwangju, perhaps because the Punwon was established in the area. They were scattered around the six counties (myon); namely, T’oech’on-myon, Silch’on-myon, Ch’owol-myon (初月面), Toch’ok-myon (都尺面), Kyong’an-myon (慶安面) and Op’o-myon (五浦面).

For this reason, it is believed that the relocation of the Punwon was restricted to the above-mentioned districts.

The six myon remained the site of the fuel yards for the royal kiln throughout the period. But some of the forests were later redesignated for other government agencies.

For example, in the 10th year of King Sukchong the right to fell the forest of Mugap-san in Ch’owol-myon was transferred from the Punwon to the Suo-ch’ong (守禁廳), the garrison command guarding the castles of Namhan-san near Seoul.

Thirty years later, the court government of King Sukchong changed its mind and redesignated Mugap-san to the Saong-won again. But this time the royal kiln refused to accept the forest, on the pretext that it had already been completely cut down by the garrison command.

The fuel yards were designated to provide firewood for the Punwon and restricted to the six myon of Kwangju during the early period. However, the gradual exhaustion of the fuel in the area made it inevitable for the royal kiln to enlarge its sphere of felling rights. The new territories included Yech’on (醴泉) of Kyongsang Province and Ch’un-ch’on, Nangch’on, Yanggu, Inje and Hongch’on of Kangwon Province.

In addition to these, three more myon of Yanggun-gun were designated for the Punwon. But their names are not traceable.

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Meanwhile, the inhabitants of the fuel yards in Kang- won Province used to transport the firewood by rafts as far as the Punwon.

However, as the practive inflicted too much harm on the populace, it was finally suspended in 1727, or the 3rd year of King Yongjo. Meanwhile, the inhabitants of Ye-ch’on were taxed. It must be pointed out that the Punwon was never located in any of these fuel yards.

As was mentioned in the preceding chapters, the royal pottery works used to be relocated every ten years in search of new fuel sources. The exhausted yard was supposed to be reforested or left alone so that it might become productive again. However, the cut areas would be invaded by peasants only to be turned into burnt fields Thus the number of forests for fuel yards in the vicinity of Kwangju became scarcer year after year until it presented quite a serious problem to the officials of the Punwon.

For this reason, they had to think of new ideas to overcome this pressing problem. The new measures included selection of a permanent site for the Punwon and taxation of peasants cultivating the burnt fields within the fuel yards.

The question was first raised in 1697, or the 23rd year of King Sukchong. A Punwon official recommended that all peasants cultivating the burnt fields, old or new, within the fuel yards be taxed and their taxes collected by the Punwon in order to solve the fuel problem for the royal kiln. In a sense, the official wanted to insure sources of taxation for the Punwon.

However, it soon became clear that taxation in kind on burnt field-holding peasants was not enough to provide all the fuel requirements. A new measure had to be taken. Thus in 1718, or the 44th year of King Sukchong, half of the household taxes levied from the burnt-field peasants was [page97] spent to purchase fuel from the raft merchants. Some distressed peasants near the fuel yards seem to have lumbered the firewood for commercial purposes.

Taxation in kind or purchase of private firewood was indeed a new development in the management of the royal kilns. However, the proposal to purchase commercial fuel was not put into practice immediately. Moreover, it was not likely that the Punwon had enough funds to pay for commercial firewood.

As a way out, a new source of taxation was devised to collect tolls from firewood vendors on the Han River. The passage taxes used to be collected by local officials of the coastal towns or villages along the river until 1725, or the 1st year of King Yongjo, when such places as Kaogae. Sin-dao-ri and Songjo-dong of Chip’yong were recommended as new sites for the Punwon.

In the first moon of that year, it was decided that the tolls be collected by Punwon officials to provide fuel for the royal kiln. The decision was implemented immediately. Thus the local officials of coastal towns and villages were sternly warned not to levy tolls upon firewood vendors. The rate was decided at ten percent of the total load.

Mr. Okuhira quoted in his book a poem written by Yun Che-gyu (尹濟査), which, I suppose, dealt with one of the scenes in which the tolls were being collected. The literal meaning of the poem is as follows:

**B**oats full of firewood

**G**ather all day long.

**O**fficials of the royal kiln

**B**usy themselves to collect tolls:

**T**hey are too honest—

**B**lue heaven dare not know the deceits and faults. [page98]

**E**legant potteries with brushed paint

Will be the royal receptacles.

Now the annual requirements for fuel during the period under discussion totaled 8, 000 charae(迲乃) or 40, 000 to 50, 000 horseloads. If we are allowed to suppose that the annual requirements were procured with the firewood taken in toll from raft vendors, then the vendors must have carried at least 400,000 to 500,000 horseloads of firewood per year of the Han River.

However, the new idea did not work to the satisfaction, of the Punwon officials. According to an official record of the 2nd year of King Yongjo, many vendors evaded paying the tolls on the pretext that the loads they were carrying were for military use. Therefore, it was decided that the Punwon officials should confirm the number of boats carrying firewood for the military and collect tolls from not only commercial vendors but also the boats working for local offices and even the royal family.

Nevertheless, the results of the new policy were not satisfactory either. Therefore, the Punwon officials had to pay the transportation fees for those who carried the firewood levied from the burnt field-holding peasants within the fuel yards.

For example, in February, 1726 the inhabitants of Puk- myon (北面), Yangju-gun were requested to carry 4, 000 charae, or 20,000 horseloads of firewood to the river-side. But their payment was too small: only 2 tong(同 200 pil)of kamok (價木 cloth). Governor Yi Kyo-ak (李喬岳) of then Kyonggi Province complained in his report to the court government about this maltreatment. He said: “The households of Puk-myon total only a little over 100. It is almost impossible for them to transport 4, 000 charae or 20,000 [page99] horseloads of firewood. For this reason, the inhabitants not only refused to receive the fees or loan of grain for the spring season, but also abandoned their farms altogether.”

Meanwhile, the hardships for the local populace had to be increased since the payment was only nominal and the work was almost compulsory. Besides, the disputes over the question of transporting firewood continued between the Saong-won and local officials. They were based on conflicts of interest among the officials concerned.

The court government which duly discussed Governor Yi’s report of complaints reached a patched-up conclusion. Its reply to the Saong-won and governor said:

“Although it is deemed inevitable for the Punwon to have taken such an unprecedented measure as to impose upon the local inhabitants the obligation to transport the firewood for cheap payment, such grievances should never be repeated in the future because it is a regrettable thing to see the poor peasants desert their farms at a time of extreme poverty in spring.

“It is recommended, therefore, that the Punwon provide its own funds to purchase the firewood required for the production of royal porcelain.”

On the other hand, the Saong-won retorted that Governor Yi’s complaints had not been based on true facts. It said that the work could have hardly inflicted any harm on the inhabitants since it would not take more than a few days for the rafts of firewood to reach the Punwon if, they were paid properly and aided by the ceramists in felling the trees and transporting them to the shores of the river.

It also warned the court government that it would no longer be able to continue to operate the royal kiln if no additional funds were made available. As for the justifica- [page100] tion for its demand for an increased budget, it explained that it had to borrow money from the Oyong-ch’ong (御營廳) to pay the inhabitants of Puk-myon since it had been on the brink of financial bankruptcy.

Despite the endless disputes, no permanent solution was found for either adversary. As for the Panwon, it was not in a position to provide its own funds so long as it was not allowed or supposed to sell its products. Besides, it could no longer mobilize local peasants for its work without sufficient reward. And yet it had to procure the firewood somehow and at any cost.

Now the local magistrates found themselves in no less delicate a position than the officials of the Punwon. They believed that the peasants under their jurisdiction had done for the Punwon whatever they had been supposed to do. Therefore, they argued that the poor populace should no longer be pat to work for unjustifiably cheap wages. Perhaps they contented themselves by giving tacit approval to the peasants’ passive but desperate manner of resistance, i. e., deserting en masse.

Meanwhile, the court government agreed to increase the transportation fees and at the same time decided to mobilize the inhabitants of such neighboring counties as Chip’yong and Kap’yong to help in the work. However, it urged the Panwon to manage to provide funds with its own resources, for the procurement of firewood in the future.

Unsatisfied with the decision, the Saong-won officials submitted a new plan to the government with which to provide funds to purchase the firewood. The plan said:

“The government offices and agencies in the capital have been granted licenses to sell the surplus cloth in the possession of the local governments of P’yongan and Hwanghae Provinces. The profits from the sale of the surpluses have been [page101] of great benefit to the government offices concerned. For this reason, it is requested that the Saong-won be granted the same privilege so that it may be able to provide funds for the purchase of the firewood.”

The request was approved by the king.

However, the amount of profit from the sale of surplus cloth was not made clean Besides, it is doubtful whether or not the profit was sufficient to pay all the transportation fees, totaling thousands of yang.

The controversies over the procurement of firewood were carried over to the following year. For example, in 1727, or the 3rd year of King Yongjo, Governor Yu Pok-myong; (柳復明) of Kangwon Province requested the abolishment of five fuel yards in his jurisdiction. The request was discussed at a cabinet meeting.

Vice Premier Hong Ch’ijung (洪致中) was in favor of the abolishment. So he said:

“The Punwon collects about 1,000 sok of cereals per year from the burnt-field peasants in Kwangju and considerable quantity of wood as toll from the raft vendors. This provides sufficient funds for the Punwon to meet the requirements for firewood. For this reason, I am opposed to the mobilization of local populace for the transportation of the firewood. I propose that the fuel yards in question be abolished.”

However, Mayor Yi Pyong-sang (李秉常) of Seoul, who had once worked for the Saong-won, opposed the proposal.

He said:

“The taxes from the burnt fields are scarcely enough to support the officials and ceramists of the Punwon. Besides, the quantity of cloth levied for the official craftsmen has been reduced year after year due to bad harvests. Therefore, the Punwon can hardly afford to purchase firewood. Even [page102] if it could, it would only be a temporary measure. For this reason, I propose that the fuel yards in Kangwon Province be allowed to remain, and that local peasants be mobilized continuously for the transportation of firewood, even if it causes some inconveniences for them.”

The king agreed to pay subsidies to the Punwon to cover its deficit, and decided to abolish the fuel yards in question.

We have traced the historical background in connection with the procurement of firewood for the royal kilns. In the beginning, the kilns were relocated in pursuit of the forests. In this cas, the trees were lumbered by employees of the Punwon. Thus no problem was raised about the transportation of the firewood.

Then the royal kiln was located at a fixed place, remaining for at least ten years. In this case, each fuel yard was supposed to be reforested so that the kiln might be able to come back after a certain period of absence. However, invasion by burnt-field peasants into the exhausted forests spoilt the original plan altogether.

In the third stage, a permanent site was selected and the firewood was supposed to be brought to the Punwon by various means. In the early period of this stage, the requirements for firewood were met by levying taxes in kind from either the burnt-field peasants or the wood vendors utilizing the Han Riven

When collection of taxes or tolls could not satisfy the demand, local inhabitants were mobilized to transport the firewood free or for nominal payment. But this plan did not work either, because not only the peasants, but also local officials were unwilling to cooperate with the Punwon officials.

Government subsidies or taxation on burnt-field peasants remained, therefore, the only sources of revenue for the [page103] royal kiln to purchase firewood. However, collection of burnt- field taxes was allegedly insufficient to support the budget, even if failure to insure full collection or embezzlement by the tax collectors were ignored Besides, it is not likely that the poor court government could keep its promise to cover the deficits of the royal kiln.

After all, the Punwon was left with no other choice but to provide funds from its own sources of income to overcome the fuel crisis. But this was almost impossible unless part of its products was allowed to be sold in the public markets. On the other hand, it must be taken into consideration that the domestic commerce and private handicraft industry were developed to such an extent as to make it impossible for the Punwon to mobilize the local populace to transport its firewood without paying wages.

**5. LIVING CONDITIONS OF THE CERAMISTS**

According to the Kyong-guk Taejon (經國大典), the basic codes of the Yi Dynasty completed in 1471, or the 2nd year of King Songjong (成宗 1470—94), a total of 482 ceramists had registered with the Kong-jo (工曺) or the equivalent of today’s ministry of commerce and industry. Of them, 380 were assigned to the Saong-won, six to the Naesu-sa (內需司), the office of supply and general affairs of the. royal household and the rest, 90 in number, to different provincial governments.

As was mentioned in the beginning of this article, the royal kiln was the only field of handicraft industry that was still maintained under the management of the court government until the closing years of the dynasty. Therefore, the ceramists comprising more than 70 per cent of the total worked for the Punwon as government craftsmen. However, [page104] their living conditions or working conditions seemed to have undergone significant changes according to the phases of the history of the ceramics industry of the Yi Dynasty.

Generally speaking, the government handicraft industry of the dynasty began to decline aound the time of the Japanese invasion of Korea by Hideyoshi. I suppose that desertion by malcontent craftsmen was one of the major reasons for the decline- For example, in 1530, or the 25th year of King Chungjong, almost half of the ceramists deserted the Punwon. As a plan to replace the deserters periodically, it was recommended that at least 50 replacements be recruited from bondsmen among sailors (sugwi) whenever necessary.

Meanwhile, a new provision to bind the sons of ceramists to remain hereditarily in the profession was included in Taejon Hu Sok Nak published in 1543, or the 38th year of the king. The unprecedented regulation was necessitated, presumably, by the immediate urge to prevent the ceramists from escaping from the government workshops, on the one hand, and the need to maintain the pottery industry under government management on the other hand. The especial emphasis on the hereditary clause on the ceramists was, I presume, due to the need to keep the industry under government control, which was strongly felt by the court government. This contributed to the survival of the ceramics industry under government control until the end of the dynasty while all other industry went out of government control.

Despite the new provision, the reluctance on the part of the ceramists to serve the government industry intensified after the invasion, which in turn inflicted a great blow on the royal pottery works. For example, in 1625, or the 3rd year of King Injo, the number of ceramists and reservists assigned to the Punwon was reduced to 821 from the original strength of 1140, because of repeated desertions. Local [page105] magistrates were not cooperative to help recruitment for the Punwon. For this reason, the court government had to send out stern warnings and threats of severe punishment to the local officials. The Punwon was on the verge of closing due to insufficient manpower.

Two reasons may be pointed out to explain the drastic drain of ceramists at the royal pottery works during the immediate aftermath of the Japanese invasion. On the one hand, it is conceivable that many of them were taken to Japan as prisoners of war. But on the other hand, there were quite frequent incidents in which ceramists voluntarily deserted the Punwon.

For example, in 1632, or the 10th year of King Injo, ceramist Yun Hi-un (尹希雲), an inhabitant of Chip’yong-hyon (祗平縣), escaped the government workshop to surrender to the Oyong-ch’ong, which in turn accepted him under a false name. Angered by this incident, the chief of the Saong-won demanded the immediate return of the escapee. He argued that a soldier could be substituted by any healthy young man, but it would take years to train a qualified ceramist. Besides it would encourage other ceramists to follow his example if such an event were to be allowed to succeed once, he concluded.

It must be pointed out that any registered ceramist was required to work at the Punwon for at least a fixed period of years. But soldiers registered in Oyong-ch’ong were allowed to pay cloth instead of doing actual service.

Therefore, the fact that ceramists wanted to escape ana could somehow manage to run away from the royal pottery works was detrimental to the maintenance of the government industry.

Moreover it also could be interpreted as a sort of resistance to the hereditary social status and profession typical [page106] of feudal society.

The trend of declining government industry continued and intensified after the invasion as many craftsmen deserted their government workshops to join private enterprises or changed their professions, which further prompted the decline of the government handicraft industry. However, the need to maintain the ceramic industry under direct government supervision was felt to be so urgent that numerous measures had to be taken to prevent further desertions by the ceramists.

The emphasis was repeated most frequently during the latter part of the 17th century, when deserters among government craftsmen were recorded in great numbers. For example, in 1633, or the 11th year of King Injo, when the reorganization of military registration was made, the chief of the Saong-won demanded the retransfer of 300 out of 1140 ceramists who had been reassigned to the Pyong-cho, or the defense ministry.

It was felt all the better to maintain the hereditary ceramists without making a new precedent.

In 1689, or the 15th year of King Sukchong, the Saong-won again gave stern warnings to its ceramists not to escape or change their assignments for easier jobs, and asked them to search and report hiding fellow ceramists or their children.

It is doutful that all of the deserting ceramists did come back to the Punwon. Other government agencies often refused to send former ceramists back, despite repeated and strong demands by the Saong-won.

However, it must be pointed out that enforcement of the hereditary system for the ceramists was comparatively effective, and that most craftsmen who deserted were forced to return to their original occupations. It was for this reason [page107] that the strength of the government ceramists could be maintained even when most other government craftsmen had abandoned their workshops.

Until the immediate aftermath of the Japanese invasion of Korea in the 16th century, the ceramists of the Punwon used to be rotated with those selected from various provinces. They were supposed to be handed over to the Punwon officials who accompanied them.

When they were relieved from duties at the Punwon, provincial ceramists were supposed to produce porcelain for local governments, or be allowed to have other jobs. However, they were registered with the Saong-won and were not supposed to change their social status.

For example, the full strength of the ceramists for Namwon (南原), Cholla Province, was 22 in 1725, or the 1st year of King Yongjo. Any vacancy was supposed to be filled by the local government.

Generally speaking, craftsmen were required to work for pertinent government workshops annually for a certain period of time during the Yi Dynasty, and were exempted from taxes only for the number of days they served in the workshops.

Daring the early period of the dynasty, the ceramists were also governed by the same rule. The ceramists had to pay taxes to the Saong-won for the days they did not work for the kiln. However, the system seems to have undergone a change as late as the 17th century. In other words, the government ceramists were given permanent assignments without rotating their services: the Punwon ceramists and local ceramists were divided as to permanent assignments. In the first place, mobilization of local ceramists took too much time and expense for their travel to and from the royal kiln. In addition to this incovenience, most provincial cera- [page108] mists proved to be too inefficient to fulfill their highly skilled jobs, since they had long abandoned their hereditary profession to do other work such as farming. For this reason, assignment of exclusive ceramists for the Punwon was necessitated. Meanwhile, local ceramists were allowed, or rather demanded, to pay cloth as taxes instead of working for the government pottery kiln.

Thus the ceramists assigned to the Punwon became professional craftsmen who brought their families to settle down near the royal kiln. The number of their households increased to form “a special colony of their own” as early as 1697, or the 23rd year of King Sukchong.

After the permanent assignment of the ceramists, a sort: of wage labor system developed. Their wages were paid with the cloth collected from those who did not serve at the Punwon.

According to the record of 1634, or the 13th year of King Injo, “the ceramists at the royal pottery works were living on the cloth collected from local craftsmen.” It added that “the cloth for the coming year should be collected by the end of November, for the ceramists would otherwise run away.” The record of 1707, or the 33rd year of King Sukchong, tells us more details about the situation:

“Local ceramists used to be taxed in kind (cloth) for their exemptions from duties. Of the cloth collected, an equivalent of taxes for 530 persons used to be spent for the payment of salaries of the ceramists, and that for 352 for the payment of salaries for miscellaneous laborers and the purchase of various commodities.

“However, the original rate of 3 pil(疋) was reduced by 1 pil since last year, For this reason, the total budget was not sufficient to pay not only the production expenses but also the salaries of the craftsmen. The production could be [page109] completed only after the surplus cloth, totaling 330 pil, was appropriated from the Pyong-cho.”

Although the ceramists assigned to the Punwon were in a sense wage laborers, their assignment was rather compulsory than voluntary. Besides, their wages were paid so irregularly that their living condition could never be stabilized.

For example, the number of ceramists and laborers assigned to the royal pottery works totaled 325 in 1697. The ceramists had to work in three shifts. Besides, more than 40 horses a day were mobilized for the work. The officials of the Punwon reported that “the famine prevailing in the period was so serious that one day 39 workers starved to death and 63 fell ill.” They also added that “a total of 24 households deserted the royal factory due to economic distress. For this reason, the remaining craftsmen were not successfully persuaded to continue their work.”

“The suspension of the production of ceramics by the Punwon last autumn was attributable,” said the report, “to the extreme economic distress.”

“For this reason,” the officials continued, “the ceramists and laborers could neither be paid, nor farm nor produce pottery for general use to earn additional income.”

It must be pointed out that the report was a little exaggerated because the officials had some political reasons to obtain a greater loan of grain from the central government. Nevertheless, the report may lead us to some significant conclusions.

Firstly, the report made a quite contradictory statement. It said that the ceramists could not farm because the royal kiln suspended its work the previous autumn. This apparently does not agree with its earlier assertion that the Punwon workers were not engaged in any other occupations, such as farming or commerce. [page110]

It remains to be proved whether they possessed their own fields or had to borrow land to farm, or were merely hired by other farmers when the furnaces were inactive. However, other historical records unanimously confirming that the ceramists in question held no additional occupations lead me to presume that they were allowed at most to work for other farmers on a wage basis. Moreover, it is very likely that they depended exclusively on production of ceramics to make their living. They were one of the most specialized -professional groups in this field, at least during the period under discussion.

Secondly, the report suggests that the ceramists did not work on a permanent or periodical contract basis. In other words they were not paid when there was no work at the Punwon. For this reason, they had to suffer economic distress when they were inactive. Nevertheless, they were not in a position to seek other jobs or run away for good, although they had to face starvation or desert, because they were supposed to come back from exile when the work was resumed, indicating their profession was still compulsory.

Thirdly, the report confirms that the ceramists were allowed to earn additional income from the sale of private products. In view of the statement that they worked on a rotation system (three shifts a day), they could concentrate on private work for at least two-thirds of the total number of work days.

However, the report does not specify whether they had their own ovens or used the official ones to produce products for commercial purposes. It is very likely that they had to rely on the government ovens and at least part of the materials, i.e., kaolin and firewood, to make commercial porcelain, since the report implies that private work also had to stop when the official production was suspended. If this was true, [page111] it gives us another picture of the government handicraft industry of the Yi Dynasty.

The following report is more suggestive about the treatment given to the ceramists. It was written in 1698, or the 24th year of King Sukchong, by an official of the Punwon. It reads:

“The ceramists begin to work in early spring of each year when the ice melts, and do not stop until early winter when it freezes. For this reason, they can hardly find spare time to engage in private work. Besides, the repeated bad harvests of recent years reduced the buying power so seriously that they can hardly sell their private products, even if they had any.

“Moreover, the local ceramists have been exempted from all or part of their taxes due to the bad harvests. For this reason, the Chinhyul-ch’ong (賬恤廳) or the Relief Office has been ordered to subsidize the Punwon to cover the budgetary dencit. However, the Relief Office has paid only 1.24 yang per 1 pil of cloth instead of the official rate of 3:1, which in turn further aggravated the problems of the ceramists.

“The situation is a little better for ordinary peasants because they can rely on early crops after the 6th moon. But the ceramists could not enjoy even such a trivial favor because they usually do not farm and are too busy to seek extra work to earn additional income. For this reason, a total of 13 ceramists starved to death even after the 6th moon, the time of the early harvest.

“It is very unfair,” the report continued, “to lower the exchange rate for the ceramists who have to work for the government all year round without having any means to make extra income. It should be stressed that it takes scores of years to train a qualified ceramist. Who will succeed them should they all starve to death [page 112]

Payment of subsidies by the Chinhyul-Ch’ong to cover the budgetary deficit of the Punwon gives us a good illustration of the government handicraft industry. Although the reduction in the quantity of cloth collected from local ceramists was attributable to frequent bad harvests, it also must be pointed out that the decline of power and financial bankruptcy of the court government had progressed to such an extent as to make it hard for the rulers to finance even such a small handicraft industry as the Punwon.

Meanwhile, the fact that part of the payment was: made in coin leads me to presume that a significant change was being made in the wage system of government enterprises.

Therefore, the court government decided to lend grain to the ceramists on better conditions, in order to prevent them from deserting, and to keep the royal pottery works in shape. For example, in 1687, or the 23rd year of King Sukchong when 39 ceramists had died of starvation, the government loaned them 200 sok of rice and 100 sok of soy beans. This was a great increase as compared with loans of the previous year, which totaled only 13 sok of rice and a little more than 70 sok of millet.

However, the generosity was often discontinued because the government found itself unable to continue the loans due to the ceramists’ failure to return the borrowed grain. This in turn drove them to even harder distress. The desperate officials of the Saong-won requested the government to lend 300 sok of rice from the reserves for the garrison command of the castle at Namhan-san. They also demanded severe punishment for the magistrate of Kwangju, who, they asserted, had failed to take relevant relief measures for the ceramists under his jurisdiction.

Nevertheless, the ceramists were given a considerable [page113] quantity of grain loans every year. Sometimes military grain was appropriated for them when the government had insufficient reserves. It is likely that the loans were transacted directly from the metropolitan agency to “the special colony of ceramists.” Besides, they were granted more generous repayment terms than ordinary peasants.

For example, they were permitted to postpone their repayment of grain which totaled more than 1, 490 sok for five years by 1700, or the 26th year of King Sukchong. Of course, the generous measure was taken in order to prevent them from deserting the government pottery works.

Neither the cloth collected from local ceramists nor loans of relief grain on generous terms could put an end to the chronic hardships of the government ceramists.

In the beginning, the royal pottery works of the Yi Dynasty was operated under the compulsory labor sytem. Then it was gradually developed into a sort of wage-labor system after the 17th century. However, the decline of the ruling apparatus, the irreparable financial bankruptcy of the court government, and the ensuing socio-economic changes made it almost impossible for the government to provide salaries for the ceramists at the Punwon.

Meanwhile, the ceramists had two major sources of income: issuance of cloth collected from local ceramists and sales of their own products. During the latter period of the Yi Dynasty, the ceramists seem to have earned more income from the sale of private products than from government salaries. It must have been for this reason that the royal kiln could survive

until the last days of the dynasty, despite unprofitable management and underpayment of its workers.

**6. BUDGET AND TAXATION AT THE PUNWON**

During the 17th and 18th centuries the royal pottery [page 114] works was faced with serious budgetary problems, such as shortage of salaries for its workers and transportation fees for firewood.

As was mentioned in the previous chapter, the metropolitan ceramists were first paid with the cloth collected from their local counterparts as taxes. When collection of the taxes became unfeasible or insufficient, they were granted relief grain of the Chinhyul-ch’ong, or repayable grain loans, such as military grain.

Meanwhile, transportation fees were paid with the tolls collected from firewood vendors on the Han River or government subsidies. However, the major sources of revenues for the Punwon were the taxes collected from the burnt-field peasants within the vicinity of the fuel yards. There were two kinds of taxes: burnt-field tax and household tax.

One day in 1779, or the 3rd year of his reign, King Chongjo (正祖, 1777—1800) asked his ministers whether or not they knew of the fact that “the officials of the Saong-won tax the commoners living near the fuel yards because of their felling trees in the yards.”

Then Prime Minister Kim Sang-ch’ol (金尙喆) replied to the king: “I have no knowledge of the year when the law was first put into force. In the beginning, they used to tax 2 mal per household- However, the rate was reduced by half a mal during the reign of King Yongjo.”

Thus even a prime minister did not know the exact date of the enforcement of the law. Magistrate Yo Song-Je (呂聖齊) left a little more suggestive record about the taxation in 1683, or the 9th year of King Sukchong. His record reads:

“The six myon in the northern district of Kwangju arc under the jurisdiction of the Saong-won. In the beginning the royal office did not inflict any harm on the inhabitants [page115] because the latter were only forbidden to set fire or fell the trees in the fuel yards. However, the officials began to tax 2 mal of cereals on each household and 5 mal of cereals on each piece of land for one day’s ploughing. I understand that half of the taxes has been spent by the Punwon and the rest has been sent to the metropolitan office.”

Magistrate Yo’s remarks lead me to presume that the taxation was started after the royal kiln was relocated at the county as Punwon and the six myon designated as the fuel yards.

What is more informative about the situation is a report submitted by an official of the Saong-won in 1732, or the 8th year of King Yongjo. His report reads as follows:

“After the seven myon of Kwangju-gun were designated as the fuel yards to provide and reforestate firewood for the Punwon, the number of inhabitants living in the fuel yards has increased to such an extent as to form villages at many places. They not only set fire to the forests to cultivate burnt fields, but also felled the trees of the fuel yards in order to build their houses and even to cook.

“For this reason, most of the fuel yards have gradually been uprooted- In 1662, or the 3rd year of King Hyonjong, it was planned to expel them from the fuel yards. But the plan was abandoned for fear of possible revolt by the inhabitants. Therefore, a compromise had to be innovated: They were allowed to live there but told to pay taxes at the rate of 2 mal of rice per household so as to finance the transportation fees for the firewood.”

The above record implies that the collection of household taxes began in 1662. But there is no mention about the burnt-field taxes. For this reason, it remains to be proved whether or not collection of burnt-field taxes coincided with that of household taxes. [page116]

However, the record of 1697, or the 23rd year of King Sukchong, leads me to presume that the burnt-field taxes were levied immediately after the enforcement of the household taxes. According to the record, the officials of the Saong-won recommended that a permanent site be selected for the Punwon, that the requirements for firewood be allocated among the burnt-field peasants within the fuel yards, and that the traditional burnt-field taxes be paid in firewood instead of cereals.

Not much importance seems to have been attached to the collection of the household and burnt-field taxes when the Punwon could move around to find forests and the tax cloth of local ceramists could be levied as planned. However, the relocation of the Punwon at a permanent site and the unsuccessful collection of cloth brought about a significant change in taxation policy of the court government.

Since the collection of the taxes imposed great burdens not only on the peasants but also the local officials concerned, successive governors of Kwangju county repeatedly recom-mended reduction of taxes for the burnt-field peasants in the fuel yards.

For example, Governor Yi Chong-song (李宗城) of Kwangju recommended in 1732, or the 8th year of King Yongjo, that all households in the fuel yards be classified into four grades according to their wealth so that they might be taxed more fairly. In other words, he requested that the rate be decreased in order by five toe (升되 ) or half a mal per grade: Grade 4 be taxed ½ mal; grade 3, 1: mal; grade 2, 1 ½ mal; and grade 1 ,2 mal; respectively.

However, the officials of the Saong-won opposed the plan with the following “justifications.”

(1) Indiscriminate classification of the households in

the fuel yards is not a reasonable solution because the wealth [page117] of each household can hardly be judged by the size or location of their houses. For example, some rich peasants here keep quite shabby houses, while others have big houses although they are in fact rather poor.

(2) The household taxes, even if fully collected, are not sufficient to cover the transportation fees of the firewood, now that ten years have passed since the permanent relocation of the Punwon.

The officials finally proposed a compromise: That the rate be reduced indiscriminately by one half to one mal per household for the current year, since the inhabitants were sorely distressed by the unprecedented famine and calamity, and that the Chinhyul-ch’ong grant subsidies to cover the deficit. The compromise proposal was approved by the king.

As the reliance on household taxes began to increase, the officials of the Saong-won tried their best not to decrease the tax rate. However, the repetition of bad harvests and the constant insistence by the local governors compelled the stubborn officials to agree with the reduction plan.

As was mentioned above, it was during the reign of King Yong jo that the rate was reduced to 1 and ½ mal of rice per household and 4 mal of rice per piece of land for one day’s ploughing. However, numerous irregularities practised by tax collectors and conflicts over the taxation, rights between the officials of the Saong-won and the local government began to be recorded as early as the beginning of the reign of King Sukchong, not too long after the enforcement of the tax law.

The irregularities were attempted by the tax collectors from the Saong-won. For example, they created new branch families by separating sons of slaves and commoners from their fathers in order to levy more taxes. They also accepted bribes in order to reduce taxes. Besides, some clerks of the [page118] royal pottery works collaborated with the rangers only to take cloth forcibly from any peasants who happened to be discovered by the former in possession of any piece of lumber or wood. For this reason, the complaints of the taxpayers reached an unprecedented extent.

On the other hand, the local officials not only reported to the court government on the hardships inflicted on the inhabitants by the tax collectors, but also took the opportunity to take over the collection rights from the officials of the Punwon.

For example, Governor Chong Ch’ang-song (鄭昌聖) of Kyonggi Province requested and was granted the right to collect taxes from the inhabitants of the fuel yards in 1779, or the 3rd year of King Chongjo. As for the justifications for his request, he remarked that “the despoilment by the officials of the Punwon has been so merciless that the inhabitants in the vicinity, totaling thousands of households， have almost deserted their villages.

“Although there is an annual allocation of grain to be paid as salaries for the craftsmen of the Punwon, they collect the grain directly from the inhabitants after harvest, which, I believe, is responsible for the excessive collection.”

It remains to be proved whether or not the above decision was enforced up to the end of the history of the royal pottery works. However, it is certain that the decision drove the officials of the Punwon to a more disadvantageous position in efforts to provide funds for the management of the kiln.

Yet the officials of the Punwon had to face still more financial difficulties. For example, the court government approved a request by the governor of Kyonggi Province to collect the household taxes in millet instead of rice in 1782, or the 6th year of King Chongjo. Unsatisfied with the [page119] new decision, the officials of the Punwon made a protest. It reads as follows:

“Although the rate has been decreased to 1 and ½ mal from 5 mal, the inhabitants demand more reduction whenever there is a bad harvest. Now they are ungrateful enough to refuse to pay the taxes at all, even in a year of good harvest like this. If the phenomenon continues to prevail, the Punwon will have to close down, putting an end to the production of porcelain, in the near future. For this reason, it is recommended that severe punishment be imposed on those who have failed to pay the taxes.”

The increase in the transportation fees and the unsuc- cessful collection of cloth from local ceramists drove the Punwon to depend more and more on the household and burnt-field taxes to finance its managements.

However, the revenues from these taxes were reduced even further by the repeated decrease in tax rates and finally the refusal to pay taxes at all by some bold peasants. Besides, the court government was already too poor to finance the kiln.

Thus innovation and new ideas were necessitated. Although no concrete records have so far been discovered in this connection, it is very likely that introduction of private capital or commercialization of the products was attempted to finance the royal pottery.

What should be added to this chapter is the fact that some of the farm fields confiscated from traitors were given to the Punwon to ease its financial problems. For example, the land of a traitor in Kimp’o (金浦) of Kyonggi Province was donated free of taxes to the royal pottery works in 1724, or the 4th year of King Kyongjong.

It must be pointed out that the action was taken only after the Punwon was faced with financial difficulties due [page120] to unsuccessful collection of cloth from local ceramists. So far I have not been able to determine the exact acreage of the lands, other than those in the fuel yards designated for the uses by the Punwon, or find any records of other donations of land for the pottery works.

**7. MANAGEMENT AND SUPPLY OF ROYAL PORCELAIN**

The prime task of the Punwon was to produce ceramic vessels for royal use. However, not all of the vessels produced by the Punwon were necessarily supplied for royal use.

The production usually began in early spring and continued until frost. It was supervised by 8-grade officials from the Saong-won. One of them was sent to the pottery whenever production was under way.

He was called either Ponjokwan (燔造官)or Nang Ch’ong. The literary meaning of Ponjo-kwan was the officer in charge of baking. When a baking officer was transferred to another post, he was replaced immediately.

Mr. Asakawa Takumi (沒川巧) wrote that the supervising official from the Saong-won had a total of 20 assistants who in fact ran the routine business of the royal kiln. His statement was based on quotations from the Punchu-wop Podong (分厨院報騰) or the Reports of the Punwon.

No standard was set for the quantity of the annual production. The number of ordinary receptacles produced in 1694, or the 20th year of King Sukchong, totaled 300 chuk (10 pieces make 1 chuk). The number of special receptacles or Pyolpon (別燔) was not included in the figure.

The vessels were used for various purposes. For example, they were used as tableware for the royal kitchen, as receptacles for religious services, as medical receptacles for the Naeui-won 內醫院 the royal dispensary) and even for receptions for foreign envoys. In 1625, or the 3rd year of King [page121] Injo, 223 chuk of tableware were provided to greet a mission from Ming. In addition to these, the Punwon was also supposed to bake special receptacles to be used for auspicious occasions in the royal household.

It seems that the receptacles for the royal kitchen and religious services were kept by the offices where they were used and all or part of them were replaced with new ones after a certain period of time or whenever damaged. Meanwhile, the tableware for receptions or auspicious occasions was generally lent to the offices or officials concerned. They were supposed to be returned after their purposes were fulfilled. However, most of them were not returned for various reasons. In fact, they were of ten turned into private properties.

For example, the record of 1648, or the 26th year of King Injo, gives us a clear picture of the situation:

“The tableware for receptions of foreign envoys used to be baked apart from the ordinary requirements. However, in recent years there has been no additional production although the visits of foreign envoys have been more frequent than before. For this reason, the tableware for royal use had to be lent for the purpose. More than 200 chuk are needed to have a reception. And it is not unusual that 40 to 50 chuk are not returned for such excuses as damage or scratches. Last year a total of 20 chuk were not returned on the pretext of theft, making the total shortage 30 chuk.”

It is not hard to imagine that many officials wanted to possess the receptacles produced by the Punwon because they were of the most excellent quality. Most notorious were the officials of the Saong-won itself.

For example, Prince Hwach’ang (花昌君) or Yi Yon (李沇) was acting chief of the office in 1677, or the 3rd year of King Sukchong. It was no secret that he often ordered the [page122] ceramists to produce additional porcelain for his own use. The record remarked that those ceramists who disobeyed him were given severe punishment and even tortured

Thus a considerable quantity of the porcelain produced by the royal kiln was misappropriated by the officials of the kiln itself. I presume that many of the misappropriated vessels were sold illegally among the aristocrats.

The record of 1793, or the 17th year of King Chongjo, states that not only high-ranking officials of the court government but also commoners possessed many of the items produced by the Punwon. This leads us to believe that the Punwon receptacles were widely used by the general public during the period under discussion.

Meanwhile, the requirements for various government offices were met by private ceramics procured from the Sagi-chon (沙器癦) or the ceramics store in Seoul. However, the ceramics produced by the Punwon were also appropriated when the exclusive store could not meet the government orders.

The Sagi-chon was in a sense an exclusive agent for government procurement of receptacles. But it had to go out of business around the closing years of King In jo because of excessive exploitation by government offices.

Therefore, ordinary merchants were requested to supply the official requirements. Since they were not professional dealers in ceramics, they had to purchase the commodities from any possible source. But they soon met the same fate as that of the exclusive agent.

For a brief while, each government agency had its own servants trade ceramics to meet its requirements. Then the Kong jo was told to take care of the procurement of ceramics for government offices. When private products were not sufficient to meet the official demand, some of the receptacles [page123] produced by the Punwon were appropriated.

According to the record of 1657, or the 8th year of King Hyojong, the receptacles for royal use used to be presented to the throne twice a yean Only one-third of the total products was accepted and the rest rejected as disqualified Of the disqualified, about 50 per cent was pocketed by the acting director of the Saong-won and the remaining half was sent to the Kongjo.

It is yet to be proved whether or not such disposal as was mentioned by the above record was prevalent throughout the history of the dynasty. But the record is enough to inform us of the historical background, in which a great quantity of Punwon products came to be used by various government agencies, officials and even commoners.

Meanwhile, many of the official ceramists could manage to spare some time to produce their own vessels on a commercial scale. It is quite probable that they had enough time to do so, for they usually worked in three shifts.

For most of the period the government ceramists utilized government equipment and materials such as ovens, kaolin and firewood to produce commercial ceramics. Indeed, it is not likely that any of them was rich enough to procure their own materials to earn additional income.

However, it must be pointed out that the quantity of royal ceramics misappropriated for commercial markets was rather increased, despite the fact that the court government was too poor to finance the royal kiln during the latter period. This leads me to presume that the government enterprise underwent a gradual change in the nature of its management; that is, it began to be influenced less and less by government control in the last phase of the period. [page 124]

**9. CONCLUSION**

I have now introduced part of my studies of the management of the Punwon or the royal pottery works of the Yi Dynasty in such matters as location and facilities, procurement and transportation of kaolin and firewood, the living standards and working conditions of the government ceramists, budgetary problems and disposition of the products. My effort was especially concentrated on the 17th and 18th centuries. The preceding materials may lead us to the following conclusions:

(1) During the early period the royal kiln had to be relocated in search of fuel yards. However, it settled down at a permanent site which is believed to have been somewhere near the Uch’on-gang in the county of Kwangju-gun in the early part of the 18th century, or during the reign of King Kyongjong. After the settlement, such major materials as kaolin and firewood were brought to the Punwon, mainly by boats or rafts on the Han River. This in turn caused a great increase in the budget needed to finance the royal pottery.

(2) Kaolin was produced at more than ten districts in the country. The mining or transportation of the material was mostly carried out by the inhabitants of the districts concerned, who had to contribute compulsory labor. Although some of them were paid wages, this was very rare and only nominal. Meanwhile, private boats were frequently chartered to transport kaolin because they insured more promptness than the tax boats in the possession of local governments.

(3) Prior to the settlement near the Uch’on River, the firewood used to be felled by the employees of the Punwon. Later the fuel was provided with the tolls collected from wood vendors on the Han Riven Sometimes local inhabitants [page125] were mobilized to lumber and transport firewood for cheap wages. Collection of household and burnt-field taxes from the peasants living in the fuel yards also helped the royal kiln cover the transportation fees. But the socio-economic progress no longer allowed the government enterprise to depend on compulsory labor or cheap wages. Thus transportation fees remained one of the most pressing problems for the Punwon.

(4) The production used to be carried out by government ceramists throughout the country, who were supposed to work for a certain period of time annually at the Punwon. However, assignment of exclusive ceramists began to be favored sometime in the 17th century. They became professional craftsmen and later wage laborers. Meanwhile, local ceramists who were not assigned to the royal pottery were supposed to pay cloth as taxes to cover salaries for the official ceramists. However, the tax rate was gradually reduced so that the royal ceramists were often underpaid.

(5) The major income source was the household and burnt-field taxes collected from the inhabitants of the fuel yards. However, the repeated opposition by local officials and the reluctance or refusal to pay taxes by the peasants caused the Punwon to be faced with incessant financial difficulties.

(6) The products were supposed to be used exclusively by the royal household. However, irregularities by the officials of the Saong-won and other government agencies of ten misappropriated the products, which in turn came into the possession of not only high-ranking government officials but also rich commoners. The practice of producing commercial porcelain by underpaid ceramists was also responsible for the phenomenon.

As was mentioned in the preceding section, the numerous [page126] factors which caused extreme financial difficulties for the Punwon must have caused the officials concerned to seek new sources of income so as to maintain the royal pottery works. Introduction of private capital and significant increase in the production of commercial vessels are some of the most probable innovations.

No doubt the sale of commercial receptacles was officially forbidden, in view of the original purpose of the government enterprise. For this reason, I have so far failed to find any official records about this. Besides, I could not find any traces which might have led me to a satisfactory conclusion as to the presumption, although I made an extensive examination of the remains of the ovens. I had also wished to meet some descendants of some of the Punwon officials who might have kept accounting books about the sale of commercial vessels. However, I was not lucky in this endeavor either.

My only comfort and delight was to meet Mr. Ham Ch’ang-sop (咸昌燮), an elder of 82 at the village of Punwon-ni, Namjong-myon, who was born early enough to hear about the management of the Punwon during its last days. According to his memories, the royal pottery works was placed under the supervision of a leader elected among the Sori (胥吏) totaling 30, and run almost without any interference by the Saong-won. He also recalled that some rich villagers provided operation money for the royal kiln. Meanwhile, only a small portion of the production was presented to the throne, with the rest put to public sale. For this reason, the village of Punwon-ni was then the center of the ceramics market of the entire country.

I want to make it clear that Mr. Ham’s memories must be taken with reservation because his stories were based on what he heard only after Punwon had already been abolished. However, it is enough, I believe, to presume that the [page 127] royal pottery works began to free itself from the control of the court government after the 17th and 18th centuries, undergoing a significant change in the original purpose of its establishment.