[page 1]

**Korea and Manchuria:** The Historical Links between Korea and the Ancestors of the Modern Manchus

Dr. Johannes Reckel Gottingen

[This lecture was presented at the regular meeting of the Royal Asiatic Society-Korea Branch, on 8 November 2000, at the Goethe Institute, Seoul.’

Part 1: Introduction and historical Overview

Today we see Korea lying as a rather erratic block in the landscape of East Asia. Linguistically and politically, and very much in the mind of most Koreans themselves, there is a sharp line drawn between the one Korea and her “5000 years of history” here on this side, and China and Japan there yonder on the other side. From the viewpoint of a historian and linguist, this sharp division line, which only partly can be explained as a psychological result of repeated Japanese aggression and Chinese supremacy, makes otherwise no sense indeed! For it means projecting our modern view of today’s Korea back onto a distant past, that in reality saw a much more diversified Korea, lacking those clear cut frontiers to distinguish her from her neighbors. Actually there had not been a one Korea, neither linguistically, nor culturally, nor politically, nor even the idea that there would be anytning like “a Korea” until the 10th century, and the modern border along Yalu and Tumen emerged only around 1400.

Now, when we see that we shall not fall into that trap of projecting a one Korea into the distant past, we nevertheless acknowledge the existence of a group of different tribes, tribal leagues, even states existing more than 2000 years ago between Manchuria and the Korean peninsula, that are all somehow connected, so that we may call them the Korean group. The earliest Korean kingdoms, leaving the tribal state behind them, emerged in the northwestern corner of modern Korea and in Manchuria. It was the kingdom of Puyo that flourished more than 2000 years ago in central Manchuria. And out of Puyo sprang Koguryo with her old center north of the Yalu. Manchuria was then mainly inhabited by members of the Korean group. Only later, Manchuria became the home of the ancestors of the Manchu, who were then called Malgal and later Jurchen, in the 5th century C.E., [page 2] which in a great migration wave these Malgal poured into Manchuria, to make an end to the dominating role the Korean tribes had played in that area for well over a thousand years.1)

The time between 57 B.C.E. and 668 C.E. is called the period of the Three Kingdoms, with Koguryo in the North and Silla and Paekchae in the South. In 660 and 668 Silla with the help of China destroyed first Paekchae then Koguryo. After 698 the kingdom of Parhae, with a population mainly consisting of Malgal but also incorporating part of the old Koguryo people,2) ruled over the land from Pyongyang northwards and over all of Manchuria, while Silla had unified the South of the peninsula. Still there was no idea of a unified Korean nation. When in 928 the Mongolian Khitan destroyed Parhae, the old Koguryo tradition came to an end. The territory north of Pyongyang became the land roamed by unorganized, wild nomadic Jurchen tribes only loosely controlled by the Khitan.

At the same time, in 918/935 the Silla dynasty came to an end and the new Koryo dynasty took over the rule in southern Korea. The first ruler of the Koryo dynasty, Wang Kon, came from the north-western frontier region of Silla, and there it was where his interest and that of his descendants lay, and where he founded his new capital Kaesong, then rather a frontier town. The Koryo kings took Pyongyang and gradually pushed the northwestern border towards the Yalu. In 1117 Uiju, the last remaining Khitan stronghold south of the Lower Yalu, fell into Korea hands, when the Khitan fled from the advancing Jurchen. From here Korea could link up with the civilized and sinicized South of Manchuria, opening also the land route to China proper.

Things were different on the northeastern border, and Koryo could never bring the wild Jurchen tribes that lived north of Yonghung up to the Tumen and further into northern and central Manchuria under her control. Instead, Koryo built a Great Wall reaching from the mouth of the Yalu towards the Bay of Wonsan in the East. Thus the modern provinces of North and South Hamgyong-do and parts of North P’yong’an-do lay outside the Korean border wall. And this is exactly the area where the kings of the next dynasty, the Choson dynasty (1392-1910) had their roots and hence managed to make the Tumen the modem borderline between Korea and China. Thus the modern shape of Korea emerges about 600 years ago.

Before we take a closer look on the Tumen area and the ways in which Korea dealt with her native Jurchen population there, let us first see, how the Korean languages develop against the historical background we have just outlined.

1) Gardiner, K.H.J., The early history of Korea, Canberra 1969

2) For more detailed information see pp.9-14, 18-49, 453-471, 488-500 of my work on Parhae (Chin. Bohai): Reckel, J., Bohai- Geschichte und Kultur eines mandschurisch-koreanischen Konigreiches der Tang-Zeit, Wiesbaden 1995

[page 3]

Part 2: The Language

The Altaic Hypothesis proposes a common ancestral language, from which all modern Turkic, Mongolian Tungus-Manchurian, and according to some scholars like Ramstedt, even the Korean and Japanese languages developed. ) Whereas the languages of the first three groups share a fairly large common vocabulary, only a few dozen Korean words might be connected with other Manchurian or Mongolian words (e.g. Korean “suin”/ (“50”) and Manchu. “simja” (“5”) or Kor. “mul” (“water”) with Mongol. “Muren” (“river”)).4) Nevertheless the morphological system and the syntax, i.e. the way sentences are built, of all these languages (including Korean) is very similar.

The Altaic theory, that is the hypothesis that from one common Altaic language all the mentioned language groups developed, has been criticized by various scholars, mainly on the basis that a common ancestral Altaic vocabulary can’t be proven, either because there are not enough words to compare as is the case with Korean and Japanese, or because the existing common vocabulary might be proven to consist only of loan-words that had traveled from Turkic to Mongolian and on to the Manchu-Tungus languages.5) But this criticism is solely based on the vocabulary. It doesn’t take into account the other important features of languages.6)

3)Gustav John Ramstedt (1873-1950), a Finn whose parents were both or uerman origin, wrote several books and articles on the Korean language and its Altaic connections. His collected works were published by the Taehaksa in Seoul in three volumes in 1981. His two major works on Korean-Altaic studies are:

a) Studies in Korean Etymology (Memoires de la Societe Finno-Ougrienne XCV), Helsinki 1949; and; Additional Korean Etymologies by GJ Ramstedt, collected and edited by Pentti Aalto (Journal de la Societe Finno- Ougrienne 57:3) Helsinki 1954.

is is actually a Korean - Altaic dictionary.

b) Einfuhrung in die Altaische Sprachwissenschaft by GJ Ramstedt, bearbeitet und herausgegeben von P.Aalto (Memoires de la Societe Finno-Ougrienne CTV:1), Helsinki 1957; und Teil II (Men. Soc. Fin.-Ougr. CIV:2) Helsinki 1952.

The other important Altaist of the old school is the German-Russian Nikolaus Poppe (1897-1991), who followed in Ramstedt’s footsteps:

N.Poppe, Vergleichende Grammatik der altaischen Sprachen, Wiesbaden I960. N.Poppe, Introduction to Altaic Linguistics, Wiesbaden 1965.

4) Janhunen, Juha and Kho Songmoo: Is Korean Related to Tungusic?

in: Hangeul NT77 (p. 1-12), Seoul 1982

5) The great anti-Altaist Gerhard Doerfer would like to reduce all linguistic relations within the Altaic family to loan-relation-ships (“Lehnverwandtschaft” as opposed to “Urverwandtschaft”). He published his findings in a classified etymological dictionary, called “Mongolo-Tungusica”, Wiesbaden 1985.

6) Roy Andrew Miller is an outspoken pro-Altaist. R.A.Miller, Languges and History-Japanese, Korean and Altaic (The Institute for Comparative Research in Human Culture, Oslo, Serie B: Skrifter XCIII), Bangkok 1996.

[page 4]

The three main characteristics common to all Altaic languages are:

1. Agglutination, i.e. a non-changeable word stem, to which all kinds of endings can be glued on.

2. Vowel-Harmony, i.e. the vowels in the endings change according to the vowel of the word stem, e.g. Kor. “choayo” (“good”) and ,,komawayo,, (“thank you”), but ,,mogoyo” (“eat”), etc. The system of vowel-harmony exists only in remnants in the Korean language.

3. Sentence structure (syntax). All Altaic languages put the verb at the end of each sentence. Any Turkic etc. sentence can be translated word by word, ending by ending into Korean.

In the 7th/8th century A.D. these Altaic people lived much closer together than nowadays. The old Turks lived in modern Mongolia; the Mongolians lived at the eastern fringe of Mongolia stretching from southwestern Manchuria northwards to Lake Baikal. The forefathers of the Tungus probably lived northeast of the Mongols, but they only became historical when they migrated into Manchuria in the middle of the 5th century. From this nucleus centered around modern Mongolia the Turks started expanding westwards after the 7th century, and the Mongols followed under Genghis Kahn after 1200. The Korean group was pushed out of Manchuria by the advancing Manchu-Tungus people in the 5th to 10th centuries. The Koreans couldn’t expand further East but were stuck on the Korean Peninsula.

Part 3: Prehistory

Archaeological material shows a common bronze-age culture stretching from Manchuria through the whole length of the Korean peninsula reaching even Japan.7) Its most obvious representatives are the large dolmens. These dolmens come in two types. The northern type is the overground type found in Manchuria and as far south as Kanghwa Island near Seoul South of Seoul, with examples found also in Japan, we find the underground dolmen with its headstone on natural ground level. This new bronze age culture entered Manchuria and Korea nearly 3000 years ago. Later, slightly over 2000 years ago, the first historical kingdom of the Korean group, named Puyo, emerged in central Manchuria, - if we discount the slightly older Old-Choson in Northwestern Korea disappearing in the haze of half historical myths -, and the first king of Koguryo originally came from Puyo and founded his kingdom also in Manchuria.8)

7) Riotto, Maurizio: The Bronze Age in Korea ( Italian School of East Asian Studies, occasional Paper 1), Kyoto 1989.

8) a) Ikeuchi, Hiroshi: A Study on the Fu-yu (i.e.Puyo); In Memoirs of the Research Department of the Toyo Bunko N’6, Tokyo 1932. b) Shiratori, Kurakichi: The Legend of the King Tung-ming, the founder of Fu-yu-kuo (i.e.Puyoguk), In: Memoirs of the Research Department of the Toyo Bunko N’10,Tokyo 1938.

[page 5]

We do not know exactly how the languages of Koguryo and Puyo in the North differed from those of Silla, Paekche, and Kaya in the South. But, as the example of different dolmen types shows, there was a certain diversity of cultures and thus of languages, within the Korean group. At least there was a northern and a southern group. This division into a southern and a northern culture can be traced in the construction of Silla, Paekche, and Kaya tombs (large earth-mound over an underground chamber) in comparison to Koguryo tombs (stone pyramid or stone mound with the burial chamber in the top section well over ground). Later, in the 7th century, Silla conquered Paekche and Koguryo, and the Silla languages, with a few words from the Paekche and Koguryo langyage incorporated, became the basis of modern Korean. Thus the old northern group represented by Puyo and Koguryo was eliminated eventually, and only the culture of the southern group survived. Today the Korean language stands isolated amongst the Asian languages. But it seems very likely, that if only we knew more about the Puyo-Koguryo languages, we might find closer links with the Mongolian or Tungus languages. Research on the place-names recorded in the Samguk-sagi (“History of the Three Kingdoms” a 12th century work) has shown that there were pockets of old place-names in central Korea that were connected with the Japanese language rather than with modern Korean.9)

Hence we can imagine waves of immigrants pushing from northern Central Asia into Manchuria, the Korean peninsula and finally Japan, with different types of place-names and dolmens representing different waves. It is impossible to attribute with certainty any of these rather hypothetical waves to historically recorded peoples of a great variety of dialects, languages and material cultures, a cultural diversity existing 2000 years ago, which we tend to group under the rather egalitarian term of “Korea”.

Only the latest of these waves has been recorded clearly in the Chinese and Korean sources. In the year 494 the last king of Puyo flees to Koguryo. Puyo had been overrun and destroyed by the Mulgil, later called Malgal. In the 10th century out of one of the Malgal tribes the Jurchen developed, who were the ancestors of the Manchu. The year of 494 marked the beginning of the end for Korean peoples in Manchuria. The new wave we can call Tungus, for there is a gap-free link from the Mulgil to the modern Tungus. It came perhaps from the same region and the same pool of tribes and peoples out of which the Korean people had originated

9) Cf. Janhunen etc., op.cit. p.8-10 .

[page 6]

1500 years earlier. During this long time separating these two waves, the Korean languages and the Tungus languages had gone different ways, and in the end, the Silla language, which by being spoken in the South might represent a rather earlier Korean immigration wave, was the only Korean language that survived. Today the Korean language consists of about 70% vocabulary of Chinese origin, which makes it even more difficult for comparison with other Altaic languages.

Part 4: The Northeastern Frontier of Korea

We have mentioned earlier how the modern shape of Korea grew out of a nucleus that was the old heartland of Silla and Paekche in the Souths grew northwards towards Yalu and Tumen, thereby retaking territory of the northern Korean group that had been completely taken over by the Jurchen. The Koryo Dynasty (918-1392) had pushed the northwestern borderline as far north as the mouth of the Yalu, and it did so by constant military expeditions against the Jurchen followed up by a systematic building programme of new garrison towns, each encroaching a few miles further into the country of the enemy, thus step by step advancing towards the Yalu. This same military policy did not work in the Northeast, despite a huge effort made in 1107 when a large Korean army under general Yun Kwan advanced for more than a hundred miles towards the Tumen and even founded nine fortified towns in this area. But the advance had been too fast, the conquered territory too vast, and the whole expedition ended in a complete defeat of the Koreans against the Jurchen in 1109, Korea never got a second chance because the Jurchen at that time were being united under a strong ruler, Wanyen Aguda, who founded the golden Chin dynasty in 1115. ) A century later the Mongols took over from the Chin dynasty and so the northeastern border of Korea remained nearly static at the northern edge of the Bay of Wonsan.

Around the middle of the 13th century Yi An-sa, a great-great-grandfather of the first king of the Choson Dynasty (1392-1910) moved together with 170 families of his village, because he could not live in peace with some local official, northwards from Chonju along the east coast where he surrendered to the Mongols at Yonghung, until he settled down at the Tumen river. On the northern bank of the Tumen, opposite modern Kyonghung, he lived with his 170 families as a loyal officer of the Mongols amongst the native Jurchen. Though Yi An-sa had some success in controlling the neighboring Jurchen chieftains, his son Yi Haeng-ni was less lucky and had to flee suddenly in 1290 together with his families from a group of rebellious Jurchen that tried to kill him. He, his son, and grandson then settled at the southern edge of the Jurchen territory around Hamhung where they continued

10) Rogers, Michael C.: The regularization of Koryo-Chin relations (1116-31); In: Central Asiatic Journal 1961, p.51-84

[page 7]

to serve as loyal officers to the Mongols, receiving Mongolian names and titles.

Thus Yi Song-gye, the first king of the Choson dynasty, and his forefathers had lived for five generations in an area outside the Korean borders and surrounded by the native Jurchen population. Naturally Yi Song-gye had many friends amongst these Jurchen and knew their way of life. When then in 1392 Yi Song-gye overthrew the Koryo dynasty and declared himself king, he didn’t have to conquer that vast area between the Bay of Wonsan and the Tumen by military force, as his predecessor had tried in 1107, for it was his own homeland by birth and upbringing, and Yi Chi-ran, whose original name was Turan Temur, was one of his best generals and a close friend, and he was a Jurchen chieftain from that area south of the Tumen.11)

To bring it to a point: The northwest was successfully incorporated into Korea because the first king of Koryo came from the northwestern frontier region, and the northeast became Korea because it was the homeland of the first king of the Choson dynasty, Though these were not the only factors, they nevertheless determined the shape of northern Korea.

The rise of Yi Song-gye coincides with the collapse of the Mongolian power in Asia. In Nanking a new nationalist government, the Ming dynasty, came to power. Unlike the previous rulers over China, the Mingolas, Jurchen, and Khitan, who all came from the North, the Ming dynasty had no firm grip on Manchuria, most certainly not during the first decades of Ming rule from Nanking, This created a power vacuum in Manchuria and hence there was no serious opposition when Yi Song-gye claimed all the country south of the Tumen for Korea.

But we have to keep in mind that no one at that time saw the Tumen as a border. It was just one river in the midst of the vast Jurchen Territory. There were half nomadic Jurchen tribes living north and south of the Tumen, crossing the river into both directions freely. These tribes lived in constant warfare with each other. Now it was one of the policies of the Ming dynasty to draw these tribes closer towards China by granting titles to their chieftains.

Each tribe was made a garrison by name, and its chieftain the commander of the garrison, a large impressive seal included in the bargain. Of course these were only empty titles. It often happened that a chieftain who got into a fight with a rival south of the Tumen, would move north to claim help from the Chinese, whereas his enemy would enjoy the protection of the Korean king who equally handed out empty titles with a free hand. Thus many tribes many times changed their official overlord between Korea and China.

11) For Yi Chi-ran cf. So Pyong-guk: Yi Chi-ran yongu in: Paeksan Hakpo N’10, Seoul 1971, p. 117-167. Still the best Korean work for a broader picture of Jurchen-Korean relations before 1600 is Yi In-yong: Haneuk-Manju kwangvesa-ui yongu, Seoul 1950.

[page 8]

To complicate the situation further, the late 14th century, just before the Choson dynasty was founded, saw heavy migrational activity amongst the Jurchen tribes living north and south of the Tumen before then, and over the centuries these tribes had partly become naturalized by Korea- These newcomers, who moved into the Tumen area around 1270, were much more unruly and independent minded They consisted of three large groups: the Odoli, originally from the Ilan area on the Sunggari, the Orank’ae, originally living southeast of the Odoli, and the Udige tribes mainly living on fishing east of Hurkha and Ussuri. The Odoli, after many wars with the Koreans throughout the 15th century, finally moved from the Tumen area into the Yenden area north of the middle Yalu.12) From that new base, their leader Nurhaci united all Jurchen tribes around 1600 and built the base for the Manchu Ch’ing Empire. The wild Orank’ae tribe gave its name in Korean to all barbarians and foreigners even to this day. The Dutch shipwrecked sailor Hamel recorded in the 17th century that Orangk’ae is the Korean word for a barbarian.13)The vast area between the Bay of Wonsan and the Tumen, which now makes up the two provinces of North and South Hamgyong-do, had been part of the Mongolian Yuen Empire, and before that of Jurchen Chin dynasty, etc. Of course the Chinese Ming-dynasty as the heir and successor of the Yuen dynasty claimed all the Jurchen living north of the Bay of Wonsan as her own subjects, Korea argued that it had conquered this area already in 1107, though be it only for a short while. In the end Hamgyong-do only became part of Korea, because the Chinese couldn’t send a military force into this distant border region, where many of the local Jurchen chieftains backed the Korean course.

Interestingly enough, throughout the 15th century the Korean kings again and again used that old, ill-rated military expedition of 1107 as a “proof” and argument in the diplomatic correspondence with China, claiming that a large part of

12) The original “Sojongnok” is a diary from a military expedition by Korea 1432-37 against the Jurchen on the middle reaches of the Yalu. But the modern edition from 1989 offers, in addition to the original text, a translation of the same into modern Korean and several maps and commentaries that make the complicated movements of Jurchen tribes between Yalu and Tumen more transparent:

Sojongnok (ed Kukpangbu chonsa p’yonch’an wowonhoe: Kiksa munhunjip 9), Seoul 1989 There is also a Pukchongnok by the famous Sin Suk-chu describing the major military expedition against the Jurchen in 1460 in the Tumen area. The text of the Pukchonnok has been published in 1984 in vol.3 of the Pohanjae chonso.

The Pukchongnok has partly been translated into German: Jugel, Ulrike Studien zur Geschichte der Wu-liang-ha (i.e.Orangk’ae) im 15. Jahrhundert (Tungusica II), Wiesbaden 1982.

13) Hamel, Hendrik: Hamel’s Journal and the description of the Kingdom of Korea, Transl. by BrJean-Paul Buys; Revised edition, Seoul 1998. Orank’ae cf. p. 100.

[page 9]

Manchuria was originally conquered by Yun Kwan in 1107 and hence belonged to Korea. There is though, no firm historical evidence at all that Yun Kwan ever reached the Tumen, but the Koreans of the 15th century produced maps, that showed ruined Korean towns and broken inscription stones allegedly erected by Yun Kwan far into Northeast Manchuria, But in the end Korea had enough of a task on her hands to secure even the area south of the Tumen with its predominantly Jurchen population.

Under King Sejong, several thousand Korean families from the South were resettled in the Tumen area, and these settlers until this day preserved their own very special dialect, known as the Yukchin-Dialect or “Dialect of the Six Garrisons”. These six garrisons were founded from 1434 onward as a chain of outposts along the Tumen to keep the new wild Jurchen tribes of the Orank’ae, Odoli and Udige at bay. Prior to 1434 there were practically no Koreans living in the Tumen area.14) In 1588 there were 283 Jurchen villages with over 8,500 households recorded for the sparsely populated Tumen area south of the river.15) Around 1600 the Jurchen chieftain Nurhaci united the Jurchen tribes under his rule. In 1644 his grandson became the first Manchu emperor of the Ch’ing dynasty ruling form Peking. Before conquering China the Manchu invaded Korea twice, in 1627 and 1636, and made the Korean king the little brother of the Manchu emperor. After the Korean king submitted to the Manchu emperor, a peace treaty was imposed on Korea and the text of the same inscribed in Manchu and Chinese in a 15ft high stele erected near Seoul in 1639. It is today known as the Samjon-dobi, now hidden behind housing blocks near Sokchon subway station, not in its origmal place. Naturally the Koreans were never very fond of this inscription. In 1895, when Manchu-China had lost the war against Japan, the Koreans buried the stone in the mud of the nearby river. The Japanese dug it out again in 19o3. It’s above ground at the moment.16)

In 1627, there were still many tens of thousands of Jurchen living in Korea. The Manchu emperor claimed them all as his own subjects and demanded from

14) The following book is mainly concerned with the Six Garrisons and the Tumen area in the earlier 15th century. It contains several useful maps: Kukt’o kaech’ok sa (ed. Kukpang kunsa yonguhoe: Minjok chonjaeng-nan sa 10), Seoul 1999.

15) As recorded in the Chesung pangnyak, the original work was written by the founder of the Six Garrisons, Kim Chong-so (1390-1453), and contained strategies against the Jurchen. It was supplemented around 1588 by Yi II, who added facts and figures on the border population at the Tumen.

16) Charles, W.R : A Korean Monument to Manchu Clemency; in: JChB RAS vol.23-1 (1888), p. 1-8.

[page 10]

Korea their return to Manchuria. But these Jurchen had lived in Korea for centuries and showed no desire to move to Manchuria. So they retreated deep into the secluded valleys and mountains of Northern Hamgyoung province where they lived in their own villages until this day. They are called “Chaegasung” by the Koreans, which means “monks living in a family’’.

These Jurchen hid themselves so well from the outside world that even the Koreans forgot about them. Though there are a few scanty hints in 19th century sources, they were really only rediscovered less than a hundred years ago following the war between Russia and Japan in 1904/05 which severely effected the northern border region. ) Most of the temples, that formed the center of each Chaegasung village, were destroyed in that war and many of the old Chaegasung communities upset.

How little even the Koreans knew about the Chaegasung and their history, and how puzzled they felt about these rediscovered people is illustrated by the short chapter on the Chaegasung by Yi Nung-hwa in his ‘‘history of Korean Buddhism” (Choson pulgyo t’ongsa II, p.835) from 1918: “There is a curious thing in the history of Korean monks, namely the Chaegasung at the northern border. These monks have wives and eat meat, and there is no one who would forbid it. In the northern province of Hamgyong-do in the prefectures of Kyonghung, Kyongwon, Hoeryong, Puryong, Chongsong and Onsong, which line the northern border, there live a certain sort of monks together in communities in the mountain valleys, forming their own villages. These villages are called Sanmun. Each will necessarily have a Buddhist temple as a public place. The rites of marriage and memorials for the dead are performed at the temple. The men amongst the Chaegasung produce yellow paper out of straw, and the women weave fine cloth of hemp and silk. And they also go out onto their fields to work For they work for their daily life. The normal people despise them and never marry with any of these.

“There are the following explanations for their origin. The first one says: In the year 1636 at the time of king Injo’s reign, the army of the Ch’ing came and

17) Imanishi Ryu was the first one who collected contemporary reports about the Giaegasung, even interviews with Chaegasung themselves; imanishi Ryu, Zaikeso ni kansuru chosa ippan; in; Chosen Iho, Seoul March 1915, p. 52-56.

The first detailed population count is published in: Yoshio Nagasuke, Chosen no shiraku-chuhen (=Seikatsu jotai chosa), Chosen sotokufu:Chosa shiryo 39, Seoul 1933, p. 303-306.

The following author traveled as a young man though the Northeast of Korea and even visited a Chaegasung village, though apparently the Chaegasung there weren’t very talkative (cf. p.229f.). The other information on the Chaegasung is taken from Imanishi Ryu. Kim ki-ch’ol, Kwanbuk taegwan (Hambuk inswae), 1927, p.70-73/229-234

[page 11]

besieged Namhan (the mountain fortress near Seoul where the king had fled). At that time, a treaty was signed, and by one paragraph of that treaty it was decreed that Korea should deliver 3000 steeds and 3000 large breasted women, and these would be sent at an appropriate time (when the Manchu at some time in the future should be in need for women and steeds to replenish their own depleted ranks with plenty full offspring) to Ningguta, for Ningguta is the place of origin of the house of Ch’ing. And therefore, the Korean government collected the rest of the Jurchen living in the praefectures along the northern border, and out of these they chose (the required women). The name of these people is Chaegasung. They followed both the bloodline of the family and the Buddhist law. In order to separate them from all good customs, they were forbidden to settle amongst the Korean people. Certain villages were set aside for them to live there by themselves.

According to their custom, their women wear a special garment for their breasts (to make them stand out more prominently).

“Second explanation: When general Yun Kwan of the Koryo dynasty expelled and drove away the Jurchen (in 1107), he built temples for the remaining Jurchen and made them live in these temples to serve Buddha. That’s why their folk came to live as monks.

“. . . But I (Yi Nung-hwa) am of the opinion that both these explanations are wrong. There is only one explanation, and that is to be found in the “Kao-li t’u-ching” (written by Hsu Ching after he visited Korea as head of a Chinese embassy in 1123). There it is written, that at that time there were colonies of Chaega-hwasang (hwasang=sung: “monk, ) who dress like monks but have wives and children. They are descendants of Khitans captured by Korea... This means that the modern Chaegasung are descendants of these Khitan.”

This last theory by Yi Nung-hwa can’t be upheld because the modern Chaegasung live at that Tumen, an area far outside the Korean borders at the time of Hsu Ching. And of course the Koreans didn’t have to supply 3000 large breasted women to the Manchu, though this particular story appears to have been very popular in the folk tradition of that region around 1900. And of course Yun Kwan didn’t drive away the Jurchen in 1107-09, but they drove him away.

The Chaegasung share the following characteristics: They live in their own secluded villages. The center of each village is the temple. All the men of the village shave their heads like monks, but they would eat meant, marry and have children. These Jurchen have traditionally been Buddhists, Whereas Buddhism was suppressed in Korea during the Choson dynasty, the Jurchen in their own close knit communities kept their own beliefs and customs. They had to suffer a lot from their Korean neighbours who despised them and used them for hard labour like slaves. These Chaehasung eventually lost their own language, but they preserved a peculiar [page 12] Korean dialect incorporating a few Jurchen words. They lived as poor farmers and had no family names until a hundred years ago. Unlike Koreans, they burn their dead according to Buddhist customs and disperse the ashes. Hence they have no graves to care for, and so ancestor worship is not very developed amongst them, and they don’t keep elaborate genealogies.

According to a North Korean count, there were 1031 Chaegasung house-holds registered in 1957. ) They are the living proof that Hamgyoung-do has not always been inhabited by the modern Koreans. But at the same time, the Chaegasung are also remnants of a Jurchen race that came as intruders more than 1500 years ago to supplant much older Korean nations in Manchuria. And then, whom did the forefathers of Koguryo, Puyo etc. supplant when they arrived as newcomers some 3000 years ago?

18) There is one very comprehensive monograph from North Korea on the Chaegasung: Hwang Ch’ol-san, Hamgyong pokto sangan purak (“Chaegasung” purak)-ui munhwa wa p’ungsup, minsokhak yongu ch’ongso (Choson minjujui inmin konghwaguk kwahag’won kogohak mit minsokhak yonguso, che samjip), Pyongyang 1960.

A much shorter version appeared under the same title in the Pukhan minsohak charyujip, Seoul 1974.