*The Return of the Uigwe,*

*Official Record of Korean Royal Court Ceremonies*

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**Introduction**

In a December 8, 2010 article entitled “The Long Journey: Repatriating *Uigwe*: Looted Korean Royal Books to come back from France 144 Years after the 1866 French Invasion,” the *Korea Herald* reported as follows:

In November [2010] the French and the Japanese governments announced they would return the Joseon-period royal books on court rites and ceremonies that had been taken by force from Korea in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The announcements mark the end of years of negotiations between governments and relentless efforts by activists to have the priceless artifacts repatriated.... The looted “Uigwe” books...are designated by UNESCO as part of world heritage, and contain both text and hand-drawn illustrations of significant royal rites and ceremonies of the Joseon Dynasty (1392–1910). It was announced in November that a total of 464 volumes of Uigwe*—*167 from Japan and 297 from France—will be “virtually returned” and “transferred” to Korea by the two countries.... While the French took the books during its 19th century invasion of Korea, the Japanese seized the copies during its colonial rule of the Korean Peninsula from 1910 to 1945.

The first shipment of 75 books from France arrived on April 14th, 2011. The remaining 222 books were sent back in 4 separate shipments by May 27th. All the books have been returned under a 5 year loan agreement made between France and Korea. *Uigwe* books are unique in that they display both text and hand-drawn illustrations of significant rites and ceremonies of the royal family of Joseon, including weddings, funerals, banquets, and the receiving of foreign envoys, as well as other state rituals and celebrations. Experts say such royal records do not exist in any other Asian country. The 297 *Uigwe* books in France were made in the 17th and 18th centuries and were stored in the *Oegyujanggak*, an annex of the *Gyujanggak* or Royal Library on Ganghwa Island—ironically for safe-keeping against invaders.

The first *Uigwe* book is believed to have been published during the reign of King Taejo, the first Joseon king, in the 14th century, but the surviving books are mostly from the 17th century, according to Hwang Jung-yon, curator at the National Research Institute of Cultural Heritage. Hwang states that the *Uigwe* books had to be very neatly written by scribes who were experts in calligraphy, and that they usually made nine copies of each book: for the king, for the crown prince, and for each government office.

For a look at what makes the *Uigwe* contents so valuable, the writer, largely from a poetry, dance, and musical standpoint, would like to point out the following example taken from the 70th birthday celebration of the Queen Mother, Queen Shinjung (1808–1890), during the 14th year of the reign of King Kojong of the Choson dynasty (1877), at which the following poetry, dances, and music were performed.

**1. Dance of Longevity (*Jang Saeng-boyeonji-mu*)**

In 1829, the 29th year of the reign of King Sunjo, Crown Prince Hyomyong created this dance imitating a performance from China’s Sung dynasty. A reference to the original Sung dance is found in *The Complete Classics Collection of Ancient China*, which states that it was the 7th of 25 pieces of court banquet music that were performed during the Sung dynasty.

Some revisions and improvements were made in 1887. As a result, it was performed with two pole bearers, who functioned mainly as ushers leading the other dancers in and out of the performance area standing in front and dancers dressed in blue, red, yellow, white, and black costumes standing in the four directions and the center, respectively. Stepping forward, the two pole bearers sang this opening refrain: “A long and lonely day in spring, / A grand banquet is held at the royal court, / Auspicious clouds hover in the sky, / The music of the spheres resounds, / We hold an audience with his majesty and sing this song.”

After the song, one pole bearer moved to the left and the other to the right with the lead dancer in the center. The other four dancers stepped forward, kneeled down, and bowed. The lead dancer then moved forward and sang this song of praise: “His Honorable Majesty / Possesses benevolence and displays unchanging virtue, / Blessings so great are without end, / A reign of peace will be enjoyed.”

After returning to her original position, the lead dancer and four attendant dancers sang as they danced. Then the two pole-bearers entered and sang this closing refrain: “At this lavish banquet, all kinds of dances have been performed. / Nine pieces of music have been played on jade flutes, harps, and lutes. / We bow twice in the front yard and, following each other, we take our leave.”

The accompanying music, called *Pohoja* or *Changchoon-Pulloji-kok* (“Long life as eternal as the spring”), was originally from Tang- and Sung-dynasty China, but later was Koreanized. This was followed by *Hyang-Tang Kyoju*, an alternate playing of native Korean and Tang-dynasty music, which was performed by two orchestras, one on a terrace and the other in the courtyard, on instruments such as the *Kongo*, a huge barrel-shaped drum supported by a pole; the *Sukgo*, a long barrel-shaped drum; the *Unggo*, another barrel-shaped drum, the *Kyobanggo*, another barrel-shaped drum hung on a stand; the *Changgo*, a double-headed hourglass-shaped drum struck with a bamboo stick and the hand or a mallet; the *Pyunjong*, a set of bell chimes hung on a stand; the *Pyungyung*, a set of stone chimes hung on a stand; the *Panghyang*, a set of iron chimes hung on a stand; the *Uh*, a wooden tiger with a serrated back; the *Chook*, a square mortar with 4 slopping sides and struck with a pestle; the *Kayagum*, a 12-stringed instrument; the *Bipa*, a 4-stringed lute; the *Komungo*, a 6-stringed instrument; the *Ajaeng*, a bowed 7-stringed instrument; the *Haegum*, a two-stringed bowed fiddle; the *Yanggum*, a dulcimer; the *Tanso*, a vertical bamboo flute; the *Taegum*, a long transverse bamboo flute; the *Tangjuk*, a short transverse bamboo flute; the *Ka*, a bamboo wind instrument; the *Saenghwang*, a mouth organ with vertical bamboo pipes; the *Piri*, a vertical bamboo oboe; 2 large round drums struck by the dancers; and the *Pak*, a wooden clapper employed by the conductor to start and stop the orchestra and to signal changes in dance movements.

**2. Ball-Throwing Dance (*Bosang-mu*)**

This dance was newly created during the reign of King Sunjo of the Joseon dynasty. It featured a tray-table with high sides placed in the middle of the performing area holding a jar decorated with a lotus design. One dancer stands on the west side while six dancers take turns at throwing a beautifully painted ball into the jar. If the ball goes into the jar, the dancer is rewarded with a flower. If it does not, she is punished by having an ink dot painted on her cheek. To the left of the table stands a dancer holding the flowers, and to the right a dancer holding a paintbrush. The other dancers stand behind the table, three to the east and three to the west. They all come forward, kneel down, and bow. Then they rise and sing together: “The holy sun shines on the brilliant performing area with jade curtains, / The place of the bamboos is clothed anew in silken rainment.”

The six dancers then move to the back and return to their positions, and the flower and paintbrush bearers place the colored balls to the left and right of the table. The first dancers on the left and right come forward, kneel down to pick up a ball, and sing: “The music of the immortals comes from the pavilion in the clouds of five colors, / The colors of the rainbow dance on the railings decorated in jewels.”

With the table between them, the two dancers hold their hands up and move forward and backward twice, then take turns throwing the ball into the vase. Then the second pair of dancers sing: “Pushing the silken curtains aside, the colored sleeves come into clear view, / When the jade screen is raised, the balls give off their scent.”

Then the third pair of dancers come forward and sing: “Don’t push us between the flowers with the music of flute and drum, / Our only concern is not to fall where the flower petals are.”

**3. Boating Dance (*Sonyurak*)**

According to the royal protocols for a court banquet in the year 1829 (the 29th year of the reign of King Sunjo), this dance was a recreation of a boat setting sail. Two child dancers are aboard, one at the bow and the other at the stern, while two officials clad in the “robes of heaven” and wearing red caps command the boat standing at the bow armed with bow and arrow and sword. Six dancers, three on each side of the boat, pull the boat ropes, while 32 dancers on the outer circle rotate around the boat singing as they move. When the boat arrives at the center of the performing area, the anchor is dropped and the dancers, again whirling around the boat, sing a long narrative song (*Kasa*) called the “Song of the Fisherman” (*Obusa*). Some maintain this was sung to invite spiritual blessing of the fishing fleets, while others say it was sung to wish a bon voyage to high-ranking court officials about to embark on a voyage.

The dance, performed at various court banquets and celebrations from 1829 to 1901, begins with an accompaniment by royal military processional music called *Taechwi-ta* (“Great Winds and Percussion”) performed on such instruments as a conical oboe (*Taepyong-so*), long clarion (*Nabal*), conch shell (*Hoon*), brass cymbals (*Chegum*), hourglass-shaped drum (*Changgo*), and round drum (*Yonggo*) by musicians dressed in yellow robes and hats. When the “Song of the Fisherman” begins, the accompaniment is provided by the court orchestras mentioned previously.

**4. Drum Dance (*Mugo*)**

This dance dates to the time of King Chungnyeol (r. 1274–1308) of the Koryo dynasty, when a scholar-official in exile found a piece of wood that had floated in from the sea and fashioned it into a drum. Called a *Mugo*, it was placed between two dancers who struck the drum as they danced around it. The drum is said to have made a majestic sound, and the dancers were compared to butterflies circling a flower or a dragon flying up to heaven with a wish-granting bead in its mouth.

In the early Joseon dynasty, the dance was performed by two, four, or eight dancers. By the time of the reign of King Sunjo (r. 1800–1834), it had been revised to feature one large drum encircled by four lead and four attendant dancers, a version which has been handed down to the present.

The dance is performed around the drum placed in the performing area with its head facing upwards in the manner of a snare or kettle drum. The drum stand is covered on all four sides by a bright red and blue silk cloth, revealing only the four posts that emerge above the drumhead. The four lead dancers constitute the inner circle and the four attendant dancers form the outer circle. The lead dancers carry a drumstick in each hand while the attendant dancers carry flowers. They take turns in approaching and retreating from the drum. When the lead dancers approach they strike the drum, which emits a large earth-shaking thud. The attendant dancers merely touch the drum elegantly with their flowers. This alternation of the two circles moving inward and outward creates a lovely floral kaleidoscopic pattern, while the alteration of the very loud and inaudible sound creates an effective contrast—an artistic panorama of sight and sound that is a joy to the eye as well as the ear. The dance draws to a close when the lead dancers execute a cadence on the drum and return again to join the attendant dancers in a circle dance.

The accompanying music is *Hyang-Tang Kyoju* mentioned previously.

**5. Dance of Receiving the Emperor’s Benevolence (*Hahwangeun*)**

When King Sejong received recognition as king from the emperor of Ming China, the scholar-official Byeon Gye-ryang was commanded to write a congratulatory poem commemorating the event. The poem was entitled “Receiving the Emperor’s Benevolence” (*Hahwangeun-sa*):

Our brilliant founding father founded this nation of ours,

Handed to his descendants good kings from generation to generation,

That precious visage, with wisdom inbred, filial and respectful,

benign and sincere,

Learned in Neo-Confucianism, constantly working,

the son knows the will of the enlightened king,

And so he is entrusted to take care of the nation.

The permission of the emperor granted,

the wonderful edict is bestowed.

His Majesty bows his head, truly divine is the emperor.

Because the emperor is divine, no benevolence reaches Joseon,

And all the people and ministers dance, gratitude fills heaven and earth.

May Jongmyo [royal shrine] and Sajik [altar of earth and harvest],

endure for tens of thousands of years.

The Dance of Receiving the Emperor’s Benevolence (*Hahwangeun*) was created to accompany the poem. It was originally performed at banquets for foreign envoys, but in the latter half of the Joseon dynasty it was often performed at all kinds of court ceremonies.

In formation, 15 dancers holding ceremonial implements stand on the left and right sides. In front of them stand a scroll bearer and two pole bearers with three dancers behind each on the left and right. The lead dancer stands in the middle behind the scroll bearers, and behind her stand three dancers carrying parasols. The scroll bearer and two pole bearers step slightly forward and the pole bearers sing the opening refrain: “Receiving the special grace of the emperor, the throne was put to right. / We sing of the great virtue of our king, / May his grace spread far and wide. / We dare to look at the face of our king, and offer up this song.”

The pole bearers then step back and stand on the left and right, and the lead dancer comes forward to sing this song of praise: “*Hahwangeun* means receiving the divine edict of the emperor. / In the name of the emperor, the king carries out affairs of state. / Upholding the will of the emperor, the people rejoice and create this dance.”

After this song, the lead dancer steps back and returns to her original place. With six dancers from each side, she sings the *Hahwangeun* poem while bending forward and rising again. Next, she dances in the center while the other dancers on the left and right create a square, two in the north, one in the east, one in the west, and two in the south. When she moves to face the two in the north, they turn around and dance together, followed by those in the east and south, and then those in the west and south. Then she returns to her original position, and the two pole bearers enter to sing this closing refrain: “Feasting and making merry, propriety reigns with satisfaction, / Thriving and prosperous, we pray this lasts for eternity. / As the music draws to a close, we bow, and announcing our departure, we take our leave.”

After this, the pole bearers and scroll bearer step back, and the dancers come forward, kneel down, and bow. They rise, step back, and leave through the southern entrance.

**6. Dance of the Golden Ruler (*Monggumcheok-mu*)**

When Yi Seong-gye was a general during the Koryo dynasty, he had a dream in which a celestial being descended from heaven and gave him the following oracle: “The Koryo rulers are virtuous and upright but too old, and very respectable but not flexible. You are skilled in both literary and arts, equipped with both virtue and knowledge, so the people’s hopes rest with you.” The celestial being then handed him a golden ruler and told him to take it and set the nation right. Yi Seong-gye thus went on to found the Choson dynasty and became King Taejo, the first dynastic king.

The story of this oracle was put to verse by an advisor to King Taejo in 1393, the second year of his reign. Called the “Poem of the Golden Ruler” (*Geumchok-sa*), it reads as follows:

The care of heaven is great indeed,

An auspicious dream and a golden ruler.

The upright man [of Koryo] is too old,

and the honest man [of Koryo] is foolish.

The right man is the man of virtue.

Heaven knows our mind, the nation is ruled well.

How bright was that omen, the mandate of heaven.

Pass it on to our descendants for millions of generations.

A sage has risen amongst us.

All beings will come to see, so many omens there are.

All good fortune comes to pass, and all words are not enough.

We sing and we dance, we rejoice and hold rites

and pray for the longevity of our King.

In the 10th month of 1402, the court office of music devised a dance for this poem and named it the “Dance of the Golden Ruler” (*Monggum-cheok-mu*). Honoring the achievements of Taejo in founding the Choson dynasty, it was performed at court banquets and has been handed down in this form to the present. It begins with 18 female dancers holding ceremonial implements and standing in two columns, left and right. In front stand a scroll bearer and two pole bearers, and behind them are two columns of six dancers each. In the middle stands a dancer holding a golden ruler and behind her four dancers with parasols. The scroll bearer and pole bearers come slightly forward and sing the following opening refrain: “Upholding the sacredness and wonder of the omen, the King is beautiful in his Virtuousness. / Pray grant generosity in forgiveness, and with this feast give us faith in what we extol.”

After this song the pole bearers move back to either side. The dancers then come forward to form two columns of six, one on either side of the scroll bearer. Then the dancer with the golden ruler and those with yellow parasols come forward and stand beside the two lines, and the bearer of the golden ruler sings the following song of praise: “To dream of the golden ruler is to receive the mandate of heaven. / In Taejo’s dream a celestial being descended from heaven and presented a golden ruler, saying / The Koryo ruler was moral but too old, honest but foolish. / But you, Taejo, are wise in literary and military arts, virtue and knowledge, / And in you the people trust.”

This song is followed by the “Poem of the Golden Ruler” (*Geumchok-sa*) set to music. Then the pole bearers enter and sing the closing refrain: “The music has been played nine times, and prayers offered for the longevity of the King. / Before the merriment reaches its height, minds must quickly be turned to caution. / We bow, say farewell, and return. / Pray rest in comfort.” The accompanying music is *Pohuja* and *Hyang Tang Kyo-ju* mentioned previously.

**7. Dance of Offering Heavenly Peaches (*Heon seondoh-mu*)**

This dance originated from a classical poetic song of Sung dynasty China. Koryo musicians composed it as a piece intended to accompany dance, and used it for celebrations that were handed down intact to the Choson dynasty.

As it is performed today, the dance features a celestial maiden who descends from heaven carrying a heavenly peach which she presents to the king, and then performs a dance wishing for his longevity. It is performed by 18 female dancers carrying ceremonial properties, two pole bearers, a lead dancer, two attendant dancers, and three more female dancers carrying ceremonial parasols. First the pole bearers come forward slightly and sing the opening refrain: “We come to the palace from the five great mountains afar offering the beautiful fruit of a thousand years. / To present good fortune and auspicious omens we look upon the face of the King and present this song.”

Then the lead dancer comes forward slightly and another dancer enters from the east carrying the heavenly peach on a tray. She kneels and presents the peach to the lead dancer, who holds the tray up and sings: “Enjoying the wonderful feast and spring views of Wonso, enjoying this lovely event at Sang Hyang Palace. / The King faces north with happiness on his brow, Emperor Shun in long robes sits deep in the palace with arms folded.”

She then places the tray on a table, bows, rises and moves to the top of the column where the other dancers are standing in formation. She then dances, turns to the right, and, facing north and the king, sings the previous song, after which two attendant dancers come forward and sing a song announcing the arrival of the warm east wind: “The east wind comes with a message of warmth, the beautiful energy all around gradually grows softer and happier.”

The two attendants then return to their places and the lead dancer sings about Korea: “Peace reigns over the eastern nation [Korea] today. In happiness, the King and his court look upon the banquet. / The fans are spread open and the King’s throne shines. Now the painted screen is rolled up, and auspicious energy fills the air.”

The lead dancer then moves back to her place, and the pole bearers sing the closing refrain: “Putting our clothes in order for a moment we step back intending to return following the path of the clouds. / We bow twice in front of the courtyard and, following each other, we take our leave.” The lead dancer and two attendant dancers come forward, bow twice, and then all dancers leave by the southern exit.

The accompanying music is *Pohuja* and *Hyang-Tang Kyoju* mentioned previously, along with an orchestral piece called *Yomillak*, meaning “the King shares his pleasures with the people,” which originated in 1447 with a long poem written in the Korean alphabet and set to Chinese style music, which is hexatonic (6-toned).

**8. Dance for the Longevity of the King (*Suyonjang-mu*)**

Though the exact date of this dance is unknown, many *Uigwe*, other manuals, and musical documents state that Sung-dynasty China had a piece of music by this name which was performed on festive days to wish for the longevity of the king. In the Koryo and Choson dynasties, this music was used to accompany dance and was performed at court banquets. In Koryo, the dance was performed by 18 dancers holding ceremonial implements standing in two lines. There were two pole bearers and 16 dancers in four groups of four. In Choson, it was performed by eight dancers.

First, the pole bearers come forward and sing the opening refrain: “A beautiful rainbow envelops the palace sending a good omen, auspicious clouds shine on the light of dusk. / Envoys from all nations come to pay their respects as we play *Pohuja* at the pear blossom pavilion.” The pole bearers move back to the left and right, whereupon eight dancers come forward and sing: “Red clouds, shining colors, reflect upon each other, officials are crowded tightly around the throne, filling the courtyard like silken flowers of all colors, and the joyous sounds of a celebratory feast are heard. / Opening a thousand years of tradition and enjoying success, with one mind we offer our congratulations on the full moon. We offer wine in a jade cup. Gallant heroes, who often drink from jeweled cups, enjoy an era of peace for a million years.”

Upon completion, the dancers on the left face the west and those on the right face inward. Each side circles in a different direction, and two dancers each stand in the four directions, those in the east, west, and south kneeling down, while those in the north face each other then turn back, and then face north toward the king. Then the other dancers rise and, lifting their outstretched arms, move in a big circle. The pole bearers next come forward and sing the closing refrain: “A wonderful scene in a time of peace, the jade palace is wide and even the sun is long, / The scent of flowers mixes with the smell of incense and flows over the silken mat, / The beautiful blessings of heaven are brought and floated in a gold wine cup.”

The accompanying music is *Pohuja* and music taken from a court chamber music suite called *Chonggwang Ji Kok*.

**9. Ball-Throwing Dance (*Pogurak-Mu*)**

Records indicate this dance dates to the time it was performed by 13 dancers in the 11th month of 1073, the 27th year of King Munjong of Koryo. It was performed on *Tano* (the fifth day of the fifth lunar month) and also at court banquets.

A gate-like structure with a hole in it is placed in the performing area and the dancers, divided into two columns, one to the left and one to the right, try to throw a ball through the hole. If successful, the dancer is given a flower: if not she is punished by having her cheek smeared with black ink. In Koryo, there were 18 dancers in two columns, but in Choson sometimes only with three or four on either side of the gate. The first dancer on the left comes forward to the gate, bows, and rises, and a colored ball is placed in front of the gate. The dancer picks up the ball, moves forward, then backward, and tosses the ball. Each dancer does the same in turn. When all are finished, two pole bearers enter and sing the closing refrain. Then the dancers come forward, bow, step back, and leave by the southern entrance.

Here, again, the accompanying music is *Hyang Tang Kyoju*.

**10. Ivory Clapper Dance (*Abak-mu*)**

First introduced to the Paekje kingdom, this dance was accompanied by song and was transmitted to Koryo. Until the 10th month of 1449 (31st year of King Sejong) it was called the *Dong dong* dance, but according to the *Musical Canon of Choson* it was eventually renamed *Abak-mu* (“Ivory Clapper Dance”). Performed with a small gourd-shaped instrument made of ivory, this dance was likely introduced from regions west of China.

During the Koryo dynasty it was performed by two dancers. In Choson times it was performed by two or four dancers, who struck the instrument once or three times as they moved forward and backward and turned, a form handed down to the present. The accompanying music is an orchestral piece for wind instruments called “Long Life as Immeasurable as the Sky” (*Sujechon*).

**11. Dance of Beautiful Women Picking Peonies (*Kainjunmokdan-mu*)**

According to the *Encyclopedia of Subject Matter*, this dance, one of ten from Sung-dynasty China, was created by a scholar-official under the command of Emperor Taizong of the Sung period. In its original format, the performers wore red costumes and a gold-plaited headpiece decorated with a phoenix and peony design. Adopting the content and title of the Chinese dance, Crown Prime Hyomyong of Choson created a Korean version featuring 12 female dancers surrounding a large vase of peonies installed at the center of the performing area and picking the flowers from the vase. The dancers form two lines of six each behind the vase, move forward, kneel down, bow, and, standing up, sing the following song: “Tens of thousands of flowers in full bloom brighten the palace, so splendid are the red and yellow flowers in their envy. The Music of Perfect Peace on the jade flute resonates through the palace as butterflies flutter, the fragrance of flowers fills the air.”

The two groups of dancers join to make one large circle with their backs toward the vase. They turn to face the vase, then approach the vase and pluck flowers from it and turn outward, holding the flowers in their right hand. They then face each other in pairs, turn back to back, and approach the vase again. They next form a circle, return to their original position, come forward, bow, and exit. The accompanying music is, once again, *Hyang-Tang Kyoju*.

**12. Sword Dance (*Kumgi-mu* or *Kum-mu*)**

This dance originated from the story of a famous *Hwarang* (elite warrior or knight) of the Silla kingdom. As the original dance did not survive, Crown Prince Hyomyong created a new version in which two, four, six, or eight dancers performed.

Two records in *Diagrams and Records of Rituals*, compiled in 1901 in the 10th year of King Kojong, briefly mention this dance but give no detail. To the tune of royal processional music called *Taechwi-ta* (“Great Winds and Percussion”), musicians enter the performing area and place small swords on the stage. As they leave, four dancers enter. In two groups of two, they face each other with the swords between them. They pick up the swords, and, after dancing forward and backward, they bow and leave. The accompanying music is *Tae Chwi-ta*, followed by *Hyang-Tang Kyoju*.

**13. Dance of the Spring Nightingale (*Chunaengjon-mu*)**

According to a treatise of the court entertainment office of China, Tang-dynasty Emperor Kao-tsung (651–683 AD) was moved by the song of a bird that was carried to him on the wind one morning. When he was told it was a nightingale, he ordered a court musician to compose a piece of music inspired by the bird’s song. The composition was titled *Chunaengjon* and was later used as a dance accompaniment.

A record of court music lyrics from the Choson dynasty states that in 1829 (the 297th year of the reign of King Sunjo), Crown Prince Hyomyong created a dance based on Emperor Kao-tsung’s experience with the song of the nightingale. The dance is performed in a solo capacity by either a female or male dancer on a finely women multicolored straw mat, during which the following song is sung: “Oh, walking under the moonlight, the wind rushes through the silken sleeves. / Proudly beautiful even before the flowers, to the youth we entrust affairs of the nation.” The musical accompaniment is *Hyang-Tang Kyoju* and music taken from a long lyric poem called *Kagok*.

**14. Hand Bell Dance (*Hyangryong-mu*)**

Crown Prince Hyomyong recreated a Tang dynasty dance replacing the original hand cymbals with hand bells held in both hands and shaken while dancing. Two dancers stand at the front, one behind the other, and behind them stand two dancers on the west and two on the east. They ring the bells to the beat and sing the following song as they dance, first facing each other, then back to back, and then face north: “Music plays at the Jade Palace and immortals come to visit wearing phoenix pattern robes and mythical animal pattern belts. Leaving perfume behind as they lithely dance, our only wish is for the King’s longevity. / May your life be as long as heaven. / The spring breeze blows on the flowers in the yard, which lasts for tens of thousands of years.” The accompanying music is taken from a long lyric poem called *Kagok*.

**15. Crane Dance (*Hakmu*)**

Two dancers appear dressed as enormous cranes and approach two large lotus flowers located on a specially designed platform at the far end of the performing area. With their long bills, they peck at the flowers, the petals unfold, and two child dancers emerge and ride on the cranes’ backs. The dance can be traced to the Koryo dynasty and is described in the *Cardinal Principles of Music*. The accompanying music originally was *Pohuja* but was later changed to *Hyang-Tang Kyoju*.

**16. Lotus Dance (*Yunhwadae-mu*)**

Originating in India, this dance was introduced to Korea through Northern Wei in China. The *Compilation of Documents* describes the dance as performed by two dancers dressed in beautiful costumes with gold bells in their hats that rattled as they moved. The *Cardinal Principles of Music*, written during the Choson period, states that it was performed with the Crane Dance. On its own, it was performed at court rites held to expel evil spirits. It has been designated Intangible Cultural Property Number 40 by the Korean government to ensure its preservation and transmission to posterity.

The dance starts with two pole bearers coming slightly forward to sing the opening refrain: “What a wonderful day has been selected for this brilliant feast, auspicious events of all kinds come all at once. / Lovely girls emerging from lotus flowers present captivating dance and song with skill rare to see.”

After this, two dancers come forward and sing: “From the Isle of Eternal Youth we descend, born of the lotus. / Deeply moved by the virtue of the King, we come to this flower to present the joy of song and dance.”

The dancers place the hats with bells attached on their heads and sing the closing refrain: “The elegant music draws to an end, we bow before you and take leave of this brilliant place, we return to the carriage of the immortals, and head for the clouds far away.” The dancers then bow and leave through the southern entrance.

This dance, revised by Crown Prince Hyonmyong in 1829, is accompanied by *Pohuja* and music taken from a court chamber music suite.

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All these dances were performed again in January 1887 at the 80th birthday celebration of the Queen Mother, Queen Shinjong. On this occasion the following two additional dances were included.

**Dance of the Fragrant Mountain (*Musanhyang-mu*)**

According to the Royal Protocol of the Court Banquet of 1828 (*Muja Jinjak Uigwe*), this dance came from Tang-dynasty China. It is performed solo by a male dancer on a platform in the center of the performing area, who sings: “Of all the people, I alone gained the King’s favor by wearing a perfumed robe of silk with narrow sleeves. The song I joyfully offer is like the oriole chirping in the branches above. / With dance movements as light as clouds, I drift away on the breeze.” After dancing, the performer bows and leaves through the south exit.

**Dance of the Five Immortals (*Oyangsun-mu*)**

A Tang-dynasty poem describes the time Gaogu became the prime minister of the state of Chu in which five celestial maidens descended from heaven riding on rams with coats of different colors and handed to Master Anqi sheng, a hermit known for his great finial piety, a grain stalk with six ears of rice on it. Adapted from a dance originally performed in China, this dance symbolically represents Master Anqi sheng handing out the ears of rice to villagers to plant for food. Eighteen dancers hold ceremonial implements standing in two rows with two pole bearers standing in front of them. Behind the 18 dancers are four attendant dancers standing to the east and west with the lead dancer in the middle. At the very back are four dancers holding ceremonial parasols.

The pole bearers come forward and sing the opening refrain: “The clouds appear at Guling and the sun turns round at Aoshan, / Joyfully we greet the immortals riding on rams. / Meeting the sacred birds high in the heavens to the elegant music, the phoenix comes to dance. / More stirring than geese in flight is their beauty. / Graciously permit us to join the throng, and bestow on us your generous blessing.”

The lead dancer then comes forward and sings a song of praise to the emperor: “Oh, as we sing and dance expressing our congratulations, we are trying to help maintain the long, long blessings. / We the women of the court were so moved, we know not what to do.”

After this, the attendant dancers sing two verses of the following song:

The dawn air is thick with blue mist and the sea is calm.

The two or three mountain peaks by the river are cold.

Jade pendants inside the robes send out an intriguing human scent, red tags ride the rainbow of five color clouds.

A clear omen are the full ears of rice,

a smile and a blush soften the face.

Looking upon the nine roofs of the palace, looking up to the sky,

we pray three times,

May you face Mt. Nanshan

and live for one hundred thousand years.

Then the lead and attendant dancers sing this refrain: “In the Three Spirit Mountain so far, far away, day and night are divided after a hundred thousand years. / In the spring breeze the legendary peach blossoms bloom casting a smile in the spring god of the east. / A lucky wind brings fleeting fragrant notes. / We pray you will live long and never grow old. / As the auspicious smoke scatters and blue clouds disappear, teasing the warm sunshine and whistling slowly.”

At the end of the song, the two pole bearers come forward and sing the following song: “How clear is the song of the departing crane, how intriguing the dance of the oriole, / They shake their tags and say goodbye. / Pointing to the Three Spirit Mountain as they go, the sun sets red filling the air with the warmth of spring. / From deep inside the white clouds comes the faraway sound of a crane. / In front of the courtyard we bow twice and, following each other, we take our leave.”

Then the lead dancer comes forward and sings this song of praise: “The rabble is gone and the world is clean, showing gratitude for the virtue that brings peace to all. / We suddenly depart this joyful scene, for the road to the ivory pavilion is far. / We dare not do as we please, so we bow and await your command.”

**Conclusion**

In light of the precious cultural content of the *Uigwe*, neither the French invasion of 1866 nor the Japanese annexation of 1910–1945 in which the books were looted can be regarded as having any justification. The execution of French Catholic priests in Korea was admittedly a horrendous provocation, but taking such important books was not an appropriate response. It is essential that the originals of these books now be returned to Korea permanently and in their entirety.

**Sources**

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