KOREA IN THE 1950s: WAR AND PEACE
(B) PEACE

MEMOIRS OF KOREA IN THE MID-1950s

RICHARD RUTT

After wartime experience at Bletchley Park, where he learned Japanese, Richard Rutt went up to Cambridge to read Modern Languages. He then took Holy Orders in the Church of England and offered himself as a missionary. In 1954, when he was 29, it was decided that he should go to Korea. He was assigned to Anjung village in Kyŏnggi Province. Though he had been a curate in Cambridge from 1951, it was his first experience of undertaking pastoral work on his own.

Once I began telling people I was going to Korea, I realised how little known Korea was in Britain, even immediately after three years of [the] Korean War in which British soldiers had fought and died. Few English people had any idea where Korea was. Great-Aunt Jenny of Handscomb End Farm even asked what part of Africa was Korea in; but she left school in the 1870s. Yet the English in general thought that anyone going to Korea must be either a hero or a madman. War correspondents had given vivid accounts of bitter cold, but said nothing of monsoon rains and torrid summers, still less of golden autumns, and spring air that was like champagne. Some [people] were noticeably disquieted on being introduced. One churchwoman asked me what I should be doing after Cambridge and was very puzzled when she heard the word 'Korea'. She said, 'Surely you're not going to be a missionary!' but felt relieved when in my fumbling reply I mentioned the bishop. 'Oh, the bishop has asked you. I see.' I was respectable, after all.

At that time the whole of the China coast was befogged by war and threats of war, with all eyes on Taiwan. We were in Hong Kong for a fortnight before the troopship *Asturias* came along. Five days later we were unloaded at Kure, which was then the depot in Japan for British forces still left behind by the Korean War. We were at once transferred to a grubby little coaster called *Esang*, doing taxi-service between Kure and Pusan. The crew seemed to consist of three, headed, as was usual for such ships, by a taciturn Scot. [Fr] John [Whelan] and I were up before dawn to catch our first sight of the Land of Morning Calm: the same soft blue line of hills as must have

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greeted the French priests who came here to be martyred in the 19th century. They knew they would never see home again, and were prepared for isolation, misery, torture and death. In 1954 these things still felt not far away.

There was more waiting. We disembarked in the wasteland that had been Pusan harbour before a catastrophic conflagration that spring. The whole area was now carpeted with tiny temporary hovels built of rubbish, none taller than a man. The autumn sunshine was the only cheer in our welcome. Bishop Arthur Chadwell had found an army jeep to drive us to our little red brick house in the city. As we rode through the pathetic refuges, a cardboard flap was lifted and out of the dirty hut behind it stepped a Korean gentleman in spotless traditional white coat and formal black horsehair hat, moving with the typical bombastic stride of the Korean gentleman. A Korean might have murmured that the lotus-flower rises out of mud …

The train to Seoul was an American train and full. We slept fully dressed between khaki blankets, not entirely free from tobacco smoke. The great terminus station at Seoul stood isolated among the bomb sites. The main street outside it was a fairly well swept track among the piles of rubble. When Bishop Chadwell promised to get a bull-cart, I wondered why he should not say 'bullock cart'; but he had not. All the carts in the street were drawn by bulls. I discovered later that they covered Manchuria and much of north China too, stocky but handsome little animals of bright chestnut colour, sometimes shading into black. They were used for all kinds of agricultural work and haulage but [were] useless for dairy purposes, and were finally eaten (with a conviction that the flesh of cows was tenderer). The bulls were never cut, because they were normally docile. Today the breed is artificially conserved, for mechanisation has removed all cattle from the farms.

In fact Bishop Arthur hired two carts drawn by ferocious-looking men with huge beards and we all walked through the thronged but weirdly quiet streets, past the magnificent Great South Gate … Everything was caked in dust. Most buildings were flattened or at least severely damaged. Invading armies had passed this way twice during the last five years, and the glorious polychrome of the gate was for the time being covered in dust and ashes like everything else. The Bishop's house was a pretty though Spartan place in the garden of the half-built cathedral of pale grey granite.

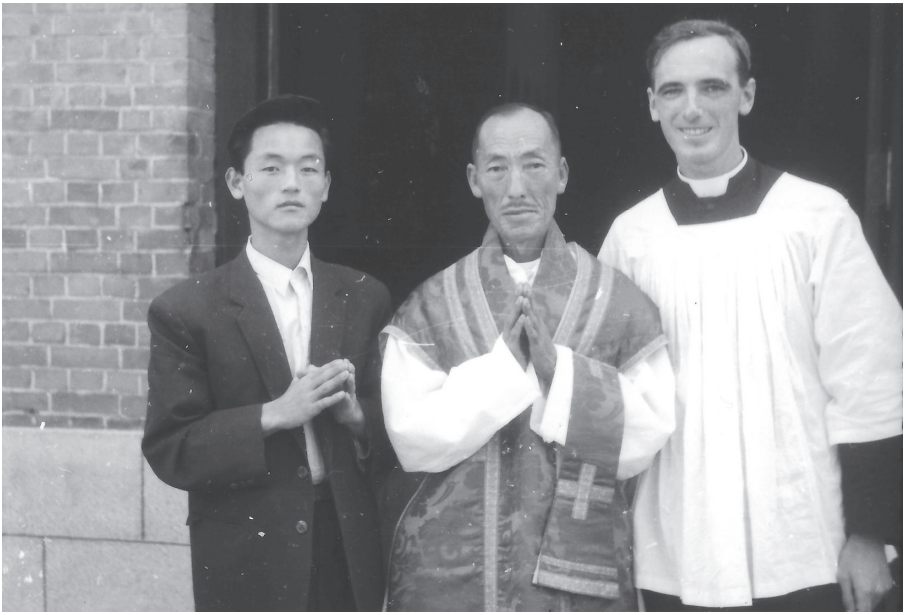
We expected to live here for the next two years, studying the Korean language. Everyone agreed that it was very difficult to learn. It was virtually impossible to learn it outside Korea, except at one or two places in the United States of America. Yet it was by no means a minority language. By 1992 only 12 languages were spoken by a larger number. It was traditionally taught by senior missionaries and native pundits. In 1954, however, there were enough new missionaries arriving from the USA to encourage the American Methodist Charles Sauer to open a language school. It worked five afternoons a week in the old Methodist high school. Sauer's method made good sense in terms of Korean language structure, though it depended heavily

Parish priest, c.1957

on the experience and imagination of the teachers. Many of these Koreans had no particular flair for teaching, let alone teaching adults. Some of them found it hard to understand why the title of 'Teacher' did not automatically elicit an attitude of Confucian self-abasement in all the students, who were thought of as 'disciples', bound to venerate all instructors. We saw some tense situations, as we did with American women who were linguistically more gifted than their husbands in the last non-feminist generations.

Anjung

The older generations believed that a man should always write in Chinese. That meant real Chinese: the peculiarity of Chinese written by Koreans lay in the way they read it aloud, which was based on the pronunciation of the words at the time they adopted it for use in Korea, and unintelligible to any Chinese. Missionaries generally paid little attention to Chinese. Thus they could rarely read a newspaper and were excluded from a large part of Korean culture – yet no one could claim that not reading Chinese seriously impeded their evangelistic work. I had some half-remembered Chinese script from my days with Japanese in the Navy. I therefore



Richard with Elijah Yi Yŏngjik (centre)

enjoyed my encounters with the Chinese script wherever I met it, but I had trouble in finding a grammar book.

When I arrived in Anjung village, I was delighted to discover that my senior catechist was a traditional teacher of Chinese: Yi Yŏngjik, Elijah. His advice on Chinese grammar was simple: 'It dawns on you as you go along.' He was right. One might call the process 'natural language-learning', since it is the way a child learns its mother-tongue. Rummaging in the bookshops, however, I discovered three pocket-sized booklets called *Chungdŭng hanmun tokpon (Chasupsŏ)* 'Middle School Standard Literary Chinese Textbook – for private study'. I intended to use it during my frequent country bus journeys, [but] for a foreigner to be seen reading a book with that title would have been an unfailing invitation for fellow passengers to start conversations of exhausting length about eccentric behaviour. So I stuck the three little books together and retitled them *Hwamun-gam* 'Mirror of Flowering Literature'. No one in a country bus would thrust themselves on a man of any age or race who read things like that, especially in a rackety country bus. I have never seen another copy. I became very fond of the little book, and cherish it still. It ranks in my affections on a shelf by I Ho's little textbook on *sijo*. It might be described as an almost bookless way of language learning …

I took up *sijo* simply to find out what it was. Koreans were more likely to know

one or two by heart than they were to say what it was or how to write it. No westerner I met had ever heard of such a thing. *Sijo* lyrics are written in Korean language and script. Again I had good fortune in discovering a pocket-sized book. Those immediately post-war books were little more than apologies for printing, but this little paper-covered volume with its smoke-ripened pages has a place on my shelves for ever: *Kogŭ myŏng sijo chŏnghae* 'Famous Sijo, Ancient and Modern Explained', by I Hou and Yun Kyehyŏn (1954). It was intended to help students prepare for middle, high and university education. I Hou was a distinguished poet himself. The following three *sijo* are in the form I gave them during the first winter at Anjung. They illustrate typical moods and content.

Pallid moon and pear blossom,
Midnight and the Milky Way –
Even the cuckoo
Tells my heart the news of spring.
This feeling is like a sickness:
It prevents me from sleeping.

The morning is cold and frosty,
Yet yellow chrysanthemums
Overflow their golden bowl!
And bring spring to the Jade Hall.
Do not dream of peach and plum blossoms
But consider the King's will.

I gave my coat to the boy
In the wine shop and pawned it.
Now I look up at the sky,
I address the moon, and say:
'Well and now, what about Li Po
What would he do in my case?'

No one knows how many *sijo* exist. Most of them are anonymous, even those that are traditionally attributed to famous personages. A large number of them are written by women, chiefly professional singers, for this form of verse is lyric in the strictest sense: it was written to be sung to formal melodies. These three examples hold typical thoughts and feelings. Beauty goes hand in hand with sorrow; life centres on rustic simplicity or politics and palaces; aesthetic ideas derive from China; singing goes with wine; everyone reveres the name of Li Po, in whom wine and song are eternally united. The English on first meeting *sijo* often want to compare it with the Japanese *haiku*; but this would be a great mistake. The two forms are fundamentally different. The *sijo* is at least three times longer, and its very soul is of another order. Peter Lee once said, 'The soul of *haiku* is wit, the soul of *sijo* is sensibility.' What is not said in

the *sijo* has a function similar to that of the white spaces in Chinese brush-painting. Like a perfect poem of the Tang period, the implied question, the adumbrated shadow, the hoped-for promise, the lingering doubt or pleasure, the suppressed excitement – such are what makes *sijo* live.

I became very conscious that few westerners who were interested in the subject had my good fortune in being able to study Chinese literature in the way that Koreans used to learn it. I made copious notes on all I could remember after a ten-mile walk that had also been an extended seminar with Elijah on literary Chinese. I noticed also that in such articles as began to come my way there was a distinct tendency to underrate the ability of Koreans in Chinese poetry, and I doubted whether any one else was likely to record how 'the grammar dawned'. At the same time I realised that the English gentleman's delight in crossword puzzles had its Korean counterpart. My village friends were constantly writing poetry, not the vaguely reflective writing that passes for writing poetry in Britain today, but a real craft demanding great skill and practice …

Then there was another aspect of Korean poetry that nearly all Koreans knew about, but no westerner: Kim Sakkat, 'Straw Hat Kim' (1807–63) … It was easy to see why he was not widely known. The greater part of the work attributed to him depended for its effect on playing with words, especially on puns in which one sense was expressed in Korean and another when the same text was read as literary Chinese. Here is a very ordinary example of Tang-style regulated verse in literary Chinese:

> The heavens are wide; you will never embrace them;
> The flowers fall and no butterfly comes.
> The chrysanthemum blooms in the cold sand
> Its bare stalk's shadows lie half over the earth.
> A passing scholar at the riverside arbour
> Falls drunk and asleep beneath the pine-trees.
> The moving moon changes the mountain shadows,
> A merchant returns, but only for gain.

The same verse, read in the same way, but understood as vernacular Korean, means:

> There are spiders' webs on the ceiling,
> The smell of bran burning on the stove.
> Here's a bowl of noodles
> And half a dish of soy sauce.
> Here are cakes,
> Jujubes and a peach.
> Get away, filthy hound. How that privy stinks!

Much of Kim Sakkat is so trivial or disgusting it does not merit much attention.

Much of it, I suspect, is folk humour from the village school: yet one cannot know how much humour there is in Korea if one has no idea of the verses of Kim Sakkat.

I was much interested in literary technique, because very little had been written about it in English. Such accounts as I could find tended to be discouraging. I came across an essay that claimed that no Korean ever expected to write top class poetry and criticism was unknown. Nothing could be easier to find than that there had been hundreds of competent poets and a very few good ones. Literary criticism makes poor reading in Korea, not least because the traditional form for criticism is the anecdote, of which there are vast numbers. I selected fifty examples. To modern Europeans, the form of some of the stories is desperately understated, but others are astringent. The first of this group begins:

> On a donkey's back I drowse gently in spring,
> Passing through the green hills in a dream.
> When I come to I find the rain has stopped
> And the brooks are babbling a new song.

I have no idea who wrote this quatrain, but it has been highly praised. I disapprove, because if the brooks were babbling after the rain, the rains must have been heavy, and not at all the weather for dreaming on a donkey.

Most missionaries made little effort to learn Chinese. I have been hugely grateful for the amount of Chinese script I was able to learn; but I must stress my limitations. I can read little contemporary Chinese, for as one Chinese visitor said – over-stressing his point – Korean newspaper headlines are in the Chinese that Confucius himself would have written.

Language-learning needs to be backed by some instruction on how to communicate, though this was rarely given. During my second summer in Korea I went with the famous Carl Miller, adviser to the Bank of Korea, and his young friend called Kim Yŏng'yŏp (an unusual name, though with the usual prayer implied, for it means 'unending flash of lightning') for a five-day car journey in the Great White Mountains of central and eastern Korea, a journey that seems in memory to have consisted of a series of exercises in how to get Carl's bulky white saloon car across rivers at points where the bridge had not been repaired since the last retreating army crossed it. We had maps, but our map-reading often had to be checked by local residents. We would draw the car up by a group of men chatting at the roadside and Carl, whose Korean was fluent, would ask, 'Is this such-and-such a village?' He rarely received an answer; but if Yŏng'yŏp asked the question, the answer was prompt. This was not due to any fault in Carl's pronunciation: we discovered that when we noticed that Yŏng'yŏp never opened the question directly, but instinctively began with a piece of conversational ballast, such as 'Good morning. What a lovely day!' He received a grunt in reply which served to indicate that a connection had been established

Richard visiting a Buddhist temple

and messages were now being received. Unexpected and unfamiliar communications need this sort of 'call-sign'. Expressing the question too soon gave the hearer no chance to tune in to an unfamiliar voice and unforeseen subject matter. By inserting the familiar and neutral 'call-sign' before asking the question, Carl and I too could nearly always get prompt answers.

A similar situation about the hazards of initiating conversation was more complicated. Early in my first spring in Seoul, I visited a department store. There were but two in the city, depressing places with broken and shabby furnishing and almost nothing to sell. On one woebegone glass counter I observed bars of toilet soap neatly stacked in two piles, apparently identical, but one pile marked with a very much higher price than the other. Practising Korea for all I was worth, I asked the salesgirl why the two products, apparently the same, had such different prices. She immediately signalled to her supervisor and said (in Korean), 'I have a foreigner here. Please come and help.' The supervisor replied, 'I know; but he is talking Korean.' The salesgirl looked back at me, made a visible effort of aural memory and said, 'This pile is the genuine American article and the other is a Korean imitation.' People often cannot understand what they do not expect to hear.

I was glad to learn this lesson so soon after arriving in Korea – but I soon realised that I constantly use these 'call-signs' when speaking English in England, and I expect their use is part of all today's language teaching.

Anjung was an unprepossessing village, a sprawling mass of greyish-thatched clay tiled houses draped over a hill among the paddies on the west coast, perhaps ten miles from the county town of P'yŏngt'aek. The sea was four or five miles in the other direction, but there was no landing on the north side of the gulf: the fishermen and the ferries boarded the southern side. Less than a century ago there had been nothing here but a wine shop at a country crossroads where the road from P'yŏngt'aek resolved itself into the web of tracks to the hamlets. The Japanese authorities had built a little police station, a post office, a tiny bank (which dealt in rice and fertilisers as well as in money) and a huge wooden primary school. The Anglican mission had recently added the church of the Holy Spirit, which looked very much like the houses, but bigger.

Arrived on St Luke's day, at the end of harvest I was ready to explore, but simply could not escape alone. Someone would see me wandering away from the built-up area, and before I realised it one or two adults or a bevy of children would appear at my side, quite prepared to follow however far I might go. I found this very tiresome. Conversation tended to be a grilling about England. Was England really always in a thick fog? Are all Englishmen gentlemen? None of them found anything of interest in the Korean countryside. And I found it fatiguing, because my Korean lacked resources and I soon got tired of the effort.

One day, at last, I escaped. I got out of sight without my escape being noticed, and followed a path I had taken when visiting the sick with the catechist. It was early summer and the rice had just been transplanted. I enjoyed my walk and the abundant birdsong in the thin pine woods. No one had forewarned me that this was shockingly bad etiquette as well as a bold risk to take. Manners demand not only that some people should be taken care of, but also that these same well submit to being taken care of; and it must always be remembered that drinking is not mere imbibition – it has its orders and its proportions. As soon as I had entered one of the houses and been installed cross-legged over the warmest part of the hypocaust, a huge silvery kettle full of milky rice-beer was brought in with bowls of stoneware and stainless steel. When I declined a second bowlful, I realised I had done wrong. My behaviour was impossible and no one knew what to do. Somebody whispered to me that a guest cannot drink less than three bowls-full. I had then to wait while a chicken was caught, killed and cooked. And of course, I could not leave the village without visiting three houses.

When I eventually set off for Anjung, I was by no means sure I would get there. Apart from anything else, the paddies were full of water and the baulks between them were less than a foot wide. I think I was actually walking in my sleep at times; but as I slumped through the door the sun was going down and I slept until sunrise. I had learned my moral lessons very well. No Korean would find anything blameworthy, except that I had gone out alone. I grew very fond of both the landscape and the people.

Mudung-San

It was raining steadily. The men and women working in the fields were wet and cold, some of them in olive-coloured oilskins, some of them in the ancient rain cape made of straw, just getting soaked; but they did not look unhappy. The rain [did] not [seem] so much to fall as to permeate the world of bright green paddies and blue mountains floating in inexpressible mist. This was the warm rain that Koreans call 'sweet rain', a rain long desired.

Farther up the valley, among the woods and rocks, there was no longer any landscape to see. The thick trees merged into the mist that hid the sky. Bamboo, gingko, maple, paulownias, and the lovely lime-green stems of the phoenix trees showed that this was no uncared-for forest. The smell of rain, the tumbling roaring sound of the streams, raindrops pattering on the umbrella, mist in the lungs, were all one in the luminous cloud through which I walked. Picking my way through several streams, I found the water warm but urgent. Finally crossing some stepping stones in a torrent, I walked along a narrow path, among the dripping shrubs to the cottage I was seeking.

One of the commonest drawings on fans that year was inscribed 'A Friend Comes to the Mountains in Summer'. I was not yet a friend, but the conventional picture was coming alive. Inside the little house a rubicund old gentleman in the very lightest of summer clothing was sitting by the window, with paper and water-dishes and writing-brushes ranged all about him painting a landscape in the old oriental style. Behind him, on a lower level, squatted a youth in denims, busily copying one of his master's works – and doing it very well.

The one or two pieces of very old furniture included a tiny reading desk with a drawer, fully twelve inches wide, just the size for bearing one book. A single piece of calligraphy hung on the wall. A stuffed pheasant stood on a fantastic little carved table and there were a few pieces of blue-white porcelain, all evidently in use. And teacups. There was a frieze of tightly packed calligraphy. One section of the room was inscribed with the complete text of the Confucian *Daxue* 'Great Learning', and the other with the Daoist *Daodejing*. The paper on which the old gentleman was painting was kept still and flat by two small bars of dark jade. The pupil's papers were weighted with smooth pebbles from the stream. They both occasionally shifted their paperweights as they moved the paper in the course of painting. Birds were singing outside the window, and the host moved the paper shutters so that from where I sat I could better enjoy a view of the rain on the bamboos.

The pupil fetched water from the spring and boiled it up in an iron kettle, then made … tea in a pot with a bamboo handle. It was good tea. Nowadays the 'tea ceremony', which is quite unlike the Japanese one, is offered at various times as a simple sacrifice, but without real tea. When brides offered tea the symbolism was

clear. Tea possesses all the 'Five Tastes': sour, bitter, peppery, sweet and salt, and signified that the bride would stick with her new family through good and ill of all kinds. The tea plant is almost impossible to transplant, because of the shape of its delicate roots, which made tea a symbol of stability.

[The old man was a tea-grower.] We drank tea steadily, in cheap modern cups. We talked of tea. I mentioned the 'Ode to Tea' by Liu Dong of Tang, and the pupil was bidden to fetch the Korean *Komun-jinbo*, a favourite Korean anthology of Chinese literature, so that we could enjoy the ode accurately. It describes the effect of tea-drinking. One bowl moistens the lips, another banishes loneliness; a third reaches the vitals with ineffable fragrance and a fourth produces a light sweat that improves health and induces peace of mind. A fifth purifies the marrow and a sixth puts man in touch with the eternal. The seventh is more than a man would dare drink, or a clean wind will take him up and bear him away to the realm of bliss. As we talked we certainly drank at least seven cups of tea, but the poet specified bowls, which would have been bigger.

The pupil had two hard yellow plums beside his brushes, the fruit of the plum-blossom tree. He had them there for their fragrance. The old painter began talking of their medicinal value: treated with salt they become 'frosted plums' and are useful for a variety of troubles from mastitis to a loose stomach. Soon some plums were brought in little glass dishes. They had been cut up and marinated in sugar. They had a sharp, slightly citrous flavour, and were served as a fitting accompaniment for green tea. When lunch appeared [my host] apologised that the food was simple mountain weeds, the fare of Korean poets. The plum blossom fruit was there again, but its colour was now carmine and the taste bitter and salty. The beefsteak plant was there, and several other herbs, with delicious rice.

After lunch tea was made again, but this time it was from a tiny old tin and served in even smaller cups: the precious pluckings of the year's first buds. It is as different from the ordinary run of good green tea as a good Chablis is from *blanc ordinaire*. It is easier to appreciate the lyricism of Liu Dong when drinking such a fragrant infusion. It has all the frugality of perfect taste, none of the vulgarity of the jasmine petals that are used to camouflage the poorer teas.

Soon guests arrived, most of them kowtowing deeply, because our host was seventy-five years old. Some were on business about the little agricultural school that he ran for a few boys just across the stream. Others had come to collect fans he had painted for them. The pupil was deputed to put seals on the pictures. The boy chose them with care out of a cardboard box which had once held a watch, and pressed them with infinite reverence on the proper places near the inscriptions on the paintings. The artist added Chinese poems to his paintings. On a drawing of bamboo in rain he wrote:

> Whispering bamboo in July gives rise to thoughts of autumn;
> But this is no sound of breezes; this is the sound of rain.

All was modest, even poor; but gracious: old age concerned for vigorous youth, in a corner of Korea where men can still sit still.

On the way home I sat down at a wine-shack where a very young taxi driver and two of his friends were warming up milky rice beer after bathing in a hill stream. They were in holiday mood in spite of the rain, and delighted to talk with a foreigner. As we walked towards the town, they chatted and joked without pause until one of them thought to ask my age. The answer was lower than expected, and after a momentary pause the taxi-driver said, 'Hi! Lower the language, boys!' They were using grammar too polite for my age. His friendliness was as heart-warming as the welcome I had received from the old painter. He may not have appreciated the finer points of painting on fans, he may have preferred rice-beer to tea; but the same courtesy was in his bones.

The Royal Asiatic Society Korea Branch

During my first few months in Anjung, poetry was not the only aspect of Korean culture with which I began to grapple. One detail of history that constantly forced itself upon one was a popular symbol of the national spirit, the ancient Korean Flower Boys of Silla. Oddly enough, Arthur Waley had mentioned them not only in his translation of the *Book of Songs*, but also when writing about some Romanian folk dancers at the London International Folk Dance Festival of 1935. This unexpected reference was as irresistible as the current significance of *hwarang* in Korea was important.

Waley obviously thought this mysterious institution was religious, but 20th-century Koreans thought it was military. Korea was still smarting from its experience under Japanese colonial rule and was often tempted to find in Korean history nobler things than the Japanese, who were militaristic above all else, had boasted about from their history. *Hwarang*, literally 'flower youth' or 'flowery youth' or 'flower of youth' or 'flower youths', clearly had educational and ethical, perhaps also religious purposes. Yet the emphasis regularly claimed in films and inspirational speeches to the young was heavily militaristic. Furthermore, in the 1950s *hwarang* was still a word for the old-fashioned wandering troupes of folk-dancers and acrobats, some of whom I had met and talked to in the village. When I discovered that the total written historical evidence on the subject barely filled half a dozen pages of Chinese, I set about a serious study, and gave the Royal Asiatic Society a paper that was printed in the *Transactions* for 1961. My conclusions were disappointing. We know almost

nothing reliable about what the *hwarang* were or did. There is no evidence they were a militaristic organisation.

The Royal Asiatic Society was founded in London in 1823, to study the culture, history and languages of India. Similar societies were established for Britons in other Asian countries, notably Japan, Siam, Hong Kong and North China. They used the name Royal Asiatic Society, but appear to have [had] little further connection with the London body. The Royal Asiatic Society Korea [*sic*] Branch was founded in 1910 by a group of missionaries and other foreigners in Seoul. The majority of its members have always been American, and it soon became an important element in the life of foreign residents in Seoul. During the Japanese colonial period (1910–45), as the only body [in] the Japanese Empire dedicated wholly to Korean studies, it had a praiseworthy place in the history of Korean studies. … This 'Korea Branch' ceased to exist during World War Two and again during the Korean conflict of 1950, but was revived when the diplomatic missions returned to Seoul after the truce at Panmunjŏm in 1953.

Only three members of the Society's Council had returned to Seoul by the end of 1954: Professor Paek Nakchŏn (George Paik); the American Presbyterian missionary Horace G. Underwood; and the American cultural representative, Marcus W. Scherbacher. The records declare that these three asked Dougald Malcolm, Chargé d'Affaires at the British Legation, to restart the Branch. Dougald was a connoisseur of ceramics whose father had first visited Peking by walking there from India, and it was in fact Dougald's enthusiasm that spurred the three councillors into action. The Society was formally re-launched in the British Legation on the very cold evening of 23 February 1956. It was Dougald's enthusiasm that fuelled the occasion.

A programme of monthly lectures was soon set up, and other less grave events were developed. This amalgam of evening visits to distinguished Korean restaurants, weekend journeys to famous scenery, visits to exhibitions and historic sites and the like was dreamed up and carried out by Carl Ferris Miller. Nobody knew exactly what Carl did in Korea. He was a 33-year-old American bachelor who was always described as 'an adviser to the Bank of Korea'. He had winning ways and a wide knowledge of Korean matters. I got to know him during my second summer. At the beginning of June 1956 he invited me to join him and a Korean student named Kim Yŏng'yŏp in a four-day drive through the Great White Mountains of central Korea to the east coast province of Kangwŏn, staying in inns and hotels that had not yet recovered from the war. Starting at Hoengju and P'yŏngch'ang, we found our way through the heavily wooded mountains to the provincial capital at Kangnŭng. We saw the famous 'miles of crimson roses blooming on the waterline of ten leagues of white sand', and heard the roaring propaganda of the communists blared through the loudspeakers in the empty darkness of a rural curfew. The monsoon was merciful that year …

Spontaneity and informality were the hallmarks of Carl's RAS 'tourism' programme, at times with comic effect, as when the local press in one mountain area, believing – as many do – that all a translator needs is a bi-lingual dictionary and a dash of courage, published a picture of an RAS group in extremely informal clothing with an inscription saying 'Welcome to the British Royal Family'. Or there was the time when Carl promised we should be going through a corkscrew tunnel that bored through 360 degrees in the core of the mountain, five or six miles south-west of Wŏnju on the T'aebaek Line. When he announced that we were about to enter [it], someone remarked that passengers inside the tunnel would have no impression of the corkscrew. Carl stopped the train at once and invited those interested to step out on to the rocks and wild flowers. It was evening and chilly, the sun had touched the high horizon and people were sipping aperitifs. We slithered down the mountain while the train gave a melancholy hoot and disappeared into the tunnel. Clutching cocktail glasses and tugging at our cardigans, we tottered further down the mountainside and found the other entrance to the tunnel. The driver sounded his mournful hoot before he reappeared on the surface, apparently moving on a course diametrically opposite to that on which he had gone into the mountain. We clambered aboard the train again and resumed our supper.

But Korean railway travel also had a darker side. There was for instance the strange hazard of country children lobbing small rocks at passing trains. The trains normally travelled very slowly, children could get close to the track – indeed often endangered themselves, despite those melancholy sirens that saluted every level crossing and every bend. The sudden explosion of the big window by one's elbow was a seriously disturbing experience for any passenger, often causing injury and sometimes death. I recall an afternoon when I was depressed and bored by the all-day crawl from Pusan to Seoul. As the train crawled slowly round a bend, my eyes met those of an emaciated boy aged ten or so, just as he hove a six-inch rock, apparently straight at me. The window was shattered. I was unhurt. The train crew did their best with the alarmed passengers, the dust and the rock. No one was hurt, but there was a strong sense of death's nearness, and the carriage had not settled down again before we reached Seoul an hour or two later. For the staff the whole incident was routine.

School Teaching

When I returned from furlough in spring 1959, the bishop told me to stay in Seoul and build a students' centre near the National University main campus. Until the building was finished I could do my priestly work better by helping out there as needed and do what I could to understand the city better. I was open to invitations and by no means reluctant when the gentle and genial Mr An Hosam invited me to teach English in his high school. There was great demand for English teaching and many missionaries

did it, I believe to good effect, though it was not notably fruitful as a means of mass evangelism.

Educated Koreans had much the same sense of loyalty to their high school as Oxford or Cambridge graduates then had to their colleges, though Korea had no traditional grey stone for the education of [its] elite. The buildings of all Seoul high schools were barracks of red brick. All were day schools. Country boys who attended them had to arrange their own lodgings. Girls' high schools were separate.

Mr An was headmaster of Hwimun School. Its dusty, shabby brickwork belied its pride. It was one of the oldest schools in the land, having been founded by Min Yŏnghwi, a member of the Queen's own clan, as one of the first couple of modern schools founded after American Protestant missionaries had introduced the idea at the end of the 19th century. It had always been proudly Korean, and was governed by a Korean head throughout the Japanese colonial period. The name Hwimun, 'Brilliant Letters', had been given by King Kojong after a character in the personal name of the founder. By a bizarre coincidence I had celebrated an Anglican Mass there within a month of my arrival in the city within a month of my arrival in Korea in 1954, because the British soldiers remaining in the city after the 1953 truce were still camped in the school buildings, of which one was temporarily called 'St Christopher's Church'. Hence I was familiar with the school's setting in the former royal park-and-palace lands at the north of the city, with their fine views of the surrounding mountains.

When I stepped for the first time on to the teacher's dais, to face a class of some eighty 16-to-18-year-olds and teach them English conversation, I should have been daunted, had not Mr An made it clear he did not expect them to learn much beyond becoming accustomed to the sound of an English voice saying something of interest to them. It was, of course, up to me to discover what the subject matter ought to be. I did this weekly during term time for the next four to five years.

An early subject for discussion – for we naturally paid attention to school life – was nicknames. I was pleased to learn that in Korea, as in England, nicknames were sublimely unoriginal: Lanky, Porky, Swot and the like, with an occasional film star's name to mock a boy who thought himself handsome, or a foreign name (because what is foreign is usually ridiculous), or even the mild bullying of 'Miss Kim' for the slight of build or mild of disposition. Some surnames carried automatic nicknames, as in English Clark becomes Nobby, Martin becomes Pincher, and Miller turns into Dusty. So in Korean Kim was called Tokkaebi (goblin), Pak was Pagaji (a gourd for dipping into water), Ch'oe got Twaeji (Piggy) and Chŏng got Tang-nagwi ('Donkey') because the Chinese character includes two strokes like long ears; Yi was Salkwaengi ('wildcat') because the Chinese character was pronounced Yi, and An was Mudang ('witch'), because the Chinese character contained elements for 'lid' and 'woman', and the witch was the only woman who ever wore a hat. These nicknames were, however, never used as forms of address.

Slang was necessary for mentioning one's family, which would otherwise be embarrassing. Father was usually 'the Foreign Minister' and Mother 'the Home Minister', formalising the normal conversational usage whereby a man referred to his wife as *ansaram* ('the one indoors'), and a woman referred to her husband as *pakkan-yangban* ('the outside master'). At one point it was common to use for one's parents the prefixes for distinguishing the sex of animals: *sut-* for males and *amh-* for females, as in *suttalk* and *amt'alk* for 'cock' and 'hen', though boys disliked girls using such language.

Classroom conversation had its own cant. The approach of a teacher was signalled by 'He's on the wing' (*nalla wa*), while *saeja* ('Let's leak out') was an invitation to truancy or strategic withdrawal. 'Get out of the way!' or 'Break it up!' was expressed by *kkŭja* ('Extinguish yourselves!'), which may have had something to do with extinguishing *kkot* 'flowers' (cigarettes) which were otherwise known as *ch'il sench'i* ('seven centimetres'). They were much 'sucked' by *kultugi* ('chimneys') using *changjak* 'firewood' to 'light up'. The money needed to buy these things was called *bai*, in denominations of *bai*, *kohakpai* and *sembai* (100, 500 and 1,000 hwan in bastard Japanese). The boys rather touchingly believed that the practice was unsuspected and that they were already addicted to tobacco for life. (It is extraordinary how the generations fail to instruct one another in such matters.)

Boys are naturally cynical and well supplied with synonyms for untruthfulness. The semi-English word *show-hada* was perhaps less common than *konggal* 'blackmail', even when there was no question of any threat. Cheating in examinations was called *k'anning* (the English word 'cunning'), but if insults were exchanged too freely someone was liable to 'steam' *kim naeda*. Silly puns gave great satisfaction. The Korean for coffee was *k'ŏp'i*, but it was customarily called *k'op'i* with a long round *o* vowel, and extensions of that joke could show more revolting aspects of the adolescent mind.

Nothing, of course, was more fascinating to them than the opposite sex, commonly known as *kkaltchi* (adapted from English 'girls'). Several Seoul schools were so built that communication with a girls' school was possible by flashing a mirror from a classroom window. Of the vocabulary connected with this and kindred games, the pleasantest was *abek*, from the French *avec*, meaning 'walking as a pair'.

And where in the world are young males not interested in their clothes? The peacock complex is deeply rooted. There came a time, usually towards the end of a high school career, when having a well battered cap was a point of honour. As for the hair, before the military government in 1960 turned all schoolboys back into miniature monks (as the Japanese military government had done) by compelling them to have their heads shaved, there had been fashions in boys' hairstyles. A huge bag once had its day. So also with shoes. When I first went to Hwimun in 1959, if a boy had *wok'ŏs* (English 'walkers' for low shoes), the winkle-picker shape was preferred.

A few years earlier a hump over the big toes was in vogue; but those were the days when trousers were cut wide at the bottom. *Nap'al paji*, 'trumpet trousers', they were called. And they survived in the provinces for a season or two after metropolitan fashion had switched to drainpipes, known as *mambo* (Korean slang for 'trendy') trousers. Trumpet trousers were frowned upon by authority, because they smacked of wild living, but they could still be seen on polite and well-behaved boys in Suwŏn as late as 1960, two seasons after they were unwearable in Seoul. The peaked cap, called *ttukkong* ('lid') was worn with the front pinched at the top, in Nazi style; but in 1962 the peak was exaggeratedly large – again with the more extravagant examples to be seen later in the provinces.

For the height of sophistication a group of 1960s boys would repair to a slightly raffish tea-room, each of them sitting with both elbows on the table, nonchalantly waving a large bun on the prongs of a small fork. This was a dashing pose for furtively watching waitresses. The shabby black uniform with its tunic buttoned to the throat gained just enough smartness from the slip of white plastic in the neck and the white name-tag on the left chest. Leisure clothes could be worn only at home.