Rediscovering Hallasan: Jeju Island’s Traditional Landscapes of Sincerity, Mysticism and Adventure

David J. Nemeth Ph. D.
*The University of Toledo, david.nemeth@utoledo.edu*

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Rediscovering Hallasan

Jeju Island’s Traditional Landscapes of Sincerity, Mysticism and Adventure

by

David J. Nemeth
Department of Geography and Planning
University of Toledo
Toledo, Ohio

September 2008
(revised July 2012)
Table of Contents

Author’s Preface

Part One: Mysticism

1. The Halls of Light on Jeju Island
2. Graven Images and Cosmic Landscape on Jeju Island
3. An Island of the Blest and Its Fungus of Immortality

Part Two: Sincerity

1. The Lifting-Stones of Jeju Island
2. Jeju Island's Pigsty-Privies: The Architecture of Sincerity
3. The Walking Tractor: Trojan Horse in the Jeju Island Landscape

Part Three: Adventure

1. Notes on Some Early Western Travelers on Jeju Island
2. Siegfried Genthe's Jeju Odyssey
Author’s Preface

On August 2, 2006, the International Small Islands Studies Association (ISISA) Executive Committee confirmed that in the summer of 2008 (August 26-28, 2008) a conference of scholars, experts and activists who study issues and problems concerning small islands would convene on Jeju Island, South Korea.

The conference title, reflecting its themes, was “The 2008 Islands of the World X: Globalizing Islands; Sustainable Culture, Peace, and Resources.” Organizers of the conference anticipated there would be 600 delegates attending, including 200 participants.

In 2007 I contacted representatives of the organizing committee and prominent cosponsors on the Island (Dr. Ko Changhoon and Dr. Kwon Sangcheol from Jeju National University) with a proposal to produce a participant’s guidebook tentatively titled “Rediscovering Hallasan, Jeju Island’s Traditional Landscapes of Sincerity, Mysticism and Adventure: A Special Publication to Celebrate the 2008 Islands of the World X (ISISA) Conference.” This work would be a compilation of several of my revised and updated prior publications about Jeju Island’s traditional culture and history, with emphasis on the changing cultural landscape. I suggested that the conference organizers publish both online and hardcopy versions, with the online version to appear on the ISISA website beginning several months prior to the conference.

My proposal was accepted. I prepared this document and sent the electronic files to Dr Ko Changhoon in the Fall of 2007. The manuscript was uploaded onto the ISISA website as a link to a remote server in the late Spring of 2008, where it served its purposes prior to and during the conference and remained accessible until late 2008, at which time it disappeared from the Internet. The hardcopy was never published.

Since the link to my “participants’ guidebook” was no longer accessible or retrievable online after December, 2008, I have reconstituted my original files as a new document and intend to render the 2008 manuscript again online as a public service, retaining the title Rediscovering Hallasan: Jeju Island’s Traditional Landscapes of Sincerity, Mysticism and Adventure.

David J. Nemeth, July 2012
Part One: Mysticism

1. The Halls of Light on Jeju Island
2. Graven Images and Cosmic Landscape on Jeju Island
3. An Island of the Blest and Its Fungus of Immortality
Part One, Chapter One
The Halls of Light on Jeju Island

(This essay is a revised and updated version of David Nemeth’s "Bright Yard Maps from Cheju Island." Landscape 25, 2 [1981], 20-21).

A most satisfying discussion of mystical Hallasan likely begins and ends with coming to terms with the meanings of local manifestations of p’ungsu (feng-shui) cosmology. This discussion could include – perhaps begin with – “stone grandfathers” (see next chapter) ... but then, further discussion could range far and wide before wrapping up loose ends and finding discussants back where they started. Circumambulating the Hallasan’s oval landscape is a challenging and rewarding experience. No visitor can really “discover” Hallasan without getting off the bus at a remote station and wandering off on little-traveled reticulated paths in search of the past.

It is not easy for Western tourists, or ever Korean mainlanders (any more) to visualize Hallasan, as tradition-bound locals do, as a “conduit for heaven’s breath.” Upbringing in scientific societies almost universally fosters the agreement among visitors to the island that erstwhile Hallasan is a dormant, perhaps dead, volcano. However, Hallasan from its local p’ungsu perspective is hardly dead, but remains forever alive with possibilities.

This chapter makes no attempt to teach the intricacies of a profound p’umgsu cosmology and its tightly-wound bundle of exotic theories and practices. It merely introduces an interesting cultural artifact, hardly noticed, that is the outcome of these practices -- the Cheju Island p’ungsu map.

Many of these antique maps are centuries old. They are among the dearest heirlooms of not a few indigenous Cheju families. However, a tourist willing to wander off the beaten path can obtain and use copies of these maps in an attempt to revisit the same places where they were created, and there at the scene to attempt to begin to put themselves into the mind-sets of the maps’ creators, the p’ungsu surveyors. I provide some here, in the interests of promoting an enlightening “cosmic” tourism on Hallasan.

This chapter is embellished with a few copies of antique maps of Hallasan’s mystical p’ungsu terrain. I pair a few of these maps with aerial photographs of what I have discovered to be the very landforms as depicted in these maps, harboring p’ungsu sites originally surveyed long ago. Equipped with these any modern visitor to Hallasan can seek out the old p’ungsu sites as an exotic exercise in seeing the world in an alternative way – the old p’ungsu way.
Map One:  
“Landscape of a Rhinoceros. 
Here, Heaven and the pole star guarantee wealth, mobility, fortune, and prosperity. This fulfilling prophecy will reveal itself in time. 
The head points northeast.” 
Translation by Kim Ji-hong.

Rockbound and windswept Cheju Island is the least Korean of all parts of Korea, but both mainlanders and islanders believe that the breath of heaven flows down to earth through mountains, and eddies in hidden places. These favored spots where astral forces gather are in each instance called myong dang chari, roughly translated here as “Hall of Light” (Soothill, 1951) or “Bright Yard.” Think of them as “propitious locations” or -- in the vernacular -- as “sweet spots.”  

When human residences are expertly aligned to coincide with “sweet spots” auspiciousness flows and wonderful things can happen to their occupants (as the legend to Map One elaborates). The term “residence” here I broadly construe to mean “dwellings” of the living (for example, homes in all their manifestations) and the dead (tombs). Map One even makes reference to the directional axis of the head of the deceased when positioned within the tomb dwelling.

On these maps the propitious place is typically represented by a circle, or circles, at or near the center of the map. The maps were drawn by the earth doctor while he stood upon the node of the converging force field. From that perspicacious position, represented by that the circle on the map and symbolizing a mystical wellhead called hyol (meaning “cave”), the map-maker captures in ink the inspirational images of the forces at play inspired there. Some of the forces are indeed playful, as depicted on some of the maps. More objectively speaking, the map represents visible terrain around the hyol customarily rendered by the cartographer into categories of symbolic shapes (for example: fire, metal, water, wood, earth).  

An ideal site and surrounding terrain configuration that meets all the myriad p’ungsu criteria to manifest perfection-on-earth forms this configuration about its hyol:
If it looks familiar, that is because it resembles the female private parts in the vicinity of the birth canal. The p’ungu rites aid in the “birth” of auspicious places. This peculiar pattern has given rise through analogy to a ribald “myongdang chadi” folklore now entrenched in the vernacular of Korean male culture, where it is believed that “anyone can discover myongdang chadi” and one doesn’t have to be a trained expert trekking the countryside to find it: Thus through pattern recognition the easy analogy is made between the ideal p’ungsu “sweet spot” and that portion of the female anatomy most men seek to discover; and the progress of their pursuit is frequently heard to this day when spoken or shouted in the wee hours of night during wine house orgies, almost anywhere up and down the Korean peninsula, and on Cheju Island.

When the area is charted and labeled by a specialist, it takes on a personality that influences the actions of villagers. The map of the “Landscape of the Resting Cow” (or U Do islet located off the east coast of Cheju Island) reminds people that the place, like the cow it suggests, should not be disturbed.
Residents of U Do islet in accommodation of their perceived “resting cow” may refrain from loud festivals, clear the area of snakes, and plant hay instead of rice. Just as heaven’s forces shape the earth, the bright yard map, once drafted, has the potential to modify the everyday lives of its users in surprising ways.

The following maps are selected from the family collections of Mr. K. H. Kim and Mr. H. K. Ko of Cheju Island. There seems to be a catalog of a hundred or so of similar maps in the hands of Cheju Island families, all copies of original maps attributed in legend to an infamous Chinese geomancer named Ho Chong-dan, who roamed the island on a nefarious mission for the Koryo peninsular government. This was between the years 1111 and 1115. The idea of the Koryo government on the peninsula was to sap the strength of unruly Cheju peoples by destroying their supply of Heaven’s Breath, supplied via Hallasan and distributed through its local dragons. Ho, confident in his p’ungsu abilities and so in the employ of the Korean king, set forth to do so.

He determined there were thirteen powerful dragons to be slain on Cheju Island, but did not know their exact courses through the vital landscape. His plan was to systematically survey the island by journeying out from Cheju Castel, traveling in a clockwise direction around Halla Mountain and eventually returning to Cheju Castle. At first he had much success; islanders say this explains why farming conditions on the eastern half of the island are inferior. However, along the south coast of the island Ho ran into trouble.

On the outskirts of Sohong Village, near Sogwip’o, he intended to locate and destroy yet another of these dragons. However, his plan was thwarted by a local peasant who was advised by an immortal of Hallasan that Ho was dangerous. The farmer directed Ho away from the precious vein. The geomancer Ho became so enraged by this deceit and his own failure to locate the dragon’s pulse that he tore up his geomancy manuscripts and they dispersed on the winds. Some maps were salvaged by the islanders and these became templates for copies repeatedly drawn by islanders through subsequent centuries. The islanders availed them to their own advantage. Some versions of the legend elaborate that Ho was shipwrecked and drowned on the way back to the peninsula by a tempest stirred up by the Mountain God.

**Example One -- Landscape of a Crouching Tiger Playing With Jade:**
Marginal notes accompanying the map:

“Landscape of a Crouching Dragon Playing with Jade,
Located at Great Paddy Field.
Descendants will rise to prominent positions for many years.
After 100 years a minister of general in the family is assured.
  Flags and flagstaffs rise high.
  Serrated rocks to the southeast.
Brave officers and a thousand soldiers cross the jade bridge.
  Gold bells lie hidden to the southwest.
A thousand soldier’ tents are pitched in three camps.
  Such a priceless palace!
Ten thousand stallions charge the Bright Hall.
  Venus rises at the water source.
Families of the wood element would find this place incompatible.
  Inside the gate the blossom spreads.
Families of the metal element will prosper here.
The Chon Te star, the sun, and the moon shine, each in their turn.
  Generations of military officers are assured.
The dragon pavilion waits close at hand.
  The head points northwest.”
Translation by Kim Ji-hong.
Air Photo of “Landscape of a Crouching Tiger Playing With Jade.”
The black dot indicates the myongdang chadi site.

Example Two—Landscape of Blossoming Flower Field:
P’ungsu Map: Blossoming Flower Field. Marginal notes acclaim the attributes of the site.

Aerial photograph of “Blossoming Flower Field” surroundings. Black dot represents the myongdang chadi site.
Modern topographic Map representation of the “Blossoming Flower Field” myongdang chari site (black dot). Prominent cinder cones in the vicinity help make it possible to tentatively identify this old p’ungsu site.

Close attention to old tombstones at “Blossoming Flower Field” myongdang chari helps identify the site by name (within red rectangle).
Example Three – Rhinoceros Landscape

This seems to be the p’ungsu site (black dot) celebrated in Map One of this chapter: “Landscape of a Rhinoceros.” Perhaps when we visit Hallasan we can together re-discover its exact whereabouts.

Recommended Reading:

Part One, Chapter Two
Graven Images and Cosmic Landscape on Jeju Island

(This essay is a revised and updated version of David Nemeth’s "Graven Images and Cosmic Landscape on Cheju Island." Korean Culture 4, 1 [March 1983], 4-19.

The so-called “stone grandfathers” (dolharubang) of Hallasan have evolved and multiplied during the 20th-century and right down to the present as the primary features of its iconic landscape. Originally few, they are now ubiquitous throughout the island, and chief representations of Hallasan’s material culture on the Internet.

The tourism literature pays little attention to the profound context of their origins, a complex and abstract story that scholar-travelers in their presence cannot ignore -- and may find fascinating.

This chapter focuses on examples of how the Yi Neo-Confucian state (A.D. 1392-1910) on the peninsula increasingly reproduced its moral, economic, and political authority over Cheju Islanders through “memory” or “mnemonic” devices intentionally implanted in the everyday islander environment, both as architecture and layout. The stone-grandfathers are a good example of these political-educational practices.
Another example of this sort of mnemonic architecture on Cheju Island is the ancestors’ "dark abode" or tomb.

The stone-grandfathers and the distinctive trapezoidal tombs of Hallasan are closely related in the same cosmic symbolism, which originates in the heavens, in ancient star patterns observed at the dawn of East Asian civilization in China. Note how the ancient idealized rectangular star pattern (A) centering on the Pole Star in the following star map is situated with its threshold proximate to two perceived-as guardian stars (B). Compare the rectangular configuration on the map to the photo of a trapezoidal stone tomb structure above, representing the traditional tomb construction typically encountered on the flanks of Hallasan.

The trapezoidal tombs and guardian “grandfather” stones of Hallasan are not the only ubiquitous mnemonic constructions that convey the important ethical messages once propagated by the Yi state. Traditional Cheju farmstead architecture also contains essentially the same cosmic symbolism in its morphology, expressing the Neo-Confucian dogma at its own scale of habitat within the hierarchically organized and carefully planned living environment. Note the rectangular structure of the farm household centering on the symbolic “well” at its center, guarded by the twinned guards at the compound gate.
The entire traditional Hallasan peasant landscape at all scales from macrocosm to microcosm can be viewed from a Neo-Confucian planning perspective as "a series of integrative levels of organization, wholes at one level being parts on the next" (Needham 1956:465-466), all having the prescribed ideal configuration of a circle-within-a-square, with paired guards at the threshold.

Discerning and contemplating this integrated unity peasant landscape, one discovers that the Neo-Confucian ideological imperative is at work within each microcosm, and that the fundamental design within all human organizational centers is alike, being copies of the same celestial archetype. Thus we may anticipate that those forms encountered at one microcosmic level of habitat are deliberately repeated at all levels within the Yi dynasty planned environment. In sum, the distribution of Cheju Island's graven stone images at all scales that include the famous "stone grandfathers" reveals integrity in the architecture of peasant landscape that was deliberately created and conserved by Yi Neo-Confucian environmental planners.

"GUARD" MEGALITHS

Within Korea, Cheju Island is a unique factory for stone carvings, being naturally endowed with a preponderance of the requisite materials. Cheju Islanders were prolific megalith builders, both before and during the Yi dynasty era. Stone megaliths on Cheju Island consist primarily of anthropomorphic statues of various sizes. The evidence of the Chinese Han dynasty celestial prototype in their origin and distribution seems obvious, and therefore may be significant for an increased understanding of Yi Neo-Confucian environmental planning and its pervasive impact on the ordering of Cheju Island society.

Almost all the stone carvings discussed here are paired images tentatively identified as "guards" (or "attendants" or "assistants"). They are presented in the order of
decreasing size in relation to the diminishing scale of human habitat with which they are associated:

Hallasan portal guards  
Cheju city gate guards  
district town guards (at Chongui and Taejong)  
village guards  
farmstead guards  
tomb guards.

Their comparisons and contrasts provide a basis for discussions of their shared cosmic symbolism.

**Hallasan Portal Guards**

The main access portals to Hallasan have always faced north from the walled fortress of old Cheju Castle, which was the ancient core of present-day Cheju City. Cheju Castle was situated on a fertile, well watered plain at the center of the island's north coast, and mostly confined between two large, parallel, stone-choked gullies. Due north of Cheju Castle, but far across the treacherous Cheju Straits, was the Korean mainland and a higher governmental authority. All communications from the Korean government to its citizens on the island during Yi times were directed southward from the mainland and received at the administrative seat in the governor's mansion at the heart of Cheju Castle.

Two massive anthropomorphic stone pillars separated by several kilometers have long faced each other across that span, symbolically guarding the portals of Cheju Island at Cheju Castle. These two massive megaliths perch high upon opposite river bluffs overlooking the central city between them. The following photo depicts the east-side guard facing West (left) and the west-side guard facing East (right).

These tall twinned pillars are almost 3 meters high and carved almost identically with human-like features. They are long-eared and legless, and in these characteristics
resemble the gigantic stone statues of volcanic Easter Island in the South Pacific, as noted by Stotzner (1934), Kim Byong-mo (1983:55), and many others.¹

Each megalith wears a close-fitting, broad-brimmed detachable cap and sits upon a large foundation stone, which is also a separately carved piece. The statues' heads are massive and flat-faced. Their facial features, which are not deeply incised, include heavy brows, protruding eyes, long broad noses, and slightly parted lips. Their long ears are quite prominent when viewed from the front, side, and rear. Beneath the chin there is only the suggestion of a neck. The statues appear to be wearing robes that hang from their shoulders down to their foundation stones. On each image the hands emerge from beneath the robe with fingertips extended, nearly touching, to clasp the torso beneath the chest.

The guardian pillar facing east and overlooking the central city is implanted on the western bluff of a stream gorge called Screen Gate. The guardian pillar facing West overlooking the city stands on the eastern bluff of another rocky gorge called Under the Mountain. Its features seem more prominently carved, or perhaps less weathered by the elements than its twin. Their distances inland from the sea and above the tide lines are comparable. Surprisingly, few contemporary residents of Cheju City in the 1980’s, when these photographs were taken, were even aware of the existence of these statues, much less the relationship between the two and the symmetry of their positioning.

The western pillar seemed the better known of the two statues, but only because of its close proximate location to a phallic shrine popular among anxious barren women. An active phallic shrine in a modern Korean city is rather remarkable. In this instance, however, the great western pillar is mistakenly identified as the fertility god. The confusion is easily understandable, since the authentic phallic stone, quite small and white, shares space beneath the same tall canopy with the large guardian statue, which is in contrast carved from a block of gray basalt. Time and devotion have so worn down the
telling features of the pale phallus that it is easily passed unnoticed by anyone except the women who journey there to worship it.

This small fertility god is unusual in that it was carved from granite, which is an extremely rare surface formation on volcanic Cheju Island. The little phallus is reported to have been turned up early in the 20th century by a plowman working a field behind the temple. Some useful comparisons might be made between this phallus and similar remains of other phallic shrines in Korea and Japan (see, for example, G.S.S.G. 1926; Rhie and Kim 1984).

The tall western stone guard and the small stone phallus are both within the walled compound of Dragon Pool Temple, which is described as an unofficial Buddhist temple by the caretaker who lives on the premises. A residential district now surrounds the temple. The tall guard pillar cannot be seen from outside the temple walls.

Like its western counterpart, the eastern guard of the island portals is also located within a modern labyrinth of residences and alleyways. It stands in the side yard of a walled private residence, and can be seen from the nearest alleyway, towering above the walls. Some old maps identify the location of the eastern pillar as Long Life Temple, but there is nothing there now indicating that the site is, or ever was, a Buddhist temple.

The twin guardians at the portal threshold of Hallasan are believed to date from sometime in the Koryo dynasty (918-1392), and have been identified by island historians as Buddhist statues. However, as will be shown, their arrangements would seem also to serve a Neo-Confucian world view.

Cheju Castle Gate Guards

The Tamnaji, or History of Tamna, chronicles the early days on Cheju Island and establishes that in 1754 island governor Kim Mong-gyu placed "second grandfather stones" outside three main entrances to the old walled fortress of Cheju. The fortress was
the primary magistracy of the island and the home of the governor. These, then, are the statues popularly known today as "stone grandfathers."

In Yi dynasty times the main entrances to Cheju Castle breached the high walls in three cardinal directions: south, east, and west. The three main roads approaching the city curved sharply for their final 500 meters and terminated at the city gates. The reason that the roads snake toward the city was in order to discourage dangerous supernatural forces from gaining an entrance, for it was a firm conviction in earlier times that evil forces traveled only in straight lines. Did Governor Kim, who was in charge of defenses, station the statues along curves in the road as some added measure of protection to the city, or for some more subtle reasons? Historians are unclear as to the rationale for this placement.

According to a local antiquarian scholar, one pair of stone grandfathers faced each other across the roadway at each bend along all final approaches to the city gates: As many as 8 stone grandfathers, arranged in 4 pairs, were stationed outside each gate (Professor Hyon Yong-jun, interviewed 1980 and 1981). If each approach to the city had 4 pairs of statues, they totaled 24, since Cheju castle had 3 main gates. Like most other Korean fortresses, Cheju Castle did not have a north gate. This is because of a traditional belief that southbound evil forces were particularly pernicious, and therefore difficult to defend against.

Kim Kwang-hyop (1985) describes the 18 stone grandfathers remaining in Cheju City, and their locations. At present, none of the old statues are in their original positions; and while some statues are now displayed at new locations throughout the city in pairs, we do not know if these pairs are the original mates. Here are two, photographed at the threshold of Cheju National University.

In comparing the shapes and sizes of the existing stone grandfathers, their similarities and distinctions quickly become obvious. The images are various heights, ranging from almost 2 to 2 1/2m tall. This excludes their detachable pedestals, which average about 1/3 m. high. Their bold facial expressions range from humorous and warm, to indifferent, to
hideous and cruel. The latter bring to mind examples of paired stone deities often found at the gates of Buddhist temples: Indra and Brahma.

All of these stone grandfathers have heads quite large in proportion to their bodies, and are wearing thick-brimmed skullcaps. On all, one shoulder is noticeably higher than the other; on some it is the right shoulder, on others the left. Perhaps the higher shoulder on all guards once faced toward the incoming roadways and away from the city gates.

The frontal view of a typical stone grandfather, from the skullcap down, reveals deep creases in the forehead, pop-eyes, a broad nose closely set between two puffy cheeks, and wide, tight lips. Occasionally a statue's head is cocked either to the right or to the left of the central axis of its torso. In most cases the large head projects forward from the higher shoulder, eliminating the neck. From the chin on down to the waist, where the typical statue terminates, only the arms, forearms, and hands are distinctive. The upper arms hang down at the sides of the statues, sometimes leading to elbows cocked nearly at right angles, permitting forearms to begin to cross the fronts of the torsos. Typically, the forearm ends in a large hand with swollen fingers. The hand leading from the high shoulder rests slightly below the chest. The hand leading from the low shoulder rests upon the side of the stomach. The base of the statue is cut at the waist several inches below the lower hand.

Several of the statues have rounded, prominent chests, which might easily be interpreted as female breasts. Since the suggestion of female breasts on stone grandfathers sounds controversial, if not ridiculous, let us digress for a moment to consider some antique paired stone statues located in Cholla Province on the Korean peninsula. This is the Korean culture area with which Cheju Island had its closest cultural ties throughout Yi dynasty history. A close relationship between Cheju paired statues and those on the Korean peninsula should seem to indicate the universal influence of Neo-Confucian ideology on architectural design and development throughout Korea during the Yi dynasty era.
The paired statues of Cholla Province are similar in size, shape, and function to the stone grandfathers of Cheju Island. Examples are the *dangsan*, or *changsung*, statues found near castle gates at Puan City.  

Many of these and similar *dangsan* pairs wear skullcaps and have bulging eyes and cheeks. The right image at Puan is sometimes called Old Grandfather, and has "Full Moon 'Chu' General" etched into his belly. The left image is called Old Grandmother, and has "Decayed Moon 'Tang' General" etched into her belly. There are other stone and wooden statues on the southern Korean peninsula that are called old grandfathers and old grandmothers. Kim T'ae-gon (1983:449) describes paired wooden *changsung* images -- male and female -- standing guard face to face on both sides of the road entering some remote villages on the peninsula. He explains that on the day of their ritual construction the *changsung* pairs are linked by ropes, blocking the roadway. Thus it seems possible that Governor Kim's creation of "second grandfather stones" at Cheju Castle was related to his earlier experiences with *changsung* images on the Korean mainland (Prof. Hyon Yong-jun).

Of the two types of anthropomorphic megaliths on Cheju discussed thus far, the two tall Hallasan portal guardians overlooking Cheju castle, were each carved as three units: the head and trunk were carved as one piece, and the cap and the foundation stone were each carved separately. In contrast, the shorter stone grandfathers in pairs outside the gates at Cheju Castle were each carved in two parts: corpus and pedestal. The larger pedestals of the twin island guards were simple, unadorned platforms. However, the foundation stones supporting the stone grandfathers were deeply incised with two simple designs that may have had symbolic meaning as well as some practical use.
One pedestal had an “L”-shaped hole (left above), with the “L” lying horizontal on its side, its base pointing downward. The other pedestal, its mate, had a square hole (right above). Although most of the original pedestals belonging to extant stone grandfathers are missing or buried, enough examples remain to suggest that half of the originals may have had the square holes and the other half the “L”-shaped holes.

Pairs of stone grandfathers were initially positioned facing each other across a roadway, and the holes in their pedestals apparently also faced forward toward each other beneath them. This enabled a long beam to connect the two pedestals. One end of the beam fit firmly into the square hole, while the other end was slid into the L-shaped hole across the way, where it locked. In this way the roadway was symbolically and physically blocked, if not seriously obstructed. The guards thus connected may have provided a deterrent to superstitious folk and wandering cattle, if not to hostile armies. The sexual symbolism in this convenient arrangement was not lost on at least one antiquarian scholar, (Prof. Hyon Yong-jun), who has spoken of it.

**District Castle Guards**

The walled fort at old Cheju Castle was the primary seat of island government throughout history. As we have seen, in the administrative reorganization of Korea undertaken by the Yi dynasty, Cheju Island was judged too large to govern from Cheju Castle alone. In 1416, two additional administrative centers, Chongui and Taejong, were chosen to govern the southeastern and southwestern districts of Cheju Island, south of Halla Mountain. Both of these walled towns, like the castle at Cheju City, were Neo-Confucian strongholds of the mainland Yi dynasty culture-in-exile. Large, paired graven images faced each other across the main roadways leading into their castles, like those guards strung along the final approaches to Cheju Castle.

It is not known exactly when these district gate guards were first stationed, nor how many were constructed. The T'amnaji (Kim Sok-ik 1976) does not mention these statues as it does the images established by Governor Kim in 1754 along the roads approaching Cheju Castle. Certain similarities between those and the carved images standing at the old district capitals indicate a close relationship, and all are referred to as "stone grandfathers." Local townspeople also call the district guards "stone children."
These guards at the district seats are smaller than those at the island capital, yet the largest among them is as tall as the shortest of the Cheju City castle guards. The guards at Taejong are, as a group, the stoutest of all, typically 1 1/2 m. tall and 2 m. in girth. All district capital guards have brimmed skullcaps, but the brims are noticeably thinner than those on the hats of the Cheju Castle guards; those of the Taejong guards are particularly thin. All district guards are quite flat-faced and lack the creased brows seen on many of the Cheju Castle guards. The eyes of the Taejong guards are unique, having been carefully incised into two concentric circles. In the Chongui group, the eyes are deeply outlined with a single circle.

On all district statues I inspected, the forearms, hands, and fingers reach across the stomach, one arm above the other. One odd example was found in Taejong: its fingertips touch, and in this way it resembles the twin pillars at the portals of the island.

The anthropomorphic details on these statues are not all equally clear. Their differences may be due to the fact that the statues are not all of uniform quality, or identical intention, or perhaps some of the basalts selected for carving may have been more resistant to weathering, or more exposed to the elements, than others.

Like Cheju Castle, the castles at Taejong and Chongui each had three main gates: south, west, and east. There are now less than 12 statues extant in each old district capital. There may at one time have been 4 stone guards outside of each gate. A few of the guards have pedestals, an indication that all statues may once have had them. The foundation stones have no deep indentations carved into them, as to those under the Cheju Castle guards. In general, the guards at Taejong and Chongui resemble each other more closely than they do those at Cheju Castle or the twin guards of the island.

All types of guards -- island, capital, and district town -- do have many features in common. It is in the carving of these features, and their similar arrangement in pairs at the gates that their origins appear to be related in a single idea.

**Village Guards**
There are several hundred villages on Cheju Island, but few isolated hamlets. Along the roads leading into some of these villages can be found the remains of paired village guards.

The road that snakes into Hwasun village from the south provides a good example. Where the road curves sharply at the village outskirts, topping a rise, two guardian stones, one on either side, stand on two high rock piles; approximately 25 m. separate them. The stone piles measure 8 m. in circumference at the base and are about 2 m. high; each guard is 70 cm tall. The weather beaten statue on the western side of the road is faintly anthropomorphic, having a cap, nondescript eyes, and a nose and upper torso suggestive of features common to all the guard statues previously discussed.

Its companion, however, is not a statue at all, but a rather common rock of an identical size propped up onto its high pedestal rockpile, perhaps as a substitute for a similarly perched anthropomorphic figure that might have been stolen -- or perhaps it represents an authentic guardian artifact pre-dating the custom of carving anthropomorphic features into such guards.³

Villagers seemed reluctant to discuss these stone guards or their origins. Indeed, drawing outside attention to such rare and mysterious objects serves to attract antiquities collectors to the region, and thus may indirectly contribute to cultural and spiritual losses. Kim T'ae-gon (1983:5) and Rhie and Kim (1984:33) describe in detail similar paired guards at the entranceways of mainland Korean villages. Jin (1983:12) retells a Cheju legend that explains the origin of Hwasun's twin guards from a Neo-Confucian perspective.

**Farmstead Gate Guards**

Paired gateposts are also found at the outer entranceways to many older farmsteads on Cheju Island. Islanders sometimes call these posts "gate protection gods," so their function as guards at the entranceway to the farmstead is so well established by
tradition that they have been deified. These guards were originally carved either from perishable wood or from more durable stone. They lack any obvious anthropomorphic characteristics. Examples carved from stone are more common, especially in rural inland villages; but even there, most have been plundered away by collectors of antiquities.

The function and arrangement of these gate guards, and even some aspects of their morphology, suggest that they can be classed with the anthropomorphic stone images previously discussed. However, the fact that these farmstead guards are deified by the islanders, while district castle guards are not, suggests remote, though not necessarily non-Confucian, origins (Prof. Hyon Yong-jun).

A typical farmstead gate guard is commonly called a chongjumok, a "wooden pillar guard," even though it is carved from stone. It is rectangular, standing vertically almost 1 m. high, measures 20 cm wide across the face, and is 10 cm. thick. Three holes, sometimes four, or even five, are bored completely through the face of the pillar, top to bottom).

Each gate guard has a mate, roughly identical in shape and size. The pair stand facing each other across the main pathway leading into the walled farmstead. Often the path curves sharply behind the guards on its final approach to an inner gate. Long, thin beams called chongnang connect the gate guards, resting in corresponding holes: i.e., four-holed pairs of guards are connected by four long beams obstructing the path to the farmstead's inner door.

Farmers communicate their whereabouts to visitors by disconnecting beams from one of the pillars: four beams in place means "no one home"; three means "gone to market"; two means "look in the fields"; one means "visiting at the neighbors"; no beams in place means "welcome in!" (Song Ji-chun, interviewed 1981; see also Chin Song-gi 1979:72).

Contemporary islanders claim that the beams blocking the farmstead gate were once useful to keep wayward horses and cattle from wandering inside the family compound. Local authorities on these particular artifacts generally agree on their functions as guards at the entranceways, and a local scholar (Prof. Hyon Yong-jun) has
related the farmstead gate guards to the anthropomorphic stone grandfathers at Cheju City. As we have seen, both types consist of pairs designed to hold long wooden rails between them, obstructing passage.

**Tomb Guards**

Paired tomb guards are the most plentiful anthropomorphic stone carvings to be found on Cheju Island. Cheju tombs are unique among p’ungsu-surveyed Korean tombs for having tumuli surrounded by trapezoidal stone walls.

![Image of tomb guards]

Not all Cheju tumuli have stone guards before them, but most tombs with substantial, well maintained walls have at least one pair of guards facing each other in front of the tumulus. Since these tomb guards are still being manufactured for burials on Cheju Island, it is best to describe some of the earliest examples, in case it is possible to observe in these some traditional features that stone-carvers working in more recent times may have eliminated, or altered beyond recognition.

Old geomancers' maps (those maps that describe topographic conditions at p’ungsu-surveyed propitious tombsites) can sometimes be used to locate the oldest tombs on Cheju Island. As discussed in the previous chapter, most of these maps are difficult to decipher, since they are designed to glorify this scarce real estate without giving away its exact location. For example, the following antique map attributed to the legendary geomancer-monk T'ak Ok Chong directed my search for old tomb guards to the top of Sousan, or "Rhinoceros Mountain," a high, wave-cut cinder cone that juts out into the sea along the northern coast of Cheju Island.
There is a very old tomb construction on top of Sousan, and the relics include paired guards of equal height but slightly different shape (see photographs above). Both guards are about 60 cm tall. Both are bare-headed, with eyes etched out in deep circular lines much like the eyes carved into the district capital guards at Chongui Castle. Their noses and ears are prominent and their lips are parted, one guard being particularly open-mouthed. One statue has its hands outstretched and clasped before its chest, resting on what appears to be a male sex organ. This phallus points directly at the statue across the way, which has instead of such an appendage a deep bowl being held out as a receptacle.

THE CELESTIAL PROTOTYPE

The six types of paired stone images discussed above make up the majority of antique anthropomorphic stone carvings on Cheju Island. All the pairs appear to function as guards at the entranceways to human habitats. Eliade (1961:25) describes the threshold of sacred habitat as a site of great importance, and discusses "its guardians: gods and spirits who forbid entrance" to both human and supernatural enemies of the inhabitants.

We can think of these protected dwellings as sacred seats of virtue, or human sanctuaries, each on a different scale introduced here in decreasing size-order.
The smaller, more numerous, decentralized units are integrated into the larger, centralized units. For example, the tens of thousands of tombs, which are the dwellings of the individual ancestors, focus onto the thousands of farmsteads of the living descendants, who in turn belong to several hundred villages administered by two district towns under the direction of a single governing force located at Cheju Castle. The entire island organism composed of rock, wind, and other natural phenomena, as well as the peasantry, centers on Halla Mountain.

The daily activities of the Cheju Islanders consist of innumerable passages into, out of, and around these various human sanctuaries, and all of these comings and goings are overseen by the stone guards at the gates.

The spatial organization of stone guards on Cheju Island seems therefore very systematic and comprehensive. But what does this patterning mean, and how did it originate? I suggested at the introduction of this essay that the graven images allocated in pairs to each habitat in the Cheju Island peasant landscape correspond to those two connected stars at the open end of the enclosure around the Han dynasty pole-star (depicted at the center (“Well”) of the celestial vault; for example as mapped below).
To the Neo-Confucians, the semi-enclosed sanctuary to the pole-star appeared to open up past these "guardian" stars onto the universe beyond. This inclusion of two guards among Neo-Confucian mnemonic devices occurs not only in architectural constructions but in other kinds of artifacts, including the geomancer's compass.

Since this complex device mirrors the heavens in much of its detail, we would expect to find on its face the important symbols representing guards outside the entrance to the compound of the Celestial Emperor, or north-pole star. These guards are tentatively identified on the antique geomancer's compass above their Korean names P'il and Po, "The Assistants," two of the so-called “Nine Moving Stars” or “Directors of Fate.”
THE ORIGIN OF CHEJU ISLAND'S STONE GUARDIANS

To recapitulate: Under Yi dynasty social conventions, human dwelling sites were systematically selected and constructed according to an ideal celestial plan. The prototype and inspiration for this "Celestial Empire" originated in ancient astronomical observations. The prototype was visualized in both plan view and profile: In plan view, access to the human sanctuary appeared to lead through "Myriad Things" between "The Two" to "The One". In profile, the center of the human sanctuary was perceived as an actual pole, or conduit, with its celestial end firmly lodged into the north-pole star, which channeled the flow of heaven's blessings from the macrocosm above to the earthly microcosms of virtuous men and women below.

Possession of virtue is what enabled mankind to be on the receiving end of heaven's blessings. In a sense, humanity clung to its heaven-sent fortune by the sheer strength of its virtue, and was more or less dragged along behind the fate-dispensing celestial wagon: Without human virtue there was "disorder under heaven," indicating that heaven had lifted its tether from its temporal and spatial hold at the surface of the earth and abandoned its unlucky passengers.

Maintaining virtue by adhering to strict Neo-Confucian mores was an arduous task for ambitious people and a great source of anxiety for them. Therefore, in order to add a fiction of permanence to the tenuous source of their prosperity on earth, East Asiatic peoples once supplanted their cosmologies with the ancient and peculiar conceit of constructing "heaven poles" of iron, wood, and stone, or combinations of these materials, upon the grounds of their sanctuaries and as close to their official seats of power as possible.

Gale (in Rutt 1972:179) calls these "geomantic masts," and Rutt (p. 337) identifies them by their Korean names, tang-gan or chimdae. Apparently, the higher these poles the better, but ethics prohibited people from constructing heaven poles higher than their station in life.

For common farmers, the heaven pole was the ridgepole in their homes; until the mid-20th century in western China, the t'aeguk symbol was often painted on the underside of the ridgepole (Cammann 1985:253). In contrast, heaven poles constructed at the seats of political power were much more imposing. For example, in A.D. 688 the Empress Wu of China ordered a heaven pole nearly 100 m high constructed within her palace (Soothill 1951:107-108).

Throughout Yi dynasty times, various pillars and masts serving as heaven poles could still be found across the Korean landscape (Starr 1918; Gale 1925; Covell 1983a). Many such poles inherited by the Yi dynasty were located at Buddhist temples. The heaven-pole custom has often been associated with Korean Buddhism, though its place in traditional Confucian cosmography can also be established.
Ancient Taoist, Buddhist, and Confucian peoples in Siberia, central Asia, Mongolia, China, and Korea all constructed heaven poles, in different sizes and shapes. The custom can probably be traced back to Altaic shamanism and the legend of a sacred mountain with a tall tree upon its summit, rooted in earth and reaching into the heavens. The awe of natural magnificence in this mountainous universe became schematized as geomancy and facilitated the construction of artificial towers at strategic places across the land (Feuchtwang 1974:188).

The typical Korean heaven pole was constructed in the following manner:

In the carefully selected location, two great slabs of stone, 4 to 10 feet high, 2 feet wide, and 6 inches thick, were set up in the ground facing one another, and then a lofty wooden pillar was clamped between them pointing skyward. (Clark 1961:190)

The remains of several heaven poles, including the example photographed above, can be observed in Cholla Province. This example, from Puan County, dates from the late 17th century. It consists of a stone pillar nearly 8 m high clasped at its base by twin flanking stones 2 m high. This pillar has thin iron belts encircling its shaft at intervals to bind together the interfacing segments of the stacked granite cylinders. A dragon and a turtle -- symbols of fertility -- are carefully carved in relief upon the two flanking stones.

Rutt (1972:337) identifies the Korean name for these flanking stones as tanggan chiju. Often a pillar is riveted between the two flanking stones. Long pins pass through the pole into the flanking stones stationed on each side. Some pillars are bored with up to four holes, one above the other, which are usually circular but may also be square. An obvious purpose of the flanking stones is to support, assist, or attend the mast between them: the linkage by crossbeams passing through the pillar adds greatly to its support.

This construction also draws attention to the flanking stones themselves as exemplary models of human behavior according to Neo-Confucian mores. The pillars
support between them the symbol of the gateway to heaven and its munificence, and guard these portals against disorder and disaster. In short, the pillar guards mediate the beneficial relationship between Heaven and Earth, which is also humankind's lot in life.

These tall, paired pillar-flanking stones, with their bore-holes and crossbeams, are quite similar in general appearance, construction, and function to the gate guards stationed outside Cheju farmsteads. Perhaps these provided the original inspiration for the carving of the anthropomorphic stone guards assigned as pairs outside other kinds of human habitat in southern Korea and on Cheju Island.
CONCLUSION: IDEAL SOCIAL ORDERING THROUGH MNEMONIC ARCHITECTURE

The twin flanking stones associated with the construction of heaven poles in Korea may have conveyed the idea that guards, supports, assistants, or attendants were essential to the architecture of terrestrial Supreme Poles. As we have noted, the idea of flanking stones as guards was reinforced by a particular constellation of two guardian stars near the north-pole star, the Celestial Emperor, in an ideal configuration of circumpolar stars perceived by Han dynasty astronomers.

The remains of graven images on Cheju Island provide evidence that islanders once attempted to enhance and adjust their living environment to fit the ideal Neo-Confucian world view. Neo-Confucian environmental planners and geomancers proceeded on the assumption that the celestial world of archetypes determined the analogous terrestrial world. Every human habitat was inspired by a Han dynasty celestial prototype which ordained a circular sacred core, a rectangular protective wall, and twin guards at the gates. The form, arrangement, and function of paired graven images at the entranceways to dwellings on Cheju Island are interpreted here as a deliberate plan by the Korean Neo-Confucian bureaucracy to attempt to imprint its ideal social order throughout the land.

Although the “stone grandfathers” of Hallasan are best-known today among all of its old, paired graven images scattered across the landscape, they and the others are not at all well-remembered by anyone for their profound related symbolisms and functions. The distribution of paired anthropomorphic guards outside the human sanctuaries on Cheju Island corresponds to a single celestial model. These graven images are relict evidence that, through concerted and prolonged effort, celestial phenomena were given terrestrial affinities by Korean Neo-Confucian society.

Notes to Part 1, Chapter 2

1 Kim Byong-mo (1983) relates stone graven images on Cheju Island to similar images found in Pacific cultures in tropical and subtropical regions, of which there are many examples. Kim T'ae-gon (1983) makes a comparison instead with rarely encountered carved stone images created by northern Asiatic peoples. Erdelyi (1977) reports on some relics of Turkic stone sculpture recently excavated in the Mongolian People's Republic.

2 Dangsan is literally "mountain hall." Single stone pillars may correspond to a fabled sacred mountain in India; paired dangsan images seem to correspond to guards at the sacred mountain. For photographs of many stone megaliths to compare and ponder, see Munhwa Chetaegwan 1979.

3 However, this particular stone, which I observed in 1973 and 1981, was replaced by still another stone sometime between 1982 and 1984.
There is a tangled convergence of Taoist, Buddhist, and Confucian cosmological symbolism in these monumental artifacts that has not been completely sorted out. Rutt (1972:337) reports briefly, and without stating his sources, that the geomantic masts were originally flagpoles at Buddhist temples, "but geomantic meanings were given to them later," and that "they were erected also in China." Gale (in ibid.:179) ventures that "These masts, while associated with the Buddha, have in them as well a Taoist element, where feng-shui plays a part." Since the custom of building geomantic masts in Korea "began about 900 and continued till 1100 or so" (ibid.), an era roughly coinciding with the Sung dynasty in China, they are definitely not to be viewed as primarily Neo-Confucian constructions, but rather as examples of the syncretic nature of Chu Hsi Neo-Confucianism, through which perspective they may perhaps be interpreted.

It seems plausible that small granite phallic stones like the one at Dragon Pool Temple in Cheju City could be former segments of demolished geomantic masts.
References Cited


Part One, Chapter Three

An Island of the Blest and Its Fungus of Immortality

(This essay is a revised and updated version of a brief discussion in David Nemeth’s *Architecture of Ideology* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press).

Written reference to what is now called Cheju (Jeju) Island begins with ancient Chinese dynastic histories. Carl Bishop (1923:46-47) writes that in the 5th century B.C., during the Warring States period (480-221 B.C.) elites from the Yangtze embouchure region "made their escape to certain islands to the eastward. . .". This exodus only slightly predates that time in China when its rulers became obsessed with obtaining "drug-plants giving longevity or immortality" believed to be growing on sacred mountains and islands in and around the North China ("Eastern") Sea (Needham 1971:551).

The *Samshinsan* or “Islands of the Blest,” also called the “Three Holy Mountains,” were at that time conjectured to be located nearly opposite the Chinese coastal region that is now Jiangsu (Kiangsu) Province. These legendary isles were said to have the sacred fungus of immortality in great abundance (Williams 1980:233). This "plant of longevity," or "plant of immortality," often depicted in art and literature as a mushroom, is called *pulloch'o* by Koreans.

One of these three island abodes of immortals was known as Yongju, and has historically been associated with Cheju Island. Yongju is in fact the first of several historical and literary names for Cheju Island. Cheju early became identified with one of the legendary *Samshinsan*, since it alone dominates the blue void of the northern reaches of the East China Sea. Moreover, as an isolated mountain of great height, Hallasan (originally called Yongjusan, meaning "Mountain of the Blessed Isle") was believed by the Chinese to have formed a kind of bridge between heaven and earth (Bauer 1976:99). At a later date, when the Milky Way galaxy was widely believed by Neo-Confucian societies to form a connecting link between the heavens and the sea, Yongjusan became "Hallasan," meaning "The Peak That Pulls Down the Milky Way." Isolated and windswept as it has always been, Cheju Island also fits the ancient criteria for an Island of the Blest, as describe for example by the Chinese historian Ssuma Ch’ien (145-87 B.C.):

[The island is] in the midst of the Eastern Sea . . . not far removed from human habitation, but, unfortunately, at the very time when one is on the point of arriving at the [island], one's boat is blown back by the wind. In ancient times, to tell the truth, there were people who succeeded in reaching the [islands]. It is there that the immortals may be found, and even birds and quadrupeds are white. The palaces are made of gold and silver. No one ever succeeds in reaching the [island] a second time. They see the [island] from a distance like a cloud, but when they approach, the island becomes submerged in the water. When they come quite near, the wind suddenly forces their boat into the open sea. In short, no one has been able to land. (Here as cited in Hume 1940:52-53; also in Needham 1971:551-553 and Yetts 1919:42).

Chinese dynastic histories report that the So Pu expedition sent by the Chinese “First Emperor” (introduced in the previous chapter) actually found the Islands of the Blest during his first long sojourn into the Eastern Sea, having landed there, bargained with the resident
immortals for their sacred plants, and then returned to the First Emperor in the west to report conditions of trade. The last we hear of So Pu he has departed once more into the Eastern Sea, this time with an even greater supply of young women, tradesmen, artisans, and the seeds of the five grains. He never returns to China.

Here, some detail of what Korean folklorists call the “Blue Wave Nation” episode from Cheju's “Three Founders” legend converge on the historical record. Who brought the "five seeds" to Cheju Island? Perhaps So Pu, or his antecedents in the ancient and frustrating search by Chinese for the sacred plant of immortality.

Old place names on Cheju Island tend to confirm the Chinese dynastic histories regarding the voyage of So Pu. In particular, the ancient south-coast settlement called Sogwip'o, which means "Port of Return to the West," apparently commemorates the So Pu expedition (Chin Song-gi 1975:112-113). Other island place names further support the identification of Cheju as an “Isle of the Blest.” Paeknokdam, meaning "White Deer Lake," is the pond located within Halla Mountain's crater. Overlooking the pond at the crater's edge is the traditional site from which the Noinsong, or Old Man Star, was once celebrated by the islanders.

This ancient mountaintop ritual seems the spectacular imaginative material of a blockbuster filmic fantasy. Apparently Cheju Islanders risked freezing to death in early spring and late fall when these rituals were regularly conducted on Hallasan’s summit. The tradition was discontinued in the late 15th century, when a new ritual site was selected at lower elevations and closer to Cheju Castle. Thereafter the ceremony was gradually "Confucianized," to become more of a state institution than a local folk tradition (Kim Sok-ik 1976:377; Chin Song-gi 1977:25).

Lofty Hallasan was designated as "The Peak That Pulls Down the Milky Way" perhaps because it was conceptualized according to p'ungsu logic as a direct conduit for heaven's blessings flowing down to earth. This image of cosmic energies cascading down on Cheju Island from above has provided an explanation for many of the supernatural phenomena attributed by ancient legend to the island. I will briefly mention some of these phenomena here.

Among typical Chinese and Korean art motifs, the imagery of a bearded old man astride a white deer, surrounded by the sacred plant of immortality, often appear. The deer consumes the longevity plant, and this habit explains his whiteness. This relationship between the white deer, the enchanted plant, immortality, and the Blessed Isle is further described in Williams (1980:116). The deer is believed by the Chinese to live to a very great age, and has therefore become an emblem of long life. It is said to be the only animal which is able to find the sacred plant of immortality.

As mentioned, the Old Man Star was ritually observed by the islanders from the crater rim overlooking White Deer Lake atop Halla Mountain (and of course can still be viewed from there today). The surrounding forests have always been a mushroomer's paradise. Local conditions would seem to be well-suited to match the Blessed Isle imagery, which has long been recorded in Chinese histories and portrayed in Far Eastern art and literature. Furthermore, the visually splendid isolation of Cheju in the East China Sea, an isolation that tradition attributes to
the notorious windiness in its vicinity, also fits well the earliest descriptions of an Island of the Blest.

Whether or not the sacred plant of immortality, whatever that species may be, grows on Cheju Island, seems of less importance than the fact that its existence was conjectured to have been on a Blessed Isle in China's Eastern Sea, and that this belief encouraged early voyages to and perhaps the peopling of Cheju Island, as well as other landfalls. As Yetts (1919:62) observes, "We may safely affirm that the conception [of the Islands of the Blest] powerfully stimulated early Chinese exploration and navigation of the seas."

To digress a bit more on this topic: Early Chinese explorations into the East China Sea also stimulated trade contacts between the Han dynasty peoples, Koreans, and Japanese. Historical reference to what is now Cheju Island began to increase with these trade contacts and as more seaworthy craft were constructed to traverse the dangerous northern reaches of the East Sea in the vicinity of Cheju Island. Cheju Islanders may at first have played an active role in this trade, but by Yi dynasty times the islanders seem to have entirely abandoned any strong seafaring tradition beyond the requirements of coastal fisheries and transport. No doubt the development of the island as an official place of exile for mainlanders precluded ordinary islanders' possessing fleets of seaworthy ships. Small rafts were the characteristic watercraft used by the islanders to exploit local offshore resources. These rafts, although highly adapted to Cheju's unusual fishing conditions, were hardly seagoing vessels.

I return now in earnest to the topic of Hallasan's elusive "plant of immortality." This much sought-after sacred plant, often portrayed as a fungus, has yet to be identified on Cheju Island. What was this fungus that launched such extravagant and bold voyages, and probably resulted in those early Chinese contacts with Cheju Island? Certainly the edible mushrooms that thrive in Hallasan's forested wilderness were once a major tribute item to Korea, China, and Japan, and remain today a major export item. But these common edible mushrooms hardly launched the Chinese expeditions in search of the Blessed Isles.

Wasson (1968) argues persuasively that the divine mushroom of immortality responsible for launching Chinese explorations into the Eastern Sea was actually the psychotropic mushroom *Amanita muscaria*, commonly called the "fly-agaric."
This brilliant red mushroom with white spots is mycorrhizal, and in Eurasia and North America is found growing in symbiotic relationship with the roots of pines and birches. These trees are also found in the secluded forests of Hallasan, for example in Yongshil, or the "Enchanted Place" wilderness, the old ritual gateway to Halla Mountain's sacred peak. Yongshil is famed for its lush forests, dense fogs, thrill of calling birds, and eternal falling waters -- in short, Yongshil is the "Shangri-la" of Cheju Island's mystical geography.

I was quite surprised in 1979 to discover a beautifully illustrated, blue-leather-bound, numbered, premier edition of Wasson’s *Soma* in the Cheju National University reference room. Only 680 copies had been printed. It is today a cult classic and would fetch about $2000.00 in a book auction. My encountering this particular book on this particular island at this particular time in my island studies was the sort of synchronicity I often enjoyed experiencing during my many Hallasan sojourns, and I took it as an omen to act. Thus I spent the entire summer trekking through the high mountain forests in search of the elusive fungus. At one point I tread on a poisonous viper sunning itself, coiled upon on a sun-drenched stone athwart a narrow mountain path where it adjoined a brook. Luckily I stepped on the serpent’s head instead of its tail!

I must mention here that the higher slopes of Hallasan were at several times during the long course of its history a sort of “Sherwood Forest” refuge for armed bands. There have been several historic revolts by Cheju Islanders against mainland authority. Losers usually retreated from the coast, inland and upward. Several centuries ago Buddhism on the island was violently suppressed by the Neo-Confucian government. At the beginning of the 20th century there was a massacre of Christians by a conspiracy of islanders and Japanese residents. More recently, an entire Japanese army was dug into many of the mountainsides in early August of 1945, prepared and waiting in labyrinthine caves for the American invasion forces to arrive! Visitors to the campus of Cheju National University, if looking westward from the library rooftop, will see directly behind the Professor Apartments a cinder cone infested with tunnels excavated by the Japanese during the years immediately preceding the Hiroshima bombing. Because of the atomic bombing of Japan and the subsequent Japanese surrender, the Americans never invaded Cheju Island. The Japanese simply vacated their mountain bunkers and went home. Several years later came the tragic “April Third Incident” more accurately known as “The Cheju Rebellion of 1948-
Rebel guerrilla forces occupied many of the abandoned Japanese-built tunnels at that time. Tens of thousands died. All that is sad history now, but anyone visiting Hallasan at present willing to give some time to contemplating the panorama of surrounding hills and valleys as viewed from atop its highest peak might remember respectfully their remote battlefields, and then come down from the mountain vowing to work diligently for a Peaceful Future.

Although my fieldwork on Cheju Island included trekking remote forested areas throughout Halla Mountain, I never observed the fly-agaric growing there. However, islanders who have been shown its photograph occasionally responded that it does indeed appear there. As it happened, I carried a color photograph of the fly-agaric with me for 16 months during one residence on Cheju Island, and had many opportunities to ask islanders if they had any firsthand knowledge of the plant.

My photo of an unidentified islander collecting medicinal plants near Yongshil, circa 1980.

I was especially interested in the responses of shamans, Buddhist monks, commercial edible-mushroom (Cortinellus shiitake) growers, herbalists, woodcutters, and mountain climbers. I believed that a most likely area for finding the fly-agaric would be in the densely forested Yongshil area, where there is a Buddhist temple. However, only a few mushroom growers and hikers ever responded in the affirmative to my queries; for example: "Yes indeed, high on the mountain" and "Certainly, only yesterday along the roadside I saw one." Two older gentlemen separately responded that the mushroom in my photograph only appears in a "propitious" atmosphere. The shamans and priests, who I imagined of all islanders should know of the fly-agaric (but might not wish to tell), responded with resounding negatives.

Sometime during the Later Han dynasty (A.D. 25-250) in China, Yongju became more of a real than a supernatural place in the Chinese dynastic histories. Thereafter, throughout East Asia, Hallasan lost much of the mystery and romance of its earlier identification as an Island of the Blest. Hallasan’s indigenous residents, of course, knew better and continued their ancient respectful beliefs and ritual practices well into the 20th century.
References


Part Two: Sincerity

1. The Lifting-Stones of Jeju Island
2. Jeju Island's Pigsty-Privies: The Architecture of Sincerity
3. The Walking Tractor: Trojan Horse in the Jeju Island Landscape
Part Two, Chapter One

The Lifting-Stones of Jeju Island

(This essay is a revised and updated version of David Nemeth’s "The Lifting-Stones of Cheju Island." Korean Culture 5, 1 [March 1984], 30-33)

Hallasan offers many an obscure and mystical gateway for its visitors to seek out and enjoy the local color. These are places to pause and to peacefully reflect on the forgotten wisdoms in the relict peasant landscape of Cheju Island. To some extent, Hallasan-of-Old can become alive again for those willing to revisit and vicariously experience small pieces of the past and taking the time to puzzle through its myriad unsolved mysteries.

It is ironic and poetic that Cheju farmers, faced with a lifetime of shifting heavy stones from fields to their margins and beyond, once lifted these stones for fun. Or did they? Old-timers recall that the stone-lifting game was popular and widespread throughout the island. Competitive stone-lifting is a good example of peasants relating with profundity to each other and to nature through a group activity that superficially appears to have been mainly a spectator sport, but on closer inspection reveals itself to be politically and socially significant. The storied lifting-stone arena of the past, in all its robust spirit, as perhaps a central part of every traditional village, provides a proper allegory for the robust spirit of Cheju Islanders themselves. Some villages with lifting stone traditions are identified on this map.

The prevalence of stone at the surface of Cheju is notorious. A fraction of the land has been successfully reclaimed for agricultural purposes from this sea of volcanic waste, but only after applying generations of back-breaking labor to the removal of fieldstones. The practical removal and rearrangement of surface rock on Cheju has always challenged the intelligence of the natives. Stones coerced from their niches in the fields have served as the universal building material on the island for centuries. Historically, individual stones have been used and re-used in house, outbuilding, tomb, and wall constructions.

In 1981 an Island octogenarian named Song Ji-chun of Chongui village (now a part of Cheju City) led me to an ancient crossroads where an odd boulder lay neglected at the roadside. He identified it in island dialect as a tudum tol, or "lifting-stone," and calculated from memory that it was last used in a stone-lifting competition 67 years previously.
Many of the stones once lifted for sport can still be found in more isolated villages throughout Cheju Island. Tens, perhaps hundreds, are now incorporated into the lowest tiers of walls fashioned from lava rocks. These walls are ubiquitous on Cheju, forming tortuous narrow lanes in the villages. Such walls, especially those built near the historic centers of the older villages, are an interesting collage of worn and discarded stone implements and artifacts. Patient wall-watchers will find here a grinding stone, there a foundation stone, and occasionally an imbedded lifting-stone.

Lifting-stones can no longer be found at or near old village crossroads. In 1985, however, I observed four round lifting-stones averaging about 60 kilograms and a meter or so in circumference, collecting dust in the shade of an old tree within Shinom village. I and my companions lifted two of the four at that time, knocking the dust off a once-popular practice in Shinom that had died probably prior to WW2.

While most Cheju wall rocks are angular basalts, pocked with holes, most of those designated as lifting-stones are distinctively rounded, smooth, and dense. Some found in villages near Cheju City are actually pink-white in color. Their circular symmetry is fashioned not by human hand, but by nature, during intermittent violent tumbling in one or another of the rugged and occasionally storm-washed gullies ranging seaward from Hallasan, or in sea caves or tide pools at the coast. The following photograph records a particularly fine, almost perfectly round lifting-stone belonging to the village of Gosan in the extreme west of Cheju Island. In that region the stone is referred to in island dialect as *ttum tol.*
The lifting-stone game can be interpreted at several levels. Superficially, and in the collective memory of most old folk, it was simply a strength contest, a source of diversion and amusement: "Who's the village champion? Well, let's gather 'round the lifting-stone and see!"

The stone-lifting competition was no less complex than a modern weight-lifting event. Several lifting styles were practiced, and each of these required a lifter to master the coordination of distinct muscle groups (Chin Song-gi 1981:34; Cho Won-gil 1984). Beyond this, stories abound of hostile villages attempting to steal each other's lifting-stones. Was the lifting-stone, then, a village talisman, having power to improve luck and prevent calamities? Contemporary islanders have denied during informal interviews that anyone ever worshipped the stones, and many found the idea ridiculous.

Villagers agree that the stone-lifting game was a rite of passage for its young men.

Competition with the stone was a strictly male prerogative. Thus, the stone-lifting game of Cheju can be classed with traditional strength tests of manhood once practiced in such diverse places as Greece, Scotland, Germany, and Switzerland. Stone-lifting of this sort is still practiced by Basque shepherds (State 1982).
There is a folk-tale that may explain the origin of the Cheju stone-lifting game. The tale demonstrates again the strong influence of geomancy on the islanders. Geomantic (feng-shui or p’ung-su) theory presupposes that any human construction is an intervention in the universal harmony of nature, and of serious consequence to the fortunes of villagers.

About 250 years ago the people of a village now called Taerim were advised by a p’ung-su “doctor,” or geomancer that a dangerous weakness in landform existed to the west of their village. Alarmed villagers were instructed to reinforce that direction artificially, by lifting one gigantic stone upon another at the western border of the village. Two massive stones were rolled into place, but no way could be found to stack them. Meanwhile, the village was in ambiguous peril. Miraculously, a young Mr. Pak from the village embraced one stone and singlehandedly lifted it upon the other. The village soon began to prosper, and was known for a time thereafter as Ipsok, or "Standing-Stone" village. The village of Ipsok is today more widely known by its pure Korean name of Sondol, which has the same meaning. Taerim and Sondol (Ipsok) appear to be a recent fusion of two once-adjacent villages.

Due west of Ipsok, just beyond the stone pile, was the village of Suwon. As Ipsok prospered over the years, so Suwon declined. The villagers of Suwon eventually fixed the blame for their run of bad luck on the artificial stone pile built by their neighbors, the Ipsok villagers to the east: The standing-stone had fouled the eastern border of Suwon, obstructing its fortune.

The Suwon villagers dispatched a raiding party and toppled the perched stone. The villagers of Ipsok, who were now blessed with many strong young men, quickly replaced the fallen stone. The next day, however, it was down again. Then up. Then down. And so on for decades (Hyon Yong-jon 1976:217-219).

This legend may help to explain the origins of the stone-lifting game in Taerim village, perhaps to commemorate the village feud, or to glorify the strength of young Mr. Pak. The custom may have spread from Taerim to other parts of the island. The photography above is identified by Taerim villagers as depicting the legendary standing-stone, now in the "down" position. Since no villagers can recall having seen the capstone in the "up" position, it is presumed that this aspect of the Taerim-Suwon village rivalry petered out prior to the modern era.
There is no question that the lifting-stones and symbolic stone piles are a much less ubiquitous part of the Cheju landscape at present than previously. This decline is due to the fact that metaphysical symbolism in stone, so characteristic of the medieval Cheju landscape, no longer served its intended social function in the modern era. Certain stones once invested with meaning and incorporated in local spiritual and secular rituals are these days expendable, and are fast-forgotten components of the Cheju landscape in this present age of rapidly changing values and technologies.

In Hallim, just south of Taerim, there is a lifting-stone half-buried and half-forgotten beneath a village tree. This particular stone was allegedly muscled over to Hallim from Taerim by a Hallim raiding party (H.C. Pak, interviewed in 1981).

Hallim's possession of Taerim's stone is a trophy of its evolving dominance over Taerim as a market center. The lifting-stones of Cheju were indeed once used to measure power among villages. Villages with big stones were proud, since the stones indirectly represented village prosperity and the excellent condition of their youth. Villages with small stones were objects of ridicule. Furthermore, if a stranger boldly entered a village he risked being invited to lift its stone. His failure could result in a thrashing at the hands of local lads, after which he could expect to buy a round of drinks as recompense for his trespassing (Chin Song-gi 1981:34-35).

Interest in stone-lifting seems to have declined on Cheju Island as peasant energies shifted from clearing out field-stones to plowing and processing crops. As all arable land in the peasant landscape surrounding each village was claimed and cleared, the axial symbol of community spirit in the village peasant landscape shifted from the lifting-stone to the millwheel, and elsewhere in the public realm. The lifting-stones of Cheju remain today as a legacy of back-breaking toil and of the game that was inspired by that toil.

Judging from old timers' comments about lifting-stones, there is some justification for describing the lifting-stone game as a ritual confrontation between Cheju peasants and stubborn fieldstones that were once a particularly intransigent aspect of local subsistence farming. Young
Cheju men folk had reason to confront the lifting-stone with a vengeance after a dispiriting day in the fields. Just seeing the idle stone reposing in the shade at the village crossroads inspired work-weary peasants to take up its challenge. No small part of their inspiration came from the pressures of village social conventions whose exact origins in this instance are vague.

However, in all areas of the world where arable soils are mixed with stone, and where the repetitive process of field-clearing was a principal activity of sedentary farming, the stones assumed over a time a broad significance in local folkways, often elevated to a common metaphor by which the folk in their village societies expressed profound attitudes about their place in nature, in society, and about life in general (Kim Yong-don 1970). Consider, for example, the New England stonescape and the eloquent dissertation on the "Mending Wall" by Robert Frost.

The lifting-stone must have appeared pathetic rather than formidable, squatting there in the dust, alone, and at the hub of human activity. Young farmers who while out in their fields felt helplessly outnumbered by entrenched armies of stone, could encircle a solitary lifting-stone at the village center and enjoy the delicious sense of accomplishment in demonstrating mastery over the single stone.

To wrestle the stone was the right of each youth. Actually lifting the stone was a rare and dramatic, if temporary, victory over stone-nature. The village lifting-stone, in an analogy with islander kinship systems, was a father to all stones in the vicinity. With the lifting of the patriarch, stone-nature reverberated with this message: Human virtue and diligence have earned this man and these villagers a respectable place in the natural order.

Although the lifting-stone game is no longer practiced on Cheju Island, the neglected stones may still remain here and there to remind older villagers of their earlier significance in focusing community spirit within the public realm of peasant landscape. Few, if any, patriarchs among the local society of peasant farmers can today recall the excitement that once centered on lifting the village stone. The lifting-stone was the focus of an arena rich in sights, sounds, and camaraderie, where individual householders gathered as villagers to express their solidarity.
against outsiders and, as individual peasant farmers, to match themselves against the symbol of an oppressive aspect of subsistence farming on Cheju Island.

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H.C. Pak, interviewed in 1981.

Part Two, Chapter Two

Jeju Island’s Pigsty-Privies


This chapter introduces a somewhat delicate conversational topic about Cheju Island – its pigsty-privies. Those who may protest this conversation, perhaps thinking it uncivilized, impolite and unsavory to write of such things, only betray their own ignorance or intolerance of one of humankind’s oldest and wisest agricultural traditions. Sadly, even Thoreau deliberately spares his readers any mention of his toilet facilities in *Walden*. While even iconic nature-lovers may inexplicably alienate themselves from Nature by deliberately avoiding the scatological topic, they and other coprophobics in need of normality might begin their recovery by reading scholarly publications by Laporte (2000) and Thomas (1989) as “icebreakers” -- or perhaps just continue to read the following paragraphs.

Agricultural history teaches that pigsty-privies were once widespread throughout the world – with examples found even in Merry Old England!

A pigsty-privy (circa 1895) in Appleby, Lincolnshire
(http://www.appleby-lincolnshire.co.uk/OutbuildingsPrivies.html)

But it is on Cheju Island where they have apparently made their “last stand” against the worldwide juggernaut of agricultural modernization, and where their everyday experience is still within living human memory. Some cosmopolitan travelers (and especially Australians) do tend
to find their topic fascinating. Antiquarians and deep ecologists, among others, find them profound; as here for example: "even the prosaic pig is said to bear seven spots on its hind legs resembling the seven stars . . ." (Rufus 1913:27).

The pigsty-privy built of dark, durable volcanic stone was once a ubiquitous feature in every island village and its customary use was of essential importance to the subsistence agricultural endeavors of the islanders. Its customary use is banned by government decree. However, cordonned-off museum examples of the architectural artifact in good repair may still be viewed on Cheju Island; for example, in the folk village at Chongui.

![Cheju Island pigsty-privy outdoor folk-museum exhibit. Sign says: “This is a combined pigpen and outhouse that our ancestors built. Its appearance is preserved here, but it is no longer used.”](image)

Elsewhere there persist only the abandoned remains of some of the rest of its kind. I will speak of the Cheju pigsty-privy in the present tense as I first encountered it during the early 1970’s, even though its heyday in Cheju villages and towns had even by then long since peaked.

The traditional Cheju household pigsty-privy is so rich in sensory impressions that urban Westerners are sometimes overwhelmed to the point of nausea on their first encounter with its intimate smells, textures, sights, sounds, and (while experienced according to its function) perhaps a kinesthetic sense of vertigo while perched astride its pungent pit. The typical rural Cheju pigsty-privy is called *t'ongsi* in island dialect. It is a circular enclosure built of stones, where "friendly pigs are eager to consume what the islanders would not even touch" (Chin Song-gi 1979:24). Architecturally, the pig's world a microcosm of the islander's household compound, and is located within it. In the following sketch, numbers 5, 6 and 7 indicated the major pigsty-privy architectural components.
The basic features of construction are an elevated privy with its basement opening onto an enclosed corral containing a pig shelter. Usually the privy, corral, and shelter walls were all constructed of the same blue-black volcanic stones that made up the human dwelling and its walls. In the following photograph, the pigsty-privy structure is located in the foreground, left.
In rural areas, most privies are nowadays partially or entirely enclosed, in which case the roof is often made of thatch tied down firmly against the wind, just like the roof on the human dwelling. Within villages and towns, privy and shelter roofs are at present increasingly observed to be sheets of galvanized steel. Privy doors are optional features, providing some protection in winter for those islanders who eschew chamber pots. Privies without doors usually face at close quarters the inner wall of the household compound. Inside the privy the rough-hewn volcanic stones are often piled high, forming a solid closet, protective against the elements and totally dark but for the slivers of wind and light that can penetrate where the stones fit more loosely. The squatting hole is centrally located on the floor.

By 1970 (exemplifying the pervasive intrusive impact of the Saemaul [New Village Movement] “Cement Era” in rural South Korea) the elevated privy perches were suddenly being fashioned from precast concrete slabs. The more authentic – and precarious – privy perches comprised of two stone slabs. Beneath these was a free fall to the cellar floor, to which the pig in its corral had access.
How high can a privy pig jump? Often a sturdy stick is within easy reach, useful as a club to keep the coprophagous and enthusiastic animal below temporarily at bay.

Within the corral the pig ranges freely beneath and between the privy and its covered shelter always built (for reasons suggested below) across the pigsty corral at a distance from the cellar.

Organic litter in various stages of decomposition is strewn across the corral. A large stone bowl, or some such form of solid container, is a common fixture in the corral for providing slop and drinking water to the pig.
Since the privy-pig was long ago domesticated in the Far East (as well as elsewhere) to provide fertilizer as well as food, its appearance and temperament have been molded by the conditions of its captivity. One 19th-century Western observer described the Korean pigs as "very small . . . always black and loathsome. Their bristles stand up along their backs, and they are lean, active, and of specially revolting habits" (Isabella Bird Bishop 1898:162). No profound cosmic imagery here! To this risk-adverse adventuress, as with most other earlier Western visitors to Cheju Island, the Korean pig was merely ugly and repulsive. It is for this reason, and for dubious reasons of hygiene and disease prevention, that Korean economic planners argued successfully during the height of the Seamaul campaign that the pigsty-privy custom is incompatible with the promotion of tourism on Cheju Island, and therefore the custom was eventually eliminated by decree (circa 1985).

As earlier indicated, the pigsty-privy is located near the human dwelling and most often toward the back of the household (twetkan is Korean vernacular for "outhouse" and literally signifies “out back”). In most cases the privy site is pre-selected at the same time that all other buildings essential to the household compound are laid out. The site selection is almost always made by a p’ungsu (M.Ch. feng-shui) master.

Clients approaching a typical stone privy closet-enclosure are greeted with pig noises and soon enter what newcomers complain of as a malodorous and otherwise disagreeable dungeon-like confinement. The privy ambience is however one to which islanders have been inured from ancient times, and to which long-term visitors can invariably adjust. In the hot summer season, spiders, crickets, flies, and rodents are omnipresent and in vigorous movement, making the pigsty-privy a powerful sensory adventure.

Adventure? Quite so: I recall, for example, rushing out to a pigsty-privy on a tangerine plantation late one moonless hot summer night with an upset stomach and a faulty flashlight. I fell down no few times, but finally reached my goal, finally flinging open the door and sitting myself down in the dark. My flashlight then unexpectedly became operational, which alarmed a bloom of a thousand of crickets that, unbeknownst to me, were cooling off while clinging to the stones that comprised three of the interior closet walls. When blinded by the sudden flash of my
light, they all instantly leaped at the same time! Suddenly assaulted by the insect swarm, my screams split the night and the incident – traumatic for me – I soon discovered gave local villagers a funny story to tell at my expense for the duration of their lives.

Introducing the strong sensory environment of the pigsty-privy provides an appropriate prelude for digressing about a variety of functional relationships between man and pig that have long supported the viability of subsistence farming throughout Cheju Island. Some of these relations have been reduced by Cheju peasants to an adage, “samdan nonpop” or “three-step farming logic”: 1) pig-feed is free; 2) pork is eaten; 3) the fields are fertilized (Woo 1965:111). But there are subtleties in these functional relationships that require some elaboration.

The privy-pig is essential to the peasant as a fertilizer factory. Pigsty-privies on Cheju Island are a local solution to a problem encountered everywhere that peasant families need to create low-cost waste recycling schemes. Such schemes are widespread throughout the tropics. Recycling practices that include the use of nightsoil (human feces) as pig feed, though potentially unhygienic, are or were traditional in a number of South Asian, African, and Central American countries (Polprasert and Edwards 1981:3) and in the Far Eastern regions of China (Hsu 1980:97) and the Ryukyu Islands (Glacken 1955:71; Pitts et al. 1955:190), as well as on Cheju Island (Park and Chyu 1963:161). This widespread solution to the universal problem of the disposal of unwanted human excreta deserves exploration and comment.

The value of organic fertilizers has been recognized by the Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans for centuries. Crop wastes and pig feces, when mixed together, provide fertilizers rich in nitrogenous substances and minerals. By hand-raising one or two pigs as fertilizer factories, the Cheju farming household is always guaranteed some pork in its diet, the possibility of cash income, and most important, pig manure for organic fertilizer.

The logistic problem involved in manufacturing pig wastes by utilizing human feces for feed was apparently solved quite early in Far Eastern history. Both Hsu Cho-yun (1980:97) and Francesca Bray (1984:291) give evidence that the pigsty-privy has long been familiar and important in China, describing terra cotta models of adjoining pigpens and toilets excavated from Chinese Han dynasty tombs. Here are two examples:

![Example of pigsty-privy models](image)

The discovery that objects representing such mundane aspects of ancient farm life were among those selected for burial with kings speaks for the significance of the pigsty-privy as an
important part of the agricultural system. Evidence of its importance is also found in this Chinese
ideogram

that once signified both “pigsty” and “privy” and was pronounced hon by Koreans. Clearly, the
old, close, and affectionate relationship that I observed between Cheju Island and privy-pig
during the early 1970s represents a relationship long established in areas of Eastern Asia where,
to paraphrase Simoons (1967:27):

the pig in the traditional economy was a household scavenger which survived on table
scraps and chaff. They were quartered in the family garbage pit and regularly fed human
excreta and garbage. Thus they not only converted into flesh certain plant nutrients that
the human digestive system could not absorb directly, but may have performed an
important health function, too. Human parasites such as hookworm may have been
destroyed in the pig's intestines.

The health functions of the pigsty-privy on Cheju Island are a matter of some
controversy. Keeping the privy-pig is most often described as a health hazard, since dangerous
Cysticercus cellulosae (Taeniasis) infection in humans can result from ingesting infected pork,
especially where raw pork is eaten, as it occasionally was, and still is, on Cheju Island (Kim
Seung-ho 1977, 1982).

In 1983 approximately 60% of the toilets used by Cheju Islanders were pigsty-privies,
and the incidence of Cysticercus cellulosae infection in Cheju pork was a low .1856%: 114 of
61,420 inspected pigs (Kim Seung-ho 1984:105-106). In the mid-1960's, according to the same
source, 95% of the Cheju toilets were pigsty-privies. Park and Chyu (1963:172) report that 16%
of the islanders at that time were infected with either beef or park tapeworm, but then go on to
discuss the problems with their survey. There is therefore insufficient reliable data to conclude
that the pork tapeworm disease was ever a serious human health problem on Cheju Island,
despite the fact that pigsty-privies were once used by almost the entire island population.

Yang and Koh (1983), for example, do not list tapeworm infection among various swine
diseases requiring precautionary attention on Cheju Island. This may be because the disease in
pigs is easily identified by farmers at the time of pig-slaughtering, and infected carcasses are
entirely discarded -- "thrown into the sea!" according to one villager. A peasant would no more
knowingly eat infected pork than willingly tread on a poisonous snake; we can therefore
tentatively conclude that in the past the rate of occurrence for both calamities was equally low.

In sum, the pigsty-privy system on Cheju Island may not entirely deserve its notoriety as
a dangerous health hazard to the inhabitants. Both Park and Chyu (1963:183) and Francesca
Bray (in Needham and Bray, vol. 6, 1984:291) are in agreement with Simoons that the system
works to lower the overall incidence of parasite infection, except for the pork tapeworm disease. Expert opinion is divided; a Korean public health officer even once suggested that the pigsty-
privy custom should be imported to mainland Korea (Park and Chyu 1963:161)! In any case, pit cesspools that can result in polluting groundwater with human wastes may be a worse threat to the islanders than the pigsty-privies they are increasingly replacing (ibid.:183).

The layout of a typical Cheju peasant farm compound establishes the close physical proximity established in the built environment between peasant and pig. The close functional relationship implied by this proximity deserves some additional attention here.

A European or American might find the existence of the privy-pig in the Cheju peasant form system at first incomprehensible. This is because the Western experience has historically been to use horse and cattle manure, and not pig manure, as a source of organic fertilizer in subsistence agriculture. Hsu Cho-yun (1980:97) explains that the scarcity of arable lands in populous East Asia has historically prevented Chinese and Korean peasants from allowing their fields to lie fallow; a practice typical of medieval peasant farming in Europe. As a result, there was always a lack of grazing space in the East Asia wherever the land was under continuous cultivation. Not only was there minimal animal husbandry where grazing was at a premium, but manure from the farm animals to be used in preparing the soils for continuous use was also at a premium.

The traditional application of animal manure to increase and maintain the fertility of Cheju soils much enhances the success of the local subsistence farm system. Cheju soils, which are derived from volcanic ash, are deficient in nitrogen, potassium, and especially phosphorus. These are precisely the nutrients provided by adding farm-animal manure, usually mixed with plant litter, to the soil (Tisdale and Nelson 1956:234).

Generally, farmyard manure may include all feces produced by domestic farm animals and used for soil preparation, including the feces contributed by the members of the peasant family (nightsoil). Nightsoil is in fact richer in nitrogen, potassium, and phosphorus than the feces of the common domestic animals: cow, horse, pig, sheep, and chicken (Yawalkar et al. 1967:52). However, composting of pig manure rather than nightsoil is the traditional practice on Cheju Island. Explaining this, Park and Chyu (1963:167) report that islanders believe that human feces only aggravate the acidic soil condition, while swine excreta is alkaline and therefore suitable.

Islanders claim that the privy-pigsty system not only provides for labor-free composting, but actually reduces odors and pests. The human wastes are devoured by the scavenging, omnivorous privy-pig within the confines of its pen, along with all other unwanted organic wastes discarded there by the peasant household. Pig dung and litter are then allowed to accumulate in place to form rich, pathogen-free compost within the confines of the sunlit pigsty. As the pig roams about the sty, its movements aerate the composting materials and accelerate the biological decomposition of the organic wastes. This compost is eventually scooped out and transported to the fields as manure.
It is ironic that upland grain hulls and chaff, which are nutrient-rich, form a considerable part of pig fodder, while Cheju peasants themselves eat the less nutritious hulled grains.

Generally speaking, animal manures are both the solid (dung) and liquid (urine) excreta of livestock, usually mixed with a certain amount of an absorbent litter, such as straw, which has been used as bedding for the animals. Close inspection of which of the available domestic animals and types of litter might provide the most appropriate organic manures for Cheju soils reveals the wisdom of keeping a pig within a subsistence farm system on Cheju Island. Table 1 below indicates that the Cheju privy-pig, though "lean and active," is perhaps the most efficient producer of nutritious organic manure for volcanic Cheju soils among the domestic animals traditionally kept on the island.

Table 1. Manure Produced by Various Domestic Animals and Wheat Straw Bedding.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Animal</th>
<th>Excrement weight</th>
<th>Straw weight</th>
<th>Total weight</th>
<th>Contains:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Horse</td>
<td>9 tons</td>
<td>3 tons</td>
<td>12 tons</td>
<td>158 pounds 61 pounds 145 pounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cow</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>171 47 148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pig</td>
<td>15.25</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18.25</td>
<td>180 122 170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheep</td>
<td>6.25</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>9.75</td>
<td>154 65 175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicken</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>85 68 34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table is revised from Tisdale and Nelson (1956:237).

Although the Cheju pig during traditional times was typically small, the other domestic animals were also small. Moreover, pigs were more prolific, numerous, and cheaper to feed than horses and cattle. In addition, pigs were readily eaten, while horses and cattle were too precious for the peasantry to consume.

Table 2 indicates that pig manure is a richer source of nitrogen, potassium, and especially phosphorus, than horse or cattle manure. This is particularly important on Cheju Island, given the special requirements of its phosphorus-starved soils. Since organic manure from farm animals is bulky and has a low nutrient-to-mass ratio when mixed with litter, the labor costs of transporting manure to the fields must be considered to be most efficient where the privy-pig is utilized as a major source of fertilizer.

Table 2. Mineral Content of Manure Produced by Various Domestic Animals and Wheat Straw Bedding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Animal</th>
<th>100 parts wet manure contain:</th>
<th>100 parts dry manure contain:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nitrogen Phosphorus Potassium</td>
<td>Nitrogen Phosphorus Potassium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horse</td>
<td>.55 .30 .33</td>
<td>2.29 1.25 1.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cow</td>
<td>.30 .20 .10</td>
<td>1.67 1.11 .56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pig</td>
<td>.60 .50 .40</td>
<td>3.75 3.13 2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheep</td>
<td>.60 .30 .20</td>
<td>3.75 1.87 1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicken</td>
<td>1.63 1.54 .85</td>
<td>6.27 5.92 3.27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table revised after Jenkins (1935:5). The pig, compared with other larger domestic farm animals, is an efficient producer of wastes containing those nutrients (e.g., phosphorus) most useful in correcting soil deficiencies for agriculture on volcanic Cheju Island.
Regarding the type of litter used as bedding in the pigsty-privy, Table 3 indicates that upland grain straws available on Cheju Island have a higher mineral content than do most other litter materials used for manuring by subsistence agriculturalists around the world. It should also be noted that phosphorus-rich dwarf bracken is widespread on Cheju Island (Wilson 1979:69); and while this bracken is not used as litter in the pigpen, it is collected and eaten by the peasants. Thus bracken nutrients form a component of human waste that becomes converted into pig manure to eventually enrich the fields.

Table 3. Nutrient Qualities of Various Bedding Litters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Litter Type</th>
<th>Nitrogen</th>
<th>Phosphorus</th>
<th>Potassium</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wheat straw</td>
<td>.53 %</td>
<td>.1 %</td>
<td>1.1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bean straw</td>
<td>1.84</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rice straw</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>1.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reeds</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>1.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bracken, green</td>
<td>2.16</td>
<td>.32</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veld grass</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.1</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banana leaves</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugarcane trash</td>
<td>.8</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potato tops</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moss</td>
<td>.1</td>
<td>.1</td>
<td>.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peat</td>
<td>.6</td>
<td>.1</td>
<td>.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sawdust</td>
<td>.2</td>
<td>.1</td>
<td>.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table revised after Jenkins 1935:6.

A final consideration: All animal manures used in temperate and cold climates, and therefore manures produced on Cheju Island, have a long-term beneficial effect on the soils where they are applied. Their considerable residual value -- as opposed to immediate value -- accumulates and is liberated to successive generations of peasant farmers who will work the same plots of land. The pigsty-privy, in short, represents a long-term investment appropriate to a low-technology husbandry of the land, and is closely related to the successful continuity of one family's tenure over its inherited fields. Artificial fertilizers, as compared to organic fertilizers, have only their immediate value and no beneficial residual value. Yet the exclusive use of artificial fertilizers was promoted by the Saemaul Movement! At the same time the use of the pigsty-privy is being discouraged, perhaps unjustifiably, for public health reasons.

What economic and social price, then, was paid by eliminating the privy-pig from the peasant landscape? Long-term stability in soil productivity and long-term family connections with specific plots of land should have been weighed more heavily against the value of short-term increases in agricultural output.

In the 1970s steadfast yet ignored rural Cheju peasants were also quick to cite additional reasons for keeping this primitive and practical pigsty-privy waste recycling scheme, including the cash profit they received if they rented or sold their privy pigs. When an islander decided to
slaughter his or her pig and share pork in ceremony with neighbors, this act strengthened village solidarity, providing even the poorest of villagers with necessary protein. Also, Cheju privy pigs, being half ears and snout, made useful sentinels for guarding the farm compound. For these many reasons, Cheju pigsty-privies survived into recent memory from Korea's agricultural antiquity.

Remnants of pigsty-privies in the Cheju Island cultural landscape still can provide visible, viable gateways to increased understanding of some of the wisdoms of everyday agricultural life in the past. However insignificant and unappealing a cultural feature may appear on first impression it may, as in the example of the pigsty-privy, prove a valuable lesson from the all-but-forgotten annals of human survival.
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PART TWO, CHAPTER THREE

The Walking Tractor: Trojan Horse in the Jeju Island Landscape


The famous legend of the “Trojan horse” is derived from Greek mythology. It is widely known and referenced in the scholarly annals of Western Civilization, as well as in Western popular culture. The gist of the story is that at a critical juncture of the Trojan War (c. 1100 B.C.), when Greek armies were growing weary of their long and unsuccessful siege of Troy, the trickster Odysseus conceived a devious plan that involved faking a temporary retreat and leaving behind only an enormous wooden horse as a “gift.” The victorious Trojans, allowed their exuberance over their apparent victory to cloud their good judgment. They deluded themselves into believing that the gift horse was a Greek tribute to Trojan bravery and fortitude. They rolled their gift inside their walled city. However, the Trojan horse was a ruse that cleverly concealed a handful of Greek soldiers. These eventually emerged under cover of darkness from their hiding place to throw open the city gates. The entire Greek army, having stealthily returned and positioned outside the city walls, rushed in through the opened gates and sacked the city. They massacred the stunned Trojans and destroyed their monuments and most cherished traditions. Today the term “Trojan horse” signifies any disguised gift given by a treacherous enemy.

I adopt this famous Greek legend as my theme for this essay because its example by comparison sheds critical light on a little-known chapter in the tumultuous, brief history of Cheju Island modernization. The comparison reveals the darker side of economic growth in an episode that occurred early-on in the modernization process. The episode involved the treacherous deployment of an allegorical Trojan horse – the walking tractor -- to Hallasan.
Early Korean histories refer to a large island named “Chuho” located on the high seas southwest of the Korean peninsula. The inhabitants of Chuho were said to be of short stature, and they spoke a strange language. They cut their hair short, raised cattle and swine, and went about half-dressed in leather smocks. These remote islanders also engaged in sea trade with the mainlanders, and with the Japanese. Where did they come from? To find out, we can consult the Chinese dynastic histories.

Early Chinese histories report that the “First Emperor” maintained an ancient seaside ritual begun by his predecessors. He sent well-provisioned voyagers into the North China Sea in search of the fabled “Islands of the Blest” and their sacred plants of immortality. One such expensive expedition comprised of young men and maidens, seeds, domestic animals, farm tools and other provisions was led by an adventurer named So Pu.

These expeditions, probably employing fleets of sailing rafts, might have led to the successful colonization of diverse places both near and far afield from China, including Japan and the Ryukyu Islands. It is even possible that such Chinese voyagers drifted as far as the west coast of North America. Much closer at hand and visible from afar due to the great height of its central volcano is Hallasan; the first major landfall due east from the Chinese most eastern coastline. Subsistence agricultural history on Cheju Island may have begun with these ancient oceanic drifters, and has endured for tens of centuries almost to the present where it continues even still in the memories of some of its living inhabitants. The following photograph of a typical subsistence Cheju Island farming village landscape might have been taken at any time prior to the onset of mid-20th-century modernization and the introduction of the walking tractor.
The earliest Korean census date on record for Cheju Island is 1420 A.D., at which time there were only 19,000 residents and their population density – the island being slightly over 700 square miles in size -- was only 27 per square mile. Today the population is approaching 600,000 in total, with almost 800 persons per square mile. As recently as 1980 slightly over one-fourth of Cheju Island was still under cultivation, with over 80 per cent of these lands remarkably atomized and allocated to dry-field farming: Of approximately 33 thousand hectares of land farmed by 43 thousand households at that time, three-fourths of those households farmed land less than one hectare in size. Traditional farm holdings were not only small, but were becoming smaller due to subdivision through inheritance practices.

These small, irregularly shaped, plots were widely distributed around rural villages in a deliberate but seemingly inefficient way. This is because of what, on closer consideration, seems
to be a universal peasant logic among subsistence farmers everywhere that functions to minimize losses in the event of natural catastrophes. The wisdom of this premeditated atomization and wide dispersal of productive landholdings is its time-tested, reliable strategy of crop insurance in the event of floods, fires, pests – anything that might endanger or destroy productivity in one spot location yet spare it in another.

Another reason for the small sizes, irregular shapes, and wide dispersals of cultivated fields on Cheju Island appears to have been that many of the ubiquitous outcroppings of sterile basalts projecting above the soil were so difficult to remove that they had to be avoided. In fact, agricultural history on Cheju Island reveals that the oldest field plots may have been but tiny walled-in pockets carved out of solid slopes of lava sheets and filled with compost and seaweed. Thus the subsistence farming landscape on the island surrounding every village slowly evolved from the days of the legendary Su Po into a mosaic of cultivable landscape typically projecting outward from the village center, helter-skelter, to surround island hamlets and villages.

Some of the crude but ingenious and appropriate farm implements manufactured by Hallasan’s subsistence farmers are depicted here:
And here:
At present antique Cheju farm implements can only be publicly viewed in folk village and museum exhibits, or on the darkened walls of basement tea rooms and beer halls.

Tractors are powered by internal combustion engines, and are the farmer’s alternative in the industrial age to the traditional biological power plant of horse, ox, or mule. The word “tractor” is a compression of the two terms “traction” and “motor,” and the implication is that the main utility of the device is in plowing and cultivating fields, for tilling, planting, and weeding. Before the introduction of walking tractors with internal combustion engine, Cheju islanders pulled primitive plows using their own biological power or that of an indigenous breed of plow ponies.

However, tractor technology evolved rapidly during the past century to eclipse the biological engines of the past, and to provide the world’s farmers with a very versatile main power plant capable of doing more than just pulling and pushing loads. For example, modern tractor engines can turn belt and chain drives as a stationary power source for numerous agricultural and nonagricultural activities: pumping, spraying, mixing, and pulverizing, and so on.
The first tractors invented during the early era of mechanized farming were large, heavy and cumbersome, designed for increasing production on level unobstructed fields with rich, friable soils such as were found in the Midwestern United States at the time of their introduction there. It was, however, unfeasible until well into the twentieth century to develop and manufacture a special purpose tractor for poor farmers working small fields in rough terrain.

The walking tractor (various described in English as a rototiller, power cultivator, power tiller, hand tractor, or garden tractor) is a small tractor invented in Europe in the early 1900s. The invention appeared in response to the special needs of isolated Swiss dairy farmers who, in an industrializing economy, occupied fields which were too small in scale for the maximum utilization of their capital, and which could not be easily enlarged to accommodate big tractors.

The potential for applications of tractor technology in distant Asian rice paddies was not immediately apparent to Swiss inventors, even when prototypes were eventually exported to the Japanese Alps to service dairy farmers there.

In Switzerland, then in Japan, the walking tractor became an attractive machine for traditional farmers of modest means, not only because of its small size, easy operation, manageability, and reasonable cost, but because the operator walked behind the machine at close quarters, guiding the tractor much as he and his forefathers had guided the horse or ox. Thus the psychological transition from the biological power plant to a mechanical power plant on a traditional farm anywhere was not such a traumatic adjustment. The demonstrated easy transferability of the farmer’s affectionate bond from a biological power plant to a mechanized power plant helped earn the walking tractor quick acceptance in many conservative farming villages throughout the world. It explains why farmers around the world, speaking many languages, have nicknamed the walking tractor their local equivalent of “iron horse” or “iron buffalo.”

In 1958 Robert B. Hall described the rapid spread of the walking tractor for cultivating wet paddy fields in Japan as a “significant advance in the mechanization of farming.” As indicated, the Japanese had originally imported the walking tractor from Europe for pasture management and dry-field cultivation, after the Swiss had demonstrated its utility.
An ingenious modification of the tractor wheels adapted the machine to an even more productive environment in Japan’s many tiny muddy and flooded rice fields. Hall (1958:320) remarked that this adaptation in a typical village was “a very important change, as it shows increasing efficiency of the tractors and certainly a much more economical use of them.” He added that by increasing Japanese agricultural productivity “the machines contributed to a better way of life and ‘a higher cultural standard.’” These positive claims attest to both the success of the walking tractor (to the idea of increased production that gave rise to it and which the machine embodies. That idea has subsequently spread from Japan throughout East Asia with the diffusion of the machine.

Japanese walking tractors were first imported and used in South Korea to cultivate paddy fields. Prior to 1962 the Dae Dong Industrial Co, Ltd, provided walking tractors for the domestic market under a technological license from the Mistubishi Company of Japan. Thereafter farm mechanization began in earnest and the machines began to be produced in South Korea (personal correspondence from Andre Brandel, July 18, 1985). By the mid-1970s several Korean companies were competing to meet the demand created by the government’s zealous spread of modernization systematically into the rural sector.

President Park Chung-hee (served 1961-1979) was inspired by American economist Walt Rostow’s capitalist manifesto (The Five Stages of Economic Growth, 1960) to institute his own Saemaul Undong growth ideology nationwide, which in part used walking tractor technology to spearhead its rural modernization drive. Forrest R. Pitts, an American geographer is called “Father of the Walking Tractor” in Korea for his role in promoting its diffusion throughout South Korea. Although it is uncommon, I am going to take a provocative nativistic perspective on the history of modernization on Cheju Island that 1) valorizes its indigenous old ideas and practices, and 2) critiques for the purposes of further discussion the role of President Park’s Saemaul Undong for systematically destroying them.

The success of the walking tractor on Cheju Island cannot be related to its demonstrated success in peninsular South Korea for increasing wet-field rice production with rational efficiency. Rice production is for reasons of its unique physical geography a minor part of the island’s agricultural economy. Nevertheless by 1983 there were well over 14,000 walking tractors on the island, as the following graph indicates.
TC on this graph indicates the pace of walking-tractor adoptions on Cheju Island from for two decades beginning in the 1960s. TJ notes for comparative purposes the history of walking tractor adoptions in Japan, beginning in the 1930s. F on the graph charts the dramatic decline of Cheju Island farm families related to walking-tractor introduction.

Interestingly, if you were to observe first-hand the performance of walking-tractors on Cheju Island circa 1975, you would rarely see them being used in the fields for plowing and cultivating. You might then conclude that the tractor was being widely and rapidly adopted by farmers for other reasons.

Walking tractor promotion and its versatility go far toward explaining the initial popularity of the device. Cheju farmers, however poor, initially could receive loans at low interest (10 percent) to purchase their machines – and the first year of ownership was free! The repayment period was a long seven years. The South Korean government, through Saemaul Undong, aggressively encouraged tractor sales and provided easy loans, underwriting about two-thirds of the cost of providing the farmers with their walking tractors.
The top choice of Korean farmers circa 1985 was the eight horsepower model manufactured by the Dae Song Company. It weighed about 450 kilograms. However, there were several companies at that time manufacturing similarly constructed walking tractors for the domestic market in South Korea, with a variety of models from which to choose. They all ran on gasoline or kerosene, and all were similarly attractive in terms of their versatility as stationary and traction power sources: pumping water, spraying insecticides, and for hauling and transport.

Mr. Kim Tae-gu, a representative of the Cheju Agricultural Machine Institute in the 1980s, explained to me that while the first of Cheju’s walking tractors may have indeed been purchased to improve yields in several hectares of paddies near Sogwipo City, their widespread use and popularity began after Saemaul Undong economic planners began to promote a citrus boom during that peaked during the 1970s, when the walking tractor, as a labor-saving device for spraying insecticides and fertilizers, proved itself in the then proliferating orchards. Small, concentrated orchards could benefit from the walking tractors stationary engine alone by pumping liquids through long hoses. Since Cheju was an entomologist’s paradise at the time the walking tractor was first introduced, the island experimental station’s recommended insecticide dosage was then approximately ten insecticide sprayings per tree during the hot and humid months preceding each annual winter harvest. After several decades of pesticide sprayings following this regimen upon thousands of tangerine plantations throughout the island it is doubtful if Cheju Island in the areas of its orchards are still an entomologist’s paradise.

Once walking tractors were increasingly accepted by citrus farmers, their limited use by poor farmers as power tillers in Cheju’s upland fields was inevitable, and especially with intense Saemaul Undong encouragements and incentives. Obvious limitations on their efficient use in the fields can perhaps explain why the tractors did not replace the horse, ox, and cow as quickly as the government planned. However, these limitations do not explain why the widespread acceptance of walking tractors by Cheju’s poor farm families increased dramatically despite their limited use in the fields.

First, as regards these limitations: Small, inaccessible fields and abrasive soils combined to discourage poor grain and vegetable farmers from purchasing the tractors exclusively for use in cultivating the fields. Tractor implements were easily damaged by rock and sand; worse,
volcanic dust and grit penetrated faulty oil seals and neglected air intakes to abrade internal combustion mechanisms and ruin their entire power plants. Even if Cheju soils were soft and slick with clay, and the upland plots spacious and accessible, the time required to planting, cultivating, and weeding during the year was so brief as to recommend renting or borrowing rather than purchasing walking tractors by poorer farm families. Why then were they acquired so wholeheartedly by so many of the low-income island farmsteads?

The heavy use of the walking tractor on Cheju Island for transport is worth considering here, especially since it mobilized and thereby freed-up curious and adventurous village-dwelling farm families from their age-old habitual parochialisms. Prior to the introduction of the walking tractor subsistence farmers on Cheju had lived and worked in a completely rural setting, isolated from most of the many other island villages by rough terrain, inter-village territorial competitions, micro-regional xenophobia, and some outright clan-based feuding. Their experience differs little from the village-dwelling Chinese of the North China Plain under Maoism, who during their corresponding era of rapid rural economic development also accepted the walking tractor into their lives, for many of the same reasons as did the Cheju islander. Norman Chance has written of the walking tractor phenomena in China (1984:30):

There is one other form of transportation well recognized throughout rural China: catching a ride on the back of a wagon ... the old horse-drawn wagon is being replaced with large two-wheeled hand-held “walking tractors.” Although originally designed for agricultural purposes these machines can be easily converted into motorized four-wheeled vehicles by attaching a cart or wagon to the frame.

Chance also noted that mechanized transportation has been a high priority item for today’s Chinese peasant farmers, and that few walking tractors are actually found in the fields, where they have limited use.

Cheju farm families likewise took to the walking tractor for its transportation utility more than for its cultivating utility. By 1985 walking tractors could be observed everywhere on the roads of Cheju, between villages and towns, and always with those trailer hook-ups that converted them into four-wheeled vehicles. Unfortunately the small horsepower ratings of their engines – however much fuel efficient – did not generate much speed. Increasing numbers of farm families riding their small tractor-trailers on Cheju’s narrow, paved roadways, where speeding buses, trucks, and taxies reign, risked their lives for the convenience of increased mobility.
Farm tractor accidents skyrocketed during the 1980s -- but not on the farm. It is interesting that the factory-made walking tractors came equipped with headlights, though no sane farmer plowed at night. More interesting, driver’s licenses were not required for operating tractor-trailers on the roads, nor were the tractors themselves licensed as vehicles. Few poor farmers could afford such licenses and taxes. But is this so incredible? If it is the goal of the government to awaken poor farmers to accept change and modernization into their lives, what better way than to provide them with cheap transportation to the towns and cities where their wants and needs for modern technologies of all kinds could be stimulated and satisfied? Conspicuous consumption became the order of the day.

Ownership of a walking tractor therefore enabled the beginning of the transformation of Cheju islanders from traditional, rural, self-sufficient producers to modern, urban dependent consumers.
The walking tractor aggravated the gap between “haves” and “have-nots,”
while selfishness and jealousies fatally undermined islander communal ethics.

Already by 1983 Cheju islanders had become the most mechanized agriculturalists in all of South Korea, having one walking tractor for every 3.7 farm households; with one tractor for every four hectares of cultivated land. But by 1985, the island farmers where carrying a heavier debt burden than farmers in any of the other South Korean provinces. Not surprisingly, thousands of traditional Cheju farmers driven into debt increasingly abandoned the farming sector to join the urban work force on the peninsula.

Cook, et al. (1951:390-391) has outlined many of the reasons why a poor farmer anywhere in the world would accept a tractor substitute for a time-tested biological power plant: 1) farm animals require a larger storage space than tractors; 2) they cannot easily be adapted to stationary power production; 3) they cannot operate over long periods of time at high speeds or work continuously under heavy loads; 4) their performance decreases as daytime temperatures increase; 5) they can’t see well enough to work after dark; 6) they are not easily and quickly put into operation in emergency situations; and 7) they must be fed whether or not they work.

On the other hand, nothing short of coercion or low risk could entice many a poor farm family to substitute its familiar ox or mule for a tractor, which is totally unfamiliar to its traditional experience and understanding. Yet, the walking tractor’s promise of increasing yields and surpluses and wealth (a popular get-rich-quick story told by Saemaul Undong agricultural extension experts) was appealing, and easily trumped whatever the affectionate and symbiotic bond had been formed in the past between a farm family and its animal power plant. Cheju farmers were fundamentally pragmatic and most proved gullible to Saemaul Undong storytellers. Any fear of tractor substitution for farm animals was mitigated by government promises to provide expert advice in all matters related to the use, care, and maintenance of the tractor. Where was the risk if the cost of the substitution was heavily subsidized by the government?

Since the costs of having both a biological power plant and a mechanical substitute were prohibitive to the poor farmers, choosing the tractor over the animal had a profound aftermath. What many farmers did not realize at the time was that once the substitution had been made, and time had passed, the impact of their initial vote for modernization became irreversible. Worse, most of the shortcomings of the mechanical power plant become obvious only after the biological power plant had been removed. For example, the fuel and lubricants for the noisy
machine – oil, gasoline, and kerosene – had to be purchased with cash and not acquired by barter. Moreover, that fuel did not periodically and conveniently fall from the machine as free fertilizer once fell to enrich the soil. This tractor was no dumb, dung-providing beast. It was designed to create disorder and dependency. Artificial fertilizer also had to be purchased with cash.

A more serious disadvantage of this machine became painfully obvious to the poor farmer when even a minor breakdown rendered the entire power plant inoperable – which was often. Broken parts could be replaced—again, for cash—and perhaps even without necessarily threatening the farmer’s strict agricultural timetable, but only if the farmer knew how to diagnose problems and make repairs. The farmer also had to rely on dealers for replacement parts, often on short notice.

Drowning in cascading dependencies on outsiders, cash-short Cheju farmers hardly realized until it was too late how much their own modest farming operations had become jeopardized by the increased consumption habits that drove them into downward spirals. The walking tractors proved unexpectedly expensive to own. When the prices of fuel, artificial fertilizers, insecticides, and repair services escalated, production problems quickly multiplied for unlucky farmers as their debts increased astronomically. What happened to them then, in worst case scenarios, is a tragic historical documentary of bankruptcy and exile.

Many a poor farm family learned too late the disastrous significance of its loss of self-sufficiency. E. Estyn Evans (1956:237) described a similar situation that occurred earlier among many European farm families of modest means, after their own widespread acceptance of tractor power: “Surveying the present cultural landscape [in Europe] we see a countryside parceled out into isolated farms which have won their freedom but have lost their self-sufficiency ... .” Cheju Island’s poor farmers suffered the same experience after two decades of accepting their walking tractors. They discovered themselves, thanks to the walking tractor, freed of the past and dispossessed of the future.
References:


Part Three: Adventure

1. Notes on Some Early Western Travelers on Jeju Island

2. Siegfried Genthe's Jeju Odyssey
Part Three, Chapter One

Outline Notes on Some Early Western Travelers to Jeju Island

(This essay is an expanded and updated version of David Nemeth’s “Notes on Some Early Western Travelers on Cheju Island.” 1988. Tamla Munhwa [Cheju City, R.O.K: Tamla Culture Research Institute of Cheju National University] 7 [1988]:153-180).

Travelers, both men and women, arriving in Asia these days on the wings of globalization are relatively spoiled by modern transportation technologies and hospitality industries. Modern travelers can hardly be compared with the “adventurers” or “explorers” of yore, who more often than not risked life and limb to visit then-most-remote corners of Asia, which included Hallasan. Just arranging safe arrival to and departure from Hallasan prior to the mid-twentieth century was a notoriously difficult and dangerous endeavor for anyone – not the least Europeans. To this their adventurous stories are testimony. The earliest Western travelers to Hallasan were to a man (and a woman) hardly risk-averse, and all these brave hearts from an outsider point of view qualify as highly adventurous explorers. To the islanders, however, these early travelers were for the most part unwelcome and uninvited intruders exhibiting impertinent curiosities and rude behaviors.

The following outlined and thus still incomplete biographical sketches identify and celebrate some of the earliest Western travelers known to have viewed and/or visited Hallasan and to have written of their experiences in English. They all visited between 1653 and the mid-1930’s. The list is no doubt incomplete — but it establishes a critical mass upon which to build a more sophisticated collaborative book project. In chronological order of their arrivals, these travelers are:

1) Hendrick Hamel (1653)
2) Captain Charles A. Barlow and Lieutenant Kendall (1840)
3) Sir Edward (Captain) Belcher, with Arthur Adams (1845)
4) “Mr. McD” (1851)
5) Charles Chaille-Long (1888)
6) A. A. Pieters (1898)
7) William Franklin Sands (1900)
8) Dr. Siegfried Genthe (1901)
9) Malcom P. Anderson (1913)
10) Walther Stötzner (1930)
11) Hermann Lautensach (1933)
12) Lura Mclane Smith (1936)

These selected outline reports are interesting historical documents written by European and American travelers who actually walked the Cheju landscape and met its peoples. All of the visitors called Cheju Island “Quelpart” (various spellings), as was common use on Western maps from the time following the Hamel account all through the Japanese mid-colonial era. Nearly all but the earliest of these travelers took photographs, but only Anderson and Stötzner published photographs with their reports.
For reader convenience, here is an Internet web link to a satellite photo of Hallasan today: http://www.satellite-sightseer.com/id/13544/Republic_of_Korea/Jeju/Seogwipo/Hallasan

Ships’ captains La Perouse (May 1787), William Robert Broughton (October, 1797) and Basil Hall (1816) also approached and wrote of Cheju, but I have not included their comments since they did not land on Cheju Island. Also, famous authors Jack London* (American) and Ivan A. Goncharov (Russian) were in the near vicinity of Cheju (London in 1904 and Goncharov in 1854) but they too did not have an opportunity to visit Cheju Island. If they had, Cheju Island would probably be better known in the West than it presently is.

1) Hendrick Hamel (shipwrecked in 1653):

Hendrick Hamel, depicted here in statuary as a man in control of his own destiny, was anything but that during his unplanned “visit” to Hallasan in 1653. Regarding this statue: Identical statues were cast and then erected in commemoration of Hamel (1630-1692). One is now in his home town of Gorinchem, Netherlands. The other is located in the city of Kangjin on the Korean peninsula, where Hamel was assigned to live. There is no statue of Hamel on Cheju Island. Instead, there is a monument to the historic “De Sperwer” shipwreck located at a scenic spot on Cheju Island’s south coast. This elaborate monument may not be located at the “actual” site of the shipwreck, which has always been disputed.

Date Visited: For nine months, beginning August 8, 1653.

Purpose of visit: Crew member of the shipwrecked Dutch vessel Sparwehr (or Sperwer, meaning “sparrow hawk”), He identifies the island as “Quelpaert.”

Occupation: Ship’s purser.

Home: Holland

Comments:
Cast ashore following a shipwreck, Hamel was the first Westerner to leave first-hand descriptions of Cheju Island based on his nine-month captivity there. Hamel washed ashore four leagues (about twelve miles) from the Island’s southeastern sub-administrative center at Taejong
castle, according to his report. This indicates that he may have shipwrecked off Chungmoon beach, which is twelve miles from Taejong as the crow flies, or elsewhere on the southwester shores of Hallasan. A recently erected monument to Hamel (not the statue above) is however located near the town of Mosulpo. However, the latest conjecture is that the Sparwehr shipwreck occurred along the coastline near Sogwido islet (see red star on map, below; Belcher recorded it as “Eden Island” on his survey map; the islanders apparently long-used it as a transport station for mainland-bound tribute herds).

A possible site of the Sparwehr shipwreck (red star)

Another Hollander named Jan Janse Weltevree (Korean name Pak Yon) may have preceded Hamel to Cheju Island. Weltevree was captured by Koreans in 1628 and eventually assimilated into the everyday life and employ of the Korean government. Weltevree was sent by the Korean government to interview the Sparwehr shipwreck survivors (totaling 35) prior to their removal to the Korean peninsula. Weltevree left no written record of his own previous visits to Hallasan, if any. At any rate, Hamel arrived on Hallasan at a south coast location, which is a novel “port of entry” for Western travelers right up to the present. Hamel also remained on the island longer than any other Westerner prior to some Catholic priests arriving in the late 1890’s.

Source of report:

A provocative website with numerous maps and illustrations that updates (and contests) some of Ledyard’s version of the Hamel story is found here:

Quality of report:
Ledyard’s translation of Hamel, and his additional comments based on Dutch sources are thorough. Unfortunately, Hamel had few comments to make about Cheju Island despite his long imprisonment there.

2) Captain Charles A. Barlow, and Lieutenant Kendall, 1840.

Date visited: October 29 to November 1, 1840
Purpose of visit: to procure cattle for provisioning British troops engaged in fighting the Anglo-Chinese, or "Opium War" of 1838 - 1842.

Home: Great Britain

Event analysis:

According to a book written by Commander J. Elliot Bingham ("Narrative of the Expedition to China ..., vol.1, 1843:307-312), Captain Barlow’s ship Nimrod and the transport ship Houghly embarked from the Chinese mainland to “Quelpert,” whereupon they anchored offshore near “Cattle Islet” which was “covered with herds.” Kendall, in Bingham, provides some detail of the crew’s “amusing” methods of catching cattle on October 30. Meanwhile, the natives of Hallasan began to amass onshore, pitching tents, “gesticulating,” “blowing horns” and “beating gongs.” On the morning of the 31st, Captain Barlow in a small boat met an islander official offshore. The official entered Barlow’s boat, but would not board the Nimrod. He briefly communicated with Barlow using Chinese characters, then returned to the main island. Soon thereafter the crowds gathered onshore became more hostile and began to flash their weapons. Barlow and his crew, thus intimidated, returned to the Nimrod. During that day and the next the Europeans continued to remove cattle from the islet to the transport ship. Meanwhile, onshore, the islanders launched several boats toward the Cattle Islet in an attempt to hinder roundup operations there. Each time a few cannon shots from the Nimrod scared the islanders back to shore. Although the British offered to pay for the cattle they acquired without islander permission, the islanders claimed they could not accept payment because the cattle belonged to their king on the mainland. Technically none of the cattle raiders ever stepped ashore on Hallasan proper, but restricted themselves to “Cattle” islet. Where is “Cattle” islet? See the location indicated by the red star on the above map. The Belcher expedition and survey (introduced below) named the islet “Edon Island”

3) Sir Edward (Captain) Belcher, Arthur Adams (Assistant Surgeon), in 1845:

Date visited: June 23, 1845-July 14, 1845. “H.M.S. Samarang”

Purpose of visit: To make a detailed survey of the island as an aid to navigation. To record the “natural history” of the island. Belcher calls the island “Quelpart”.

Home: Great Britain

Event analysis:

Belcher lands on U Do (“Beaufort Island”) and talks to the local magistrate.
Belcher arrives at Cheju City to meet the island governor.
Belcher makes hasty retreat at city gates due to hostile crowds.
Samarang anchors off Sogwipo.
Belcher meets local magistrate. Gives him “seeds of various melons, cucumbers, oranges, shaddock, Chinese plum, pumpkin, mustard, cress and lettuce.”
Belcher continues on to “Beaufort Island,” completing the island survey on July 14, 1845.
Comments:
Most of the survey was conducted off-shore, or along the coast. Cheju Islanders used signal fires on shore to warn of the approaching survey party. One member of the survey party was attacked by islanders, badly burned, and nearly thrown off a cliff. The survey parties did not enter villages or mix with islanders. The surveyors make no mention of “diving women.” Belcher reports the islanders as “unruly and unmanageable.” Belcher thinks the word “Tamnah” which is an old name for Cheju Island, is related to the Malay word for “land.” He also notes the rafts of Cheju, which are similar to rafts found on other Pacific islands. Belcher calls the stone grandfathers of Hallasan “rudely carved statues….. boundary stones”. Belcher speculates that the walls of Cheju are “of European design.” Mt. Halla (“Mt. Aukland”) is measured from ship to be 6,544 feet above sea level. When Belcher needs wood, he takes a party of seamen to a grove of trees in Sogwipo. He begins to chop down a big tree. An old man tries to stop him. The trees, apparently “spirit trees,” were thought to be the old man’s personal property. Belcher gave the old man “sweet wine” in order to quiet him down. Adams makes detailed lists of island flora and fauna. Belcher here describes Cheju Island (“Quelpart”):
“Quelpart may be said to be an oval ironbound mountain covered with innumerable conical mountains, topped in many instances by extinct volcanic craters and all bowing down before one towering giant, whose foot is planted in the center of the island, and whose head is lost in the clouds. The whole surface, including the plains and valleys between the hills and even that of the mountain-flanks, is carefully, richly, and most beautifully cultivated and covered with a pleasing verdant vegetation, laid out in fields divided by neat walls made of piled-up stones.”

Source of report:
Sir Edward (Captain) Belcher. Narrative of the Voyage of H. M. S. Samarang, During the Years 1843-46: Employed Surveying the Islands of the Eastern Archipelago; (London: Reeve, Benham, and Reeve 1848) in two volumes.

Quality of report:
Good, considering the fact that the survey teams were restricted to the coasts during their visit. It is the first detailed report of conditions on Cheju since Hamel’s report. It is the first scientific English-language report about Cheju Island.

4) “Mr. McD” (in 1851):
Not much is known of this mysterious visitor to Hallasan, this “English gentleman residing in Shanghai” -- but his first-hand and detailed report of his brief account is intriguing.
We find it published in an old 1851 issue of the Hong Kong journal *China Repository*, under the innocuous title “Journal of Occurrences: Loss of the French Whaler Narwal” (volume 20, number 7 [July]:500-506). It was apparently published earlier in the *North China Herald* newspaper.

The shipwreck of the *Narwal* and the treatment of its crew by the islanders have many parallels with the *Sparwehr* incident. “Mr. McD” was only incidentally a part of the rescue mission organized by the French to retrieve those of the shipwrecked crew remaining at the shipwreck site. This was soon after a contingent of the *Narwahl* survivors successfully escaped in a small boat to reach China and then agreed to guide the rescue team back to the scene of the *Narwahl* disaster. The rescue expedition first stopped off the west coast of Hallasan, at or near Eden Islet. Members of the expedition briefly ventured onshore there, and then sailed south briefly explore the south coast of Hallasan. The Europeans eventually continued north from Hallasan to find the *Narwal* survivors being held on “Amherst Island” (Chindo?) a large island in the Korean archipelago. “Mr. McD” seems to have provided the only published account of the Hallasan episode of the rescue expedition. Here is typical passage from his report that describes a stroll into the coastal islander cultural landscape somewhere between present-day Hwasoon Village and Sogwipo City.

“Towards evening the foreigners took a stroll on shore, groups of natives following them. ... The fields near by were, in many places, separated by stone dikes, and cattle grazing within the enclosure ... Wheat and barley occupied the fields on the uplands, and laborers were ploughing up the low grounds for receiving the rice ...”.

5) Charles Chaillé-Long (in 1888):

*Chaillé-Long (in Egyptian attire)* ...

... and at the end of his career

*Date visited:* September 28-October 3, 1888. Calls the island “Quelpart.”
**Purpose of visit:** To investigate “the mysterious origin of the Corean people,” and to enjoy the adventure of exploration.

**Occupation:** From 1887-1889 he was appointed by American President Cleveland to serve as Secretary of the United States Legation and Consul General in Corea. It was during this time that he took part in a scientific expedition to Quelpart Island at the entrance of the Yellow Sea. While his expedition to Hallasan was a minor chapter in his adventurous career across many continents, it provides a major chapter in the history of early Western travelers to Cheju Island.

**Home:** U.S.A.

**Event analysis:**
- He obtains permission from King of Corea to visit “Quelpart” island. Accompanied by interpreter and cook, he departs from Seoul to Inchon (“Chemulpo”), and then sails on to Pusan.
- In Pusan, he cannot find a Korean boat owner to transport him to Cheju. He hires a small open boat, departs to Soando (“Hamilton Island”) and finds a Cheju islander to guide the boat across the Cheju Straits. He is accompanied by some Japanese from Pusan.
- He arrives at Cheju and is met by a hostile crowd. Eventually he meets the Island governor.
- He promises not to try and climb Halla Mountain.
- He tours Cheju City, while taking many photographs.
- He departs Cheju morning of October 3rd.

**Comments:**
- He disembarks at “Pelto,” the port of Cheju City, then is taken over rough roads by horseback from Pelto to Cheju City. This journey takes two hours although Chaille-Long claims that Pelto is only “five miles” from Cheju City. He is given a horse to ride that is not tame, but since he is an experienced rider, he does not fall off.
- Islanders remark “What a calamity! What a calamity!” when they see Chaille-Long approaching Cheju Castle. Apparently, foreigners are omens of bad luck.
- Chaille-Long describes the soldiers of Governor as wearing uniforms left over from 13th-century Mongol invasions.
- He describes the Cheju Castle Walls: They are 25 feet high. There are three gates, east, west and south. He estimates the population of Cheju City at 25,000 people.
- The island Governor tells Chaille-Long that one hundred days of sacrifice must precede any attempt to climb Mt. Halla. Also: the mountain spirits are angered if anyone attempts to climb the mountain without undertaking the proper ritual preparations. At this point, Chaille-Long promises the governor that he will not attempt to climb the mountain.
- Chaille-Long tours the city, and takes many photographs. He is interested in the “stone grandfathers” and remarks: “Buddhism it is certain, obtained a footing on Quelpart, for along the streets through which we made our entry (Chaille-Long entered Cheju City through the south gate) there were
four large statues of Buddha, hewn from solid black rock and worn and defaced by the hand of time.”

Chaille-Long gives the Governor a goodbye gift. In return the governor gives him oranges, abalones and limes.

He leaves Cheju City by the east gate and returns to Pelto by a good road.

Apparently, when Chaille-Long arrived, the governor decided to take him to the city in a round-about way, in case he was a spy.

Source of report:

Quality of report:
Unfortunately, though the report is fairly long, much time is taken describing the journey to “Quelpart”, rather than conditions on “Quelpart”. Chaille-Long claims to have taken many photographs, but there are none included in the report. His journey was confined to Cheju City and the port of “Pelto.” Chaille-Long has an overly high regard of himself and his place in history, which distracts him from making impartial scientific contributions about historic Cheju. The value of this report is that it is the first lengthy account of conditions on Cheju since Hamel’s visit. His descriptions of Cheju islanders are particularly valuable since their lifestyle changed rapidly in the years immediately after his visit.

6) A. A. Pieters (in 1898):

Date visited: February 1898. He also calls the island “Quelpart.”

Purpose of visit: A tour; perhaps a reconnaissance for future missionary work. He visited both the north and south coasts as well as explored the more elevated flanks of Hallasan.

Occupation: Apparently, a minister.


Event analysis: None. He does not describe his visit in a chronological order.

Comments:
He estimates 1,200 households in Cheju City.
He complains of the Japanese intrusion into island pearl oyster harvesting.
Pieters says “on the streets, one meets three women to one man.”
He saw common people wearing dog skins and persimmon-stained clothes.
He saw only eight small shops in Cheju City.
He says there are no periodic (5-day) markets on Cheju, in contrast to the mainland.
He lists Cheju exports as: pear oyster; seaweed; native medicines; cosmetic oils made from camellia seeds; horse and cow hides; horses and cattle. He says the average price of a horse is 16 dollars, and a cow is 25 dollars. He also notices the “stone grandfathers”: “six or eight large idols cut from lava and placed outside each gate ...” He claims “there is not one Buddhist temple nor a priest on the whole island.” He visited waterfalls, and saw O Pek Changkun (500 warrior rocks). He could not locate Sam Song Hyol. He counted 12 political exiles on the island. The last exile was sent in 1895, according to Pieters. His departure was delayed for six days due to bad weather. He then returned to Mokpo by boat.

Source of report:

Quality of report:
Good. Pieters takes a trip entirely around the island. His descriptions of landscape and customs are detailed. Unfortunately, his report is too brief.

7) William Franklin Sands (in 1900):

Date visited: Spent several weeks on “Quelpaert” during 1900.

Purpose of visit: to suppress tax rebellion on Cheju Island.

Occupation: American diplomat stationed in Seoul

Home: U.S.A.

Event analysis:
He hears of a rebellion and massacre of Christians on Cheju. Sands sails to Cheju on a large steamer accompanied by 100 Korean soldiers, some Japanese officers, and a personal interpreter. He arrives at Cheju City ten days after the massacre. A force of 10,000 rebels still surrounded Cheju City. Dead Christians littered the streets of Cheju City. No one wanted to bury them. Japanese snipers shot at Sands as he toured the city walls. Sands tricks the rebels into surrendering. He returns to the peninsula with prisoners.

Comments:
The Christians were massacred by irate islanders because they were allowed to live “tax free” while non-Christians had to pay taxes.
Two resident French priests escaped the massacre safely. (note: one was a naturalist. Did he climb to the peak of Hallasan? Historical records are as yet unclear about this.
The massacre was led by an exile also implicated in the Queen’s murder in Seoul. The Japanese on U Do islet supported the rebellion.
Some of the rebels were from the mainland.
The rebels were using ancient weapons stored in the Cheju City armory.
Sands regretted he had “no time to explore” the island.
Sands called Quelpaert “a real Amazon community”. He said that the women owned all the property, that children kept their mother’s family names, that few males over thirteen years of age were permitted to live on the island, and that the Governor of Cheju could never bring his wife to the island “lest a son born in the place of native kings…should lay claim to the throne of the island kingdom.”

Source of report:

Quality of report:
Poor to fair; Sands has little time or inclination to describe the landscape or people of Cheju. His remarks on local history are unreliable. On the other hand, he is a good storyteller and the account of the massacre is interesting for its insight into the political conditions of the island.

8) Dr. Siegfried Genthe (1901):

Date of visit: 1901, for several weeks.

Purpose of visit: mountain-climbing adventure, and material for newspaper report.

Occupation: Earned Ph.D; employed as a newspaper reporter for a German newspaper.

Home: Germany.

This is, I believe, by far the most extensive and fascinating report published by an early Western travelers to Cheju Island. Due to its length and special qualities, I have removed it entirely to Part Two, Chapter Two, directly following this chapter, where it provides an appropriate climax for my own Hallasan essays in this booklet.

9) Malcom P. Anderson (1913):

Date visited: circa 1913 (stayed 40 days).

Purpose of visit: To investigate the wildlife of Cheju Island, which he calls “Quelpart.”\
Home: U.S.A. I should elaborate here that Michael S. Freeman, a librarian at Haverford College, researched the story Malcolm Anderson. He discovered that Malcolm’s father was a Stanford Professor. Freeman discovered that Anderson himself is described in an early edition of *American Men of Science* as “a zoologist and zoological explorer.” Freeman also discovered that Anderson “was born in 1879 in Irvington, Indiana and died in 1919. He was a 1904 graduate of Stanford University and traveled on collecting expeditions in North America and Asia. Between 1904 and 1908, he was on a zoological expedition in East Asia for the London Zoological Society and was known to be an expert on mammals of eastern Asia.” Freeman acquired one of Anderson’s diaries, and through his researches discovered more diaries – including his Korea adventures – among his family’s archives in the Stanford Library. I have not seen these. Also, in the storeroom of the Cantor Center for Visual Arts at Stanford there is a ceramic dish from pre-Silla Korea, donated by Anderson. His father wrote his obituary in 1919. (Note: Anderson’s untimely death, and that of Genthe (who also had the impertinence to climb Hallasan shortly before his demise) might lead a superstitious mind to speculate on a “curse of Hallasan”!)

Event analysis:

Arrived from Mokpo by coal steamer, accompanied by a Japanese interpreter and a servant.
Stays one night at a Japanese inn in Cheju City.
Arranges with Japanese police for ascent of Mt. Halla.
Leaves Cheju City by south gate, accompanied by porters carrying his boxes.
Camps in foothills above grazing area. Porters go home.
Rains and great winds begin.
Moves camp to deserted house near potato farmers.
Much fog.
Anderson gets sick.
Moves camp again, to 3000 ft. above sea level.
Japanese interpreter collects insects.
Anderson collects birds and mammals. Discovers a weasel called *Lutreola quelpartis*.
Attempts to climb Mt. Halla. Encounters fog, wind, rain near the summit. Turns back.
Next day tries again. Reaches top. Measures elevation there at 6,558 ft. above sea level.
After 40 days on Cheju, 30 of which were stormy and foggy. Anderson leaves by steamer to Mokpo.

Comments:

Anderson bought steamer tickets in Mokpo, and arrived with many other passengers: many merchants.
Anderson calls Cheju Straits “Washington Straits”.
Notes small boats, but not rafts, near Cheju City.
Anderson has problems with Cheju dialect.
Men, not women, carry his boxes ashore.  
Notes walls around Cheju City. Takes pictures of West Gate.  
Describes landscape; crops, domestic animals, farmers.  
Anderson asks farmer:  
\[\text{Anderson} \text{ – “Is rain common?”} \]  
\[\text{Farmer} \text{ – “No.”} \]  
\[\text{Anderson} \text{ – “How long do you suppose it will last?”} \]  
\[\text{Farmer} \text{ – “Until you leave the island.”} \]  
(there, bad weather is still blamed on visiting foreigners)

\textit{Source of report:}  
Malcom P. Anderson. “Forty Days in Quelpart Island,” \textit{Overland Monthly} (San Francisco). New Series. 63,4(1914):392-401. This article is accompanied by several of the author’s rare photographs, all of which have great historic and ethnographic value. Here, for example, is his photo of the West Gate of Cheju Castle:

\textit{Quality of report:}  
Fair to Good. Anderson has a good eye for detail. Unfortunately, he was sick much of the time and the weather was terrible during his stay.

\textbf{10) Walter Stötzner (1930):}

\textit{Date visited:} Several months, circa 1930. Called “Quelpart.”

\textit{Purpose of visit:} Tourist; perhaps military reconnaissance.

\textit{Occupation:} Military officer

\textit{Home:} Germany

\textit{Comments:}
Japanese security was heavy during Stötzner’s visit: He was constantly guarded by Japanese detectives. On his excursions to the interior of the island he was accompanied by three detectives and two uniformed policemen. He took many photographs, but could not photograph interior island areas. All his photographs face seaward. He remarks on islander’s rafts, periodic (5 day) markets, and the large quantities of shark eaten by islanders. Stötzner was fascinated by the “stone grandfathers” of Cheju City. He took many photographs, compared them to the giant statues of Easter Island, and remarks that the statues of Cheju “originally stood guard over the four roads that lead to Seishu…” He also said “similar images guard the century-old tombs of Korean officials, on high sea cliffs.”

Source of report:
Walter Stötzner. “Have You Been to Quelpart?” *Asia* 33, 7(July, 1933) 412-417.

Quality of report:
Fair. Many interesting photographs, especially of “stone grandfathers.” Texts are too brief.

11) Hermann Lautensach:

*Date visited:* 1933. Called “Quelpart.”

*Purpose of visit:* Geographical research in preparation for a major regional study of Korea.

*Occupation:* Professor of Geography

*Home:* Germany

*Comments:* Lautensach spent several weeks on Cheju is the Fall of 1933 as the last leg of his field work in Korea. He circumnavigated the island by motor vehicle and by foot, and climbed Hallasan.

*Source of report:*


*Quality of report:*
Fair. Many interesting photographs, especially of “stone grandfathers.”
Texts are too brief.

12) Lura McLane Smith (and son “Mac”) in 1936:

*Date visited:* circa 1936 (stayed three days).

*Purpose of visit:* Tourist; botanist. She calls the island “Quelpart.”

*Occupation:* Wife of a Presbyterian missionary. She and her husband were appointed to the PCUSA's Korea Mission in 1911. During her longtime service she conducted missionary work at several locations on the Korean peninsula. Mrs. Smith performed hospital and dispensary work and was a teacher at the Chosen Christian College in Seoul and the Nurses' Training School in P’yongyang. She and her husband retired from their lifelong missionary service in 1950.

*Home:* Seoul (during the time of her visit to Hallasan).

*Event analysis:*

- Arrives at Song San Po by steamer from Mokpo.
- Sleeps in a bakery in Cheju City.
- Climbs Mt. Halla with son, local guide and his son.
- Sleeps on Mt. Halla.
- Descends next day in rain.
- Sleeps in bakery.
- Returns to Mokpo by steamer.

*Comments:*

- Steamer tickets to Cheju could be purchased easily in Mokpo.
- Steamer traffic to Cheju arrived at several island ports.
- No one discouraged her climb of Mt. Halla.
- Japanese police surveillance was lax.
- She is the first foreigner (of European descent) to report sleeping on top of Mt. Halla. She is perhaps the first European woman to climb Mt. Halla.

*Source of report:*


*Quality of report:*

Poor; disjointed; some detail regarding flora and history of missionary work.

*Additional Photographs:*
The following photographs (and captions) are in Hall, R. Burnett. 1926. “Quelpart Island and Its People.” *Geographical Review* 16,1 (January):60-72. The article is overall detailed and excellent. Hall, however, is not known to have visited the island, and does not source his photographs. Note that he uses the term “Mt. Auckland” for Hallasan, which is a cartographic artifact left over from the 1845 *Samarang* (Belcher/Adams) survey and exploration.

![Image](image1.png)

**Fig. 2—Koara Sun (Mt. Auckland) seen from the sea.**

![Image](image2.png)

**Fig. 3—Two old men of the Mountain District.** The shoulder cap commonly used is peculiar to the island. Note the aragonite nature of the rock.
Concluding remarks:

Most of the European traveler accounts of Hallasan and its people outlined above exhibit the unfair prejudices typically found in “Orientalism” literature from the long Era of European exploration in Asia. The early Western travelers’ accounts of their personal encounters with Cheju Islanders deliberately favored their bizarre and disgusting, rather than more commonplace, experiences. One can only wonder what Hallasan Islanders concluded as a result of their brief occasional contacts with these first European adventurers and cattle thieves? There is not much in their record books about these encounters, which probably means that their earliest contacts with Western travelers – at least prior to Genthe’s symbolic conquest of the Sacred Peak -- were insignificant events in their everyday lives.
* Some might say that Jack London (1876-1916) reached the shores of Hallasan “vicariously” if not in real life. Chapter 15 of his novel *The Jacket* -- more popularly known as *The Star Rover* (New York: Macmillan, 1915) -- borrows heavily from Hamel’s *Sparwehr* shipwreck account for some of its material. We read, for example:

“But I must hasten, for my narrative is not of Adam Strang the shipwrecked sea-cuny on a coral isle, but of Adam Strang, later named Yi Yong-ik, the Mighty One, who was one time favourite of the powerful Yunsan, who was lover and husband of the Lady Om of the princely house of Min, and who was long time beggar and pariah in all the villages of all the coasts and roads of Cho-Sen. (Ah, ha, I have you there--Cho-Sen. It means the land of the morning calm. In modern speech it is called Korea.)” ... “Remember, it was between three and four centuries back that I lived, the first white man, on the coral isles of Raa Kook. In those waters, at that time, the keels of ships were rare. I might well have lived out my days there, in peace and fatness, under the sun where frost was not, had it not been for the Sparwehr. The Sparwehr was a Dutch merchantman daring the uncharted seas for Indies beyond the Indies. And she found me instead, and I was all she found.” ... “Have I not said that I was a gay-hearted, golden, bearded giant of an irresponsible boy that had never grown up? With scarce a pang, when the Sparwehrs’ water-casks were filled, I left Raa Kook and his pleasant land, left Lei-Lei and all her flower-garlanded sisters, and with laughter on my lips and familiar ship-smells sweet in my nostrils, sailed away, sea-cuny once more, under Captain Johannes Maartens.” ... “We crossed the Straits of Japan and were entering the Yellow Sea on our way to China, when we laid the Sparwehr on the rocks. She was a crazy tub the old Sparwehr, so clumsy and so dirty with whiskered marine-life on her bottom that she could not get out of her own way. Close-hauled, the closest she could come was to six points of the wind; and then she bobbed up and down, without way, like a derelict turnip. Galliots were clipperes compared with her. To tack her about was undreamed of; to wear her required all hands and half a watch. So situated, we were caught on a lee shore in an eight-point shift of wind at the height of a hurricane that had beaten our souls sick for forty-eight hours.” ... “We drifted in upon the land in the chill light of a stormy dawn across a heartless cross-sea mountain high. It was dead of winter, and between smoking snow-squalls we could glimpse the forbidding coast, if coast it might be called, so broken was it. There were grim rock isles and islets beyond counting, dim snow-covered ranges beyond, and everywhere upstanding cliffs too steep for snow, outjuts of headlands, and pinnacle of rock upthrust from the boiling sea. There was no name to this country on which we drove, no record of it ever having been visited by navigators. Its coast-line was only hinted at in our chart. From all of which we could argue that the inhabitants were as inhospitable as the little of their land we could see. The Sparwehr drove in bow-on upon a cliff. There was deep water to its sheer foot, so that our sky-aspiring bowsprit crumpled at the impact and snapped short off. The foremost went by the board, with a great snapping of rope-shrouds and stays, and fell forward against the cliff.”... “Two days and nights saw us near to perishing on that cliff, for there was way neither up nor down. The third morning a fishing-boat found us. The men were clad entirely in dirt white, with their long hair done up in a curious knot on their pates—the marriage knot, as I was afterward to learn, and also, as I was to learn, a handy thing to clutch hold of with one hand whilst you clouted with the other when an argument went beyond words.” “The boat went back to the village for help, and most of the villagers, most of their gear, and most of the day were required to get us down. They were a poor and wretched folk, their food difficult even for the stomach of a sea-cuny to countenance. Their rice was brown as chocolate. Half the husks remained in it, along with bits of chaff, splinters, and unidentifiable dirt which made one pause often in the chewing in order to stick into his mouth thumb and forefinger and pluck out the offending stuff. Also, they ate a sort of millet, and pickles of astounding variety and ungodly hot. Their houses were earthen-walled and straw-thatched. Under the floors ran flues through which the kitchen smoke escaped, warming the sleeping-room in its passage. Here we lay and rested for days, soothing ourselves with their mild and tasteless tobacco, which we smoked in tiny bowls at the end of yard-long pipes. Also, there was a warm, sourish, milky-looking drink, heady only when taken in enormous doses. After guzzling I swear gallons of it, I got singing drunk, which is the way of sea-cunies the world over. Encouraged by my success, the others persisted, and soon we were all a-roaring, little reeking of the fresh snow gale piping up outside, and little worrying that we were cast away in an uncharted, God-forgotten land.

Old Johannes Maartens laughed and trumpeted and slapped his thighs with the best of us. Hendrik Hamel, a cold-blooded, chilly-poised dark brunette of a Dutchman with beady black eyes, was as rarely devilish as the rest of us, and shelled out silver like any drunken sailor for the purchase of more of the milky brew. Our carrying-on was a scandal; but the women fetched the drink while all the village that could crowd in
jammed the room to witness our antics.” ... [And eventually] “To the mainland we were taken and thrown into a stinking, vermin-infested prison.” ... 

This, then much more, all in the typical hardtack Jack London style.
Part Three, Chapter Two

Siegfried Genthe’s Jeju Odyssey:
A Précis of the Travel Account Written By
The First European to Climb Korea’s Mt. Halla

(This essay is a revised and updated version of David Nemeth and Ernst-G. Niemann’s "Siegfried Genthe's Cheju Odyssey." *Journal of Asian Culture* [1982]: 74-103.)

Abstract

In 1901 Dr. Siegfried Genthe was the first European to climb Halla Mountain on Cheju Island in Korea. Genthe intruded at great personal risk into one of the most isolated cultural backwaters of the “Hermit Kingdom.” His account of the Cheju Island cultural landscape was published almost eighty years ago within a larger work entitled *Korea* (1905). It is the gem of all geographical travel literature about Cheju Island written in a European language. This précis, based on Dr. Genthe’s well–crafted imagery of pre-modern Cheju landscape, now enables the dissemination of his interesting experiences and valuable descriptions to a wider population of English-language readers.

Introduction

Well-founded geographical descriptions of Far Eastern landscapes written by European and American travelers are encountered infrequently. There is little to recommend in the smattering of Western-language travel literature on Korea (Fujino 1971:1). This is partly because European-language travel—as opposed to tourist—literature was a distinctly late 19th -century phenomenon: “Korea during the 19th century was still very much the “Hermit Kingdom,” having successfully defied intrusions by Westerners. Moreover, European travel on the Korean peninsula, and particularly, on its off-shore islands, was severely restricted during the first half of the 20th century when Korea was a Japanese colony.

It is coincidental that what has been called one of the best pieces of German travel literature is also among the best travel accounts written on Korea (Lautensach 1945:51). Part of this travel account was compiled under formidable conditions, and on the most isolated and inaccessible landscape of the “Hermit Kingdom”—Cheju Island.

Dr. Siegfried Genthe
In 1901 Dr. Siegfried Genthe (Figure 1), a restless young German scholar residing in Seoul and employed there as a foreign correspondent for the German newspaper *Kolnischen Zeitung*, pursued at great risk his obsession to be the first European to climb volcanic Mt. Halla. Although Genthe’s exciting account of his experiences on the notorious penal island of Korea has long been available to provide readers of German with an informative and enjoyable vicarious experience, this work had never been translated into Korean or English, nor published in these languages in any format.

The opportunity to organize this précis of Genthe’s little-known German-language travel account of Cheju Island occurred under fortuitous circumstances during 1980-1981. We, the co-authors, are 1) David Nemeth, an American geographer who worked as a Visiting Professor in the Department of Tourism at Cheju National University, and 2) Dr. Ernst-G. Niemann, a German biophysicist, who was also at the University (while supervising the development there of a radioisotope facility to be used for agricultural research).

We climbed Mt. Halla together shortly after our first meeting, and thereafter shared an increasing interest in Cheju islanders and in their unique, isolated, volcanic landscape. We realized how few Americans and Europeans had any firsthand knowledge of Cheju Island, and speculated what it must have been like for foreigners to travel on Cheju before its 20th century modernization began. For answers we searched through the small body of travel literature written about Cheju. Eventually, during our spare time over a period of several months, we pored over lengthy, well-crafted passages in an old copy of Genthe’s *Korea* (1905).

Our objective was not to achieve an exacting translation of his beautiful German into English, but to extract the essence of his experiences as (apparently) the first Western traveler to ascend to the peak of Mt. Halla. What we offer here is our description of Genthe’s Cheju Island adventure based on his own account in the German language. Highlights of Genthe’s saga are presented here for the first time to readers of English, in the hope of promoting a more detailed biography of this daring observer of foreign landscapes, and to kindle academic interest in the pre-modern Cheju Island and peoples that Genthe captured so well in his travel prose.

It was appropriate to first introduce Genthe’s landmark Cheju travels to American readers in the publication year of 1982, officially “The Year of Friendship Between the Republic of Korea and the United States,” in commemoration of the centennial of the opening of Korean ports under the Korean-American Treaty of Amity and Commerce. At that time, it was four score years previous that Genthe attempted his daring and successful ascent of Mt. Halla. It is significant that 1982 was also the year that construction of Cheju airport facilities accommodating wide-body jet aircraft had just reached a completion, heralding the opening of the era of international mass tourism on Cheju Island.

This paper shall include five section headings as follows: A Biographical Sketch; Cheju Island Site and Situation; Western Explorations and Travels of Cheju Prior to Dr. Genthe’s Arrival; The Precis of Dr. Genthe’s Cheju Odyssey; Conclusions.

**A Biographical Sketch**
Siegfried Genthe (1870-1904) obtained his doctoral degree in Geography in Marburg, Germany. His dissertation, completed in 1896, focused upon the history and geographical changes in the Persian Gulf region. Dr. Genthe’s major published works include descriptions of Korea (1905), Morocco (1906) and Samoa (1908). An intrepid reporter, Dr. Genthe made it his practice to travel to these countries to conduct his investigations. Eventually, his obsessive wanderlust contributed to his untimely death; he was assassinated in March 1904 at age 34 in Morocco. His publications appeared in a series of posthumous editions compiled by Dr. Georg Wegener, Genthe’s biographer.

Dr. Genthe’s experiences in Korea began in 1901, where he was employed as a foreign correspondent for a German newspaper. He traveled widely on the Korean peninsula, and climbed the Diamond Mountains. During his short stay in Korea, Genthe contributed numerous perceptive newspaper reports covering political and social conditions (Lautensach 1945:51).

Cheju Island Site and Situation

Throughout Korean history, Cheju Island had a reputation of being the sam chae do (island of the three disasters): wind, flood and drought (Kim 1976:374). Located approximately 100 perilous kilometers south of the southwestern tip of the Korean peninsula, Cheju has developed into a unique backwater of the traditional Chinese culture realm, which includes both Korea and Cheju.

Cheju is the largest island in present-day South Korea (Republic of Korea). In 1979 (the time of our first published account), 456,988 Cheju islanders, the majorities of these farmers and fisher-folk, were living in villages located on the habitable coastal fringe of their 1825 square kilometer isle (Cheju T’onggye Yonbo 1980:20). Towering at the island’s center rises rugged Mt. Halla, the highest mountain in South Korea. This dormant volcano explains much of the geomorphology of the oval-shaped island. Last active in A.D. 1007, Mt. Halla forms one central crater with over 300 parasitic cones on its flanks. Despite high annual rainfall, there is almost no surface drainage on Cheju due to porous volcanic soils. In contrast to spectacular flash flooding along rugged storm-cut channels radiating in all directions from Mt. Halla, a serious year-round shortage of potable water occurs over most of the island. Underground water surfaces at or near the coast, and here one finds the ancient towns and villages. Since Cheju’s porous soils nearly preclude widespread wet-rice farming, the dry-field agricultural landscape of Cheju is in sharp contrast to the paddy-rice landscape of southern mainland Korea.

There are no safe natural harbors on the island. This feature has contributed to the historical isolation of Cheju islanders from Korean mainlanders as well as from neighboring Chinese and Japanese. Both Korean mainlanders and Cheju islanders acknowledge the influence of Cheju’s isolation in the history of the island’s development. Peripheral location has produced a Cheju that is physically and culturally unique while in many ways disadvantaged because of its site and situation.

Archaeological evidence indicates that Cheju has been inhabited since the Peleolithic (Jung 1977:131). Cheju legend regarding the origin of its people describes their evolution from hunter/gatherers to agriculturalists and herders (Heydrich 1931:8). Since island farming is
infeasible, the vast, dry mountain flanks of Cheju have historically been given over to grazing horses and cattle. This characteristic led to Cheju Island’s importance as a Mongol pasturage during the 13th and 14th centuries.

The punishing physical environment of Cheju has long provided Korean society with a suitable destination for its exiles and criminals. Exiled gentry have preserved Confucianism on Cheju alongside native shamanism and Buddhism. Cultural distinctions between islanders are real, but minor when compared with the profound cultural differences and animosities that have gradually developed over the centuries between islanders and peninsular Koreans. Numerous rebellions by islanders against the central government have erupted throughout Korean history.

Dr. Genthe arrived in Korea during one of these turbulent episodes. About the same time that he arrived a major tax revolt occurred in Cheju Island. Ten thousand rebel islanders, supported in their efforts by Japanese living on the easternmost islet of U Do, surrounded Cheju City. They raged beneath the city walls and threatened to kill everyone inside the gates, particularly the government officials and all Christians. Sands (1930:169) relates that the defenders within the walls were armed with ancient weapons from the city armory, but that they were short of food. For fear of starvation, treacherous women one night threw open the city gates from the inside. The rebels swept in and massacred the defenders. Only a few Christians, including two French priests, survived. Genthe, in Seoul, could not have picked a more inappropriate time to decide to climb Mt. Halla. But perhaps was by advantaging confusion and disruption in the wake of such turmoil that his accomplishment was achieved.

A Brief Review of Western Explorations and Travels on Cheju Island Prior to Dr. Genthe’s Arrival

This part of Part Three, Chapter Two, my final essay in this booklet, reintroduces in dramatic and climatic context some more of the detail from the previous chapters. The historical record of Western peoples on Cheju soil begins on August 8th, 1653, with the shipwreck of the Dutch ship “Sparwehr” (Ledyard 1971). Thirty-six crewmen survived only to be captured on the beach by the islanders. After a nine month captivity on Cheju Island, a place known to these sailors and to all Europeans until well into the 20th century as “Quelpart Island,” the “Sparwehr” castaways were transferred to Seoul. Ship’s purser, Hendrick Hamel (1630-1692) eventually escaped with seven of his shipmates from Korea to Japan, and then returned to Europe to record his experiences in the first book on Korea to be published in Europe.

Hamel was the first European to describe Cheju Island landscape. However, as a result of the conditions of his arrival and confinement, his impressions of the island were colored by his discomfort and pain.

Hamel and his shipmates were interviewed on Cheju by a Hollander-turned-Korean working in the employ of the central government in Seoul. This man, identified as Jan Janse Weltevree (his Korean name was Pak Yon) evidently left no written record of his expatriate life, or of his own visit to Cheju. A span of nearly 200 years separates the occasion of the “Sparwehr” shipwreck from the next recorded European landing on Cheju Island.
From June 23, 1845, until July 14, 1845, the “H.M.S Samarang” was in Cheju waters for the purpose of scientific investigations. The mission of the “Samarang” was to make a detailed survey of Cheju Island as an aid to navigation, and in addition, to record the natural history of the island. Sir Edward Belcher, ship’s captain, and Arthur Adams, assistant surgeon, both filed reports which were subsequently published (Belcher 1848).

Although the crew of the “Samarang” made numerous landings on Cheju Island, the islanders prevented them from entering into its interior regions. As a result, they conducted most of their survey along the coastal fringes as well as off-shore. Belcher described the islanders as unruly and unmanageable, and therefore did not attempt to enter the villages and mix with them. His one attempt to enter Cheju City and meet the island governor was aborted for fear of violence.

Belcher and Adams provided the first scientific description of Cheju in the English language. Belcher’s published descriptions read well enough to be considered literary as demonstrated in this vivid passage:

Quelpart may be said to be an oval ironbound mountain
Covered with innumerable conical mountains, topped in
many instances by extinct volcanic craters, and all bowing
down before one towering giant, whose foot is planted in
the center of the island, and whose head is lost in the clouds.
The whole surface, including the plains and vallies between
the hills and even that of the mountain-flanks, is carefully,
richly, and most beautifully cultivated and covered with a
pleasing verdant vegetation, laid out in fields divided by
neat walls made of piled-up stones (Belcher 1848:II 450).

Subsequent to Belcher, the next Westerner to visit Cheju and write an account of his visit was Colonel C. Chaille-Long, a bold and rather pompous American (Chaille-Long was Secretary of the United States Legation and Consul General in Korea when he decided to go to Cheju in order to find “a clue to the somewhat mysterious origin of the Corean people” (Chaille-Long 1890:226), and to enjoy the adventure of its exploration.

Between September 28th and October 3rd, 1888, Chaille-Long attempted to travel on Cheju. However, his movements there were severely restricted by the island governor. After inquiring about climbing the volcano, Chaille-Long was told that one hundred days of sacrifices must precede any attempt to climb Mt. Halla, and that mountain spirits became angry when anyone attempted a climb without ritual preparations. Chaille-Long promised the governor that he would not attempt an ascent. Instead, he roamed for several days within the walls of Cheju City, taking many photographs.7

A. A. Pieters, a Presbyterian missionary from Seoul, was the next foreign traveler on Cheju during February of 1898, although the year is uncertain (Pieters 1905; Hulbert 1905). His account is valuable, but brief and loosely organized. Pieter’s account of Cheju demonstrates his good eye for detail. He had the opportunity to circumnavigate the island during his visit, but did not climb Mt. Halla.
The American diplomat William Franklin Sands spent several weeks on Cheju during 1900 (Sands 1930). He had come specifically to suppress the tax rebellion that had taken the lives of many Christian converts and threatened the foreign priests. During most of his visit, Sands was under siege in Cheju City, a fact which limited the extent of his travels on the island. Dr. Genthe arrived in Korea the year following Sands’ visit to Cheju.

These, then, most likely constitute the entire body of exploration and travel accounts about Cheju covering the period before Siegfried Genthe arrived on the island. They are an interesting mixture of impressions written by castaways, explorers and travelers, people who actually walked the Cheju landscape and had limited interaction with islanders.

The Précis Of Siegfried Genthe’s Cheju Odyssey

Our précis of ninety pages of text published in Genthe’s German-language Korea (1905) intends to extract the essence of Genthe’s travel experiences on Cheju Island. Genthe’s own words in translation best convey his perspectives, insights and opinions, as well as his ability to snare peculiar, interesting details from the ambiguous Cheju landscape surrounding him. A few examples of direct translation from Genthe’s account are set off from the main body of our précis. We have also provided some illustrative materials to supplement the précis.

Several factors motivated Dr. Genthe’s desire to visit Cheju. In his capacity as a newspaper reporter, he was intensely interested in the turmoil and tragedy of the tax revolt on Cheju Island. He was also intrigued by the mysterious volcanic landscape of Cheju, and claimed to have had the urge to climb an oceanic volcano ever since he had missed the opportunity to climb Mt. Stromboli in the Mediterranean Sea. While traveling in the China Sea, Genthe had twice sighted Mt. Halla from afar; it was, therefore, Mt. Halla that he was determined to climb.

Unfortunately, when Dr. Genthe inquired about visiting Cheju Island, he was told that such a trip would be impossible. Numerous reasons were given: for example, the sea currents were dangerous and the Cheju Islanders were “Rougher and more bloodthirsty than the Koreans, Chinese and Japanese had ever been, and were daring pirates who hated foreigners” (Genthe 1905:225).

This news did not discourage Genthe, but only increased his curiosity. He was still determined to learn everything he could about Cheju. He sought out and interviewed the American diplomat Sands, who had recently returned from Cheju after negotiating the surrender of the Cheju rebels. Sands gave Genthe a letter of introduction to the Cheju Island governor. Travel to Cheju at that time required a visa which Dr. Genthe obtained from the Korean government in Seoul.

Then, Dr. Genthe, accompanied by servants (interpreter, cook and secretary) and equipment went from Seoul to the port of Inchon, at that time called Chemelp’o. There he searched for a means of transportation to Cheju Island. At that time there were a few Europeans living in Inchon, all of whom thought Genthe’s plan was madness.
He persisted in his attempts to book passage to the island. At that time only two
government steamers a year traveled to Cheju Island. Their voyages often proved unsuccessful
since there were no safe deep-water harbors on Cheju. Yet after many delays and
disappointments, Dr. Genthe was finally able to depart for Cheju in early October 1901. His
transportation was a twenty year-old, 700-ton Norwegian freighter. The ship’s officers were
Scandinavian. The crew was Korean.

During his southbound journey from Chemelp’o, to Cheju, Genthe passed from through
Korea’s “10,000 island” archipelago. He mentions being impressed on the voyage by the
marvelous view. He became good friends with the captain who entertained him with
unbelievable yarns about the sea.

After three days at sea, Dr. Genthe finally spied Mt. Halla in the distance. As the ship
approached within a few kilometers of the shore, the sound of the crashing waves increased. Dr.
Genthe noted the black volcanic nature of the island: “Everything beneath the treeline appeared
black: The soil, the houses, the beach, and the people” (Genthe 1905:261-62).

Rafts came out to meet Genthe’s ship. As the rafts drew alongside the freighter, Genthe
noticed how well they were designed to work the dangerous and rugged coast of Cheju. The rafts
could not capsize. On the other hand, nothing on board could be kept dry. Figure 5 depicts the
type of Cheju raft that Genthe was describing.

Dr. Genthe was surprised that Cheju raftsmen whom he called “rude, black fellows” did
not dress in white like mainland Koreans. Instead, they wore rough, hand-woven fabrics, dyed
black and reddish-brown. Their hats were broad-brimmed, and made of felt.

With difficulty, Dr. Genthe boarded one of the wave swept rafts together with his
servants and baggage. The following exchange of farewells then occurred:

*Captain:* “We will return for you in four or five days.”
*Genthe:* “By all means, be sure about it!”
*Captain:* “Dead sure.”

*Genthe never saw him again (Genthe 1905:264).*

Approaching shore upon his raft, Dr. Genthe noticed many women running toward him.
Beyond them, men and children squatted on the rocks, watching with curiosity. The women
seized the baggage and carried it to a distant temple-like customs-house. Genthe was shocked to
see such aggressiveness in Oriental women. Almost all travelers to Cheju have expressed a
similar surprise in their journals. One of the major cultural differences between Cheju and
mainland Korea is the radically different traits exhibited by women in their two societies: For
example, Sands (1930) described the Cheju women he saw just as they have been stereotyped by
most of Cheju’s foreign travelers, as “Amazons,” and in contrast to women residing throughout
most of Far Eastern Confucian society who, according to an old saw, are virtuous to the extent
that they are dull.
Indeed, although traditional Cheju was heavily influenced by the patriarchal Confucian ideology that developed in China and permeated Korea during its Yi Dynasty (A.D. 1392-1910), Genthe was observing vestiges of an island matriarchal society in which the skilled diving women of Cheju were “bread-winners” for their families while their menfolk formed an “idle class” (Cho 1979:x).

Genthe landed beneath the castle walls of Cheju City. There was no sand, only wave-washed black rocks. The same black rocks were made into houses and used as weights upon their thatched roofs against the storm. The very castle walls were fashioned of basalt, stone upon stone, where only the vines lacing the battlements were not black.

Once inside the city gates, Genthe noted that the lanes were dark and narrow: “Nasty black pigs, with their abominable paunches dragging in the dust, dug into the dirt alongside naked children and meager black dogs” (Genthe 1905:266). Men sat in the doorways. Women were busy carrying wood and water while others ground millet.

The Island governor promptly sent a welcoming party to escort Dr. Genthe to a lodging place. They led him to a wide street, and then to a courtyard where there was a nice apartment waiting for him. A previous occupant had just vacated the room in order to make it available to Dr. Genthe. Cheju City had no hotels or inns at the time.

On arrival, Dr. Genthe immediately sent his interpreter to the governor’s mansion bearing many gifts, including French wine, California canned fruits, Russian tea and Japanese cigarettes. In return, the governor paid the foreigner a personal visit, preceded by soldiers, the sound of trumpets, and the announcement that His Excellency The Governor was calling. The governor wore yellow silks and red shoes. His officials wore green. A gift of wine was presented to Genthe.

Dr. Genthe took this opportunity to tell the governor of his intention to climb Mt. Halla. Responding after a long, roundabout speech, the governor became direct and to the point with Genthe:

You may, at no price, climb Mt. Halla. Never has anybody been on the summit, neither native nor stranger. The mountain spirits would surely plague the island with bad weather, thunderstorms, poor harvest and pestilence if anyone were to approach them and disturb their rest. A bad harvest would cause the people to blame you, the foreigner, and no doubt result in your physical harm (Genthe 1905:268).

Oddly, at that very moment, a furious thunderstorm struck the city. The governor, thinking perhaps that Genthe’s plans had already angered the mountain spirits, became terrified and quickly departed. But Genthe, ever the adventurer, donned a slicker and climbed the city wall in order to observe the view. He reported a scene horrible and grey: “Mighty blue-black clouds and whistling winds above, and waves and a deafening roar below” (Genthe 1905:269).
The next day Genthe continued to pressure the governor for permission to climb the volcano. Genthe’s arguments must have been persuasive, for the governor eventually offered his permission, assistance and friendship to the German adventurer. Furthermore, he provided Genthe with a guide who had heard of the summit, but never been there. Runners were dispatched to the villages, warning the folk not to harm Genthe or his companions.

While preparations for his ascent of Mt. Halla were underway, Dr. Genthe climbed Sara Peak next to Cheju City in order to investigate the gruesome aftermath of the tax revolt. There he noted that the sky was full of what he identified as eagles and vultures; these attracted by the decaying sweet smells of the bodies of murdered Christians tossed into shallow graves.

The following day, October 15, Genthe began his long anticipated conquest of Mt. Halla. He departed on horseback through Cheju City’s West Gate. The photograph below shows the West Gate as it appeared a decade later, when a subsequent traveler to Cheju named Anderson (1914) photographed it. Genthe was accompanied by supply horses, wranglers, porters, interpreters, guides and his bodyguard. The weather was fair and calm.

At the gates, the governor pleaded with Genthe to reconsider, or at least to wait a few weeks until the harvest was in before beginning his climb. All to no avail. Children, beggars, and a great crowd persisted in following Genthe and his men through the city gates and far to the west. The crowd eventually wearied of its pursuit.

Turning inland and reaching the 500 meter elevation mark Genthe made these kinds of detailed, informative observations: Lava outcroppings were everywhere; the lowland areas were densely populated; habitation appeared restricted to the coast where lavas were broken down into soils; millet and sweet potatoes were abundant; above 500 meters arable land ceased.

Dr. Genthe noticed innumerable tombs surrounded by high walls of black lava blocks. A sketch of a typical Cheju walled tomb appears in Figure 6. Genthe’s guide told him that the natives of Cheju had not known of the custom of burying the dead prior to the 19th century. Instead, they set the deceased adrift on rafts in the open sea. Genthe speculated that this practice had some association with Buddhism.
It was Genthe’s plan to sleep that first night in the ruins of a Buddhist temple. The temple was supposedly located near the 1000 meter elevation mark. However, daylight receded with no monastery in sight. The porters were tired and unruly. At dusk they threatened to drop their baggage and bolt for home. The wranglers were also unhappy. Dr. Genthe’s bodyguard had difficulty controlling the mob. At this point Genthe’s guide reported bad news: There was no trace of a temple in the area.

By now it was pitch black. A cold wind blew. Blind progress through the thickets was almost impossible. Suddenly, just when things seemed their worst, Genthe spied the light of a fire in the distance. His guide quickly took out a horn made of shell, and blew out a warning. There was no reply.

Genthe’s party advanced, and soon they could hear the sounds of men chopping wood. As they approached the fire, they could see the timbermen: These were dressed in skins, wearing earmuffs. Dr. Genthe’s porters, though outnumbered, rushed the campfire and overwhelmed the surprised woodcutters. The porters forced the woodsmen to help carry Genthe’s supplies. The guide explained to Genthe that this rude impressment of mountain folk was a Cheju custom.

The woodcutters told them that the Buddhist temple had been long since destroyed. Therefore, the woodcutters led Genthe two and one-half kilometers further to their cabin. For two hours they tripped over roots and slipped on boughs. When they arrived at the cabin, which was built into the crevasse of the rock, they found a pinewood fire burning in the middle of the floor. Men, women and children huddled around the fire.

It was bitter cold. The mountaineers wore felt jackets and hats, and padded cotton trousers. Smoke filled the cabin, bringing tears to Genthe’s eyes. The ordered the fire moved outside. The temperature in the cabin was twelve and one-half degrees centigrade. Genthe was weary with cold. He distributed brandy, rum and cognac to the twenty-three woodcutters, and to his own twelve companions. This made him very popular. Genthe himself drank only tea mixed with rum.

The next morning Genthe estimated that the woodcutters’ cabin was located at 1,070 meters elevation, and was forty kilometers from Cheju City. Soon he struck out for the summit with his interpreter, a bodyguard, and a guide selected from among the woodcutters. Having no interest in the expedition, the rest of the party remained behind in the cabin.

The guide warned Genthe that it was impossible to ascend and descend the volcano in one day, but Genthe did not believe him, and stubbornly pressed on. Soon they became lost. When they regained their bearings, they were standing at the base of O Pek Chang Kun, the “500 Generals” wilderness.
Genthe measured the altitude there at 1460 meters above sea level. The guide was reluctant to continue but Genthe threatened him and they continued climbing. Moving forward above the tree line, they increased their energy by eating red berries found on shrubs. Genthe thought that they tasted like juniper.

Again Dr. Genthe consulted his scientific instruments. They had traveled sixty-two kilometers from Cheju City. At this elevation, it was ten degrees centigrade. Before them was the last leg of their climb, a steep incline of 350 meters. This took them two and one-half hours to complete.

Finally they were on the mountaintop at the rim of the crater. The magnificent afternoon view made them immediately forget their fatigue. As Genthe slowly surveyed the world at his feet, he reflected on the feeling of power one has at such heights. Yet while he may have felt like a king, he acted like a scientist. In his journal, he described the island in great detail from his perch in the sky. Unpacking his scientific equipment, he measured the elevation at the summit: 1,950 meters or 6,390 feet. Of the entire vast expanse before him glittering like fish scales, Genthe estimated that the range of vision on a perfectly clear day might extend to 165 kilometers.

Dr. Genthe began to move slowly around the crater, measuring and photographing along the way. He was curious about the small lake at the summit which was within the crater. The local legend held that the pond was very deep and served as access to the underworld. Genthe doubted this, but was extremely interested to find small horses loitering around the pond where their excrement was quite deep. Genthe’s guide told him that their owners fed them on warm bean soup.

His curiosity satisfied, Dr. Genthe now faced the problem of how to return. For a brief while he considered alternate routes of descent from the mountain. The terrain to the south seemed too steep. To the east appeared to be more a more gradual descent, but lengthy; it was from the eastern direction, no doubt, that the island horses climbed to this high pasture. With daylight receding, Genthe decided to return to the west, taking the shortest possible route to the woodcutter’s cabin. His descent took three hours.

The next day, October 17, Dr. Genthe returned to Cheju City. He had accomplished his mission, having spent three days and two nights in climbing the mountain. Now he was anxious
to leave Cheju Island. Unfortunately, the Norwegian steamer was not waiting for him as its captain had promised.

After waiting a week in vain for transportation Genthe decided to travel to U Do on the eastern tip of Cheju Island where there was a Japanese colony and good boats. He traveled to U Do by land and sea. When he arrived he found many Japanese and the boats he expected. However, the Japanese were extremely unfriendly toward Genthe and refused to provide him with passage to the mainland.

The unsuccessful trip to U Do took five days. For all his disappointment, Dr. Genthe’s account of this journey makes fascinating reading. He describes in humorous detail the appearance and behavior of his traveling companion, an upper class Korean official. Through his interpreter, Genthe learned much about Cheju Island from his conversations with this yangban (nobleman) who each morning provided him with a Korean transcript of their previous night’s conversations.

On returning to Cheju City, Genthe began to fill his diary with informative accounts of daily life in the city. For example, he visited the jail and examined the devices of punishment and torture such as thin ropes to saw muscle. Then he visited the prisoners in the jailyard. One woman, near death, had served three years for poisoning her husband. Genthe concluded that Koreans were not so cruel as the Chinese.

Then, after weeks of waiting, a ship finally appeared to the north. Dr. Genthe rushed to pack his bags and exchange farewell gifts with the governor. However, the boat turned out to be a Japanese warship which did not stop at Cheju City.

At that point, Genthe’s desire to leave Cheju verged on desperation. The island of exile had become his prison, also. He resolved to attempt escape in a tiny fishing boat. Everyone advised him against this plan. After paying a boatman much money, and ejecting numerous stowaways from the small craft he hired, Dr. Genthe departed into high, rough seas. However, storm waves nearly wrecked the boat and it barely survived its return to Cheju. Dr. Genthe, game as usual, decided to attempt another crossing in the boat after it was repaired. Reflecting on his life-long experiences at sea in his diary, Genthe remarked about his trip in a small open boat from Cheju “—to be separated from the wet death by a small plank—is the ultimate thrill” (Genthe 1905:337).

On his second try at leaving he was again forced to eject all but a few uninvited passengers from the overloaded boat. They were each as anxious to leave Cheju as Genthe. One was a teahouse madam who had come to Cheju from the peninsula to collect some unpaid bills!

Not far out to sea the weather changed dramatically and this time the boat was becalmed. Dr. Genthe then picked up the oars himself and rowed. Soon after, a fair wind blew up and they made good progress for awhile. But then, another calm; this time lasting for thirty hours….

Conclusion
Eventually, Genthe succeeded in reaching the mainland, and soon thereafter left Korea for another, and this time fatal, adventure.

What had Dr. Genthe actually accomplished on Cheju Island? Most importantly to him, he achieved a personal satisfaction: “Climbing, drawing, photographing and measuring, as no white has ever done before, this peculiar oceanic volcano” (Genthe 1905:343). Yet for his readers, it will no doubt be Dr. Genthe’s vivid and informative descriptions of Cheju Island landscape that earn him lasting recognition.

Notes

1. This research was made possible in part by the Henry J. Bruman Fellowship in Cultural-Historical Geography offered by the Department of Geography at UCLA. The co-authors are indebted to professor Dominicus C. Choung, Director of the Applied Radioisotope Research Institute at Cheju National University, for his personal and professional sacrifices in the assistance of foreign visitors on Cheju.

2. The age of tourism was preceded by the age of travel according to Paul Fussell (1980). Edward Lear, a traveling draughtsman during the 19th century, has implied that the tourist is an “effeminate traveller” (Lear 1870:255). Geographical literature on international tourism began in the 1920’s, but attained significance only in the past few decades (See table in Carlson 1980:153).

3. This research paper expands on two newspaper articles contributed by the authors. These previously appeared in the daily Korea Times (Seoul, Korea) as “Genthe’s Cheju Odyssey Exciting” (Saturday April 25, 1981), and in the monthly Islander (Cheju National University, Cheju Island) as “Dr. Genthe’s Cheju Odyssey” (April 25 and May 25, 1981). Mr. Nemeth accepts full responsibility for the present form and content of this collaborative effort, which has been more fully developed into a research paper on his own initiative.

4. President Chun Doo-hwan of the Republic of Korea was scheduled to formally open the newly-expanded airport on Cheju Island on February 7, 1982 (Korea Times newspaper: February 8, 1982:28).

5. The McCune-Reischauer system had been used to romanize Korean words in this paper.

6. Ledyard (1971) traces the name Quelpart to quelpaert, an early Dutch word describing a type of ship that sailed early 17th century East Asian waters. There are various spellings. During Japanese occupation (1910-1945) Cheju appeared on most maps as Saishu-to and Saisyu-to. On a map of shipping lanes between Java and China, dated 1945, and published by Stanford’s Geographical Establishment in London, Cheju Island is identified inexplicably as “Mouse or Quelpart I.”
7. In a personal correspondence dated February 28, 1980, Mr. Paul T. Heffron, Acting Chief of the Manuscript Division at the Library of Congress, reported that the Library’s collection of C. Chaille-Long materials did not appear to include any photographs of Cheju Island.

8. Not included in this review are accounts of Cheju made by Captains La Parouse (visited May 1787), William Robert Broughton (visited October 1797) and Basil Hall (visited 1816): These men and their crews observed Cheju from off-shore only, having made no landings there. In addition, some famous 19th century literary figures sailed in the vicinity of Cheju: The Russian Ivan A. Goncharov, in 1854, and the American Jack London, in 1904 (Goncharov 1951; Hendricks & Shephard 1970). They had ventured closer or disembarked, the island would no doubt have become better known to the West through their writings.

9. It is conceivable that first-hand travel accounts of Cheju, written before Genthe’s own, do exist, as yet undiscovered. For example, in the few years preceding Genthe’s arrival, Catholic missions manned by European priests were founded on Cheju. We have not examined the diaries and reports of these priests. While these sources are not travel accounts, they are potentially valuable documents and perhaps may reveal the existence of some European visitors to Cheju who have not yet been identified. Of course, there is the remote possibility that the priests themselves climbed Mt. Halla prior to Genthe.

9. For an account of Chinese prisons and the treatment of prisoners as they appeared in Genthe’s era, refer to C. Bone (1906).

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