

SYMBOLISM *in* KOREAN
INK BRUSH PAINTING

FRANCIS MULLANY



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SYMBOLISM IN KOREAN INK BRUSH PAINTING

With more than 200 colour plates, this volume explores the vast heritage of Korean ink brush painting, providing a rich panorama of information that stretches across the entire spectrum of Korean art - including painting, pottery, calligraphy and literature.

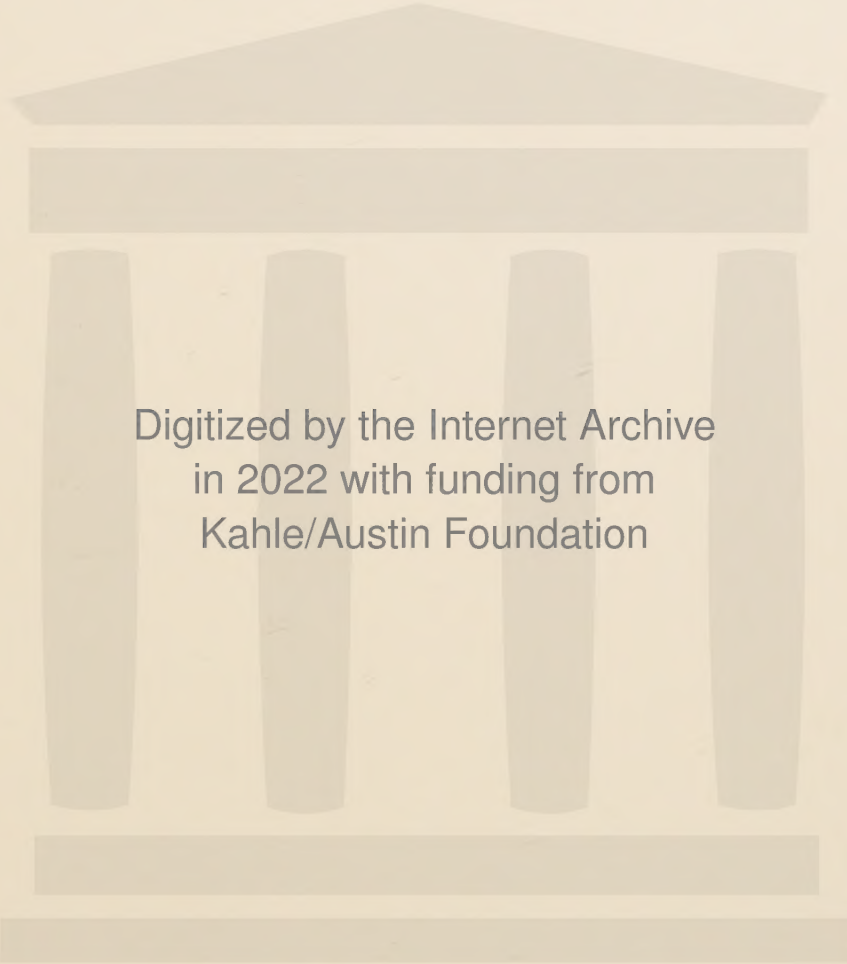
Part I presents the material in essay form; Part II, which uses a dictionary format, summarizes the information in Part I and highlights the hidden messages and symbolism inherent in literati ink brush painting in Korea.

When China and Japan opened up to outside influence in the nineteenth century, Korea maintained a closed-door policy, becoming known as the 'hermit kingdom', only to be swallowed up in the struggle for hegemony between the Great Powers. Annexation by Japan in 1910 threatened Korea's language and culture with extinction. Liberation in 1945 was followed by the tragedy of the Korean War in 1950. In the period of reconstruction after the Korean War, artists and scholars faced the task of retrieving Korea's endangered cultural tradition. Ink brush painting is a unique part of this tradition; its history stretches back through the Choson dynasty when Chinese influences were assimilated and absorbed and made into Korea's distinctive tradition.

Symbolism in Korean Ink Brush Painting, the first such study in English, will have wide appeal, not least to art lovers and students of Korean Studies.

COVER ILLUSTRATION

'Kingfisher and Lotus Blossom'. Artist's name: Han Chŏngsu. Pen-name: Sanchŏng. [See page 125]



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SYMBOLISM
IN
KOREAN INK BRUSH PAINTING



Korean ink brush paintings allow you to pick your own title and story. What are the birds saying to each other?
Read in the popular sense this picture of two birds and blossoms is a symbol of a happy marriage and wishes (and even has the power to give) every blessing to the newly-weds.
Read in the literati sense (the meanings attached to the symbols by the highly educated scholars), this picture carries the message that you will live a long life blessed with vigour and joy.

Symbolism
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Korean Ink Brush Painting

by

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by Francis Mullany

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Dalgan Park, Navan.
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General Introduction to Korean Ink Brush Painting



Korean art has a long history, with many different traditions and cultures, all of which have contributed to the formation of the modern tradition. Korean ink brush painting can be dated to the beginning of the Chosŏn dynasty in AD 1392. The kings of this new dynasty were great admirers of Chinese philosophy, literature and culture. Neo-Confucianism became the basis for the organization of the new state; the Chinese classics became the only literature worth learning and Chinese ink brush painting became the only recognized art of the new kingdom. Korean scholars studied the art of China, especially the art of the Northern Song school, and acquired the knowledge of making the Chinese inks, writing brushes, papers and silks, and the skills to copy the Chinese paintings. As time went on these scholars became proficient artists and produced works that were Korean rather than Chinese.

All of the Korean artists who worked in the Chinese tradition, from the end of the fourteenth century to the present, can be called literati artists. The best and most famous of these ushered in the classical period. The classical period of Korean ink brush painting dates from the mid-seventeenth to the end of the nineteenth century. This is the famous Korean art found in museums all over the world, beloved by the Confucian scholars and ruling classes of the Chosŏn dynasty (1392–1910). This art went out of favour during the period of the Japanese occupation (1910–45), but interest in it revived after Liberation (1945) when Korea recovered its independence.

Modern artists admire the skills of the great classical artists and the thinking that lies behind their paintings. However, they do not like the embedded hidden messages found in some of the works of these scholar artists. They say that the artists who produced this type of picture were just showing off their knowledge of Chinese culture and Chinese characters. Modern artists call these lesser artists the literati painters, a slightly derisive term, implying that although these scholars were highly educated they did not have much artistic talent. Needless to say, the modern painters avoid

hidden messages in their own pictures. Yet these classical and literati painters have so shaped and influenced modern Korean art that one always looks at the symbols in the modern pictures to find a deeper meaning, or even a hidden message, which attests to the influence of all the scholar artists of the Chosŏn dynasty period.

Korean art is a vast subject. A complete explanation would require many volumes. This work is only an introduction. It aims to help the reader enjoy modern Korean paintings done in the classical ink brush style on paper or silk.

There are many types of Korean art. There are paintings found in the royal tombs; paintings made to record royal processions and rites performed by kings; pictures made to record parties given by the king for his loyal officials; portraits of members of the royal household; portraits of wealthy and noble persons, which were used to commemorate them after death, and especially during the annual ancestor sacrifices; pictures that were really maps of the Korean kingdom; Buddhist paintings; folk paintings; shamanistic paintings; and modern paintings done in oils. Each of these classes of paintings holds a treasury of delights but would demand much time and study to find the keys to unlock their secrets. This book does not deal with these, it only deals with the symbolism used by the scholar artists working in the ink brush tradition.

Man's ability to use symbols is one of his most precious gifts. We use sound symbols (words) to talk; we use these sound symbols to think; we use symbols (letters) to write down our thoughts; we use symbols (figures) to do our calculations in mathematics and science. Without symbols, we could not communicate. Art is a form of communication. It, too, uses symbols. We have to learn what the word 'symbols' means before we can understand a language; so, likewise, we have to learn what the art symbols mean before we can understand what the artist is saying to us in his pictures. If we know what the symbols used by a Korean artist mean, then we can understand what he is saying even though we do not understand a word of the Korean language. Art bypasses language and lets us look into a foreign culture. It allows us to understand the beliefs, the religious aspirations, the ambitions, the joys and sorrows of the people depicted in the pictures. It allows us to understand the thinking of the artist who drew the pictures and of the person who bought the picture and displays it in his or her house. Knowing the symbolism lets the picture talk to us, lets it tell us all these things, thereby opening up lines of communication between the Oriental world of Korea and the outside world.

The volume has been arranged into two parts. Part I deals with the pictures that ordinary Koreans like, and with the meanings that ordinary Koreans read into traditional artworks. Such pictures use what I call popular symbolism. Part II deals with the pictures of the scholar-artists of the Chosŏn dynasty. These scholars were trained in Confucian thought, morality and traditions; they were masters of Chinese characters, Chinese literature, Chinese philosophy, and everything to do with Chinese culture. Their pictures seem to have been drawn to demonstrate their knowledge of Chinese characters,

their familiarity with the Chinese classics, their skills with brush and ink, and their mastery of all the accomplishments that were part and parcel of becoming a refined gentlemen who sat in the royal court and advised the king. Some of these artists survived the demise of the Chosŏn dynasty and continued to produce specialized pictures with hidden messages up to the mid-twentieth century.

Artists try to produce works of art so beautiful that they appeal to everybody. In this sense their art is popular. The classical artists painted works that were not only beautiful but also educational. Their pictures were lofty sermons on the teachings of Confucius, on theories developed by famous Chinese philosophers, on the virtues practised in Confucianism. Their pictures also expounded on the teachings of other famous sages, especially those of Lao Zi (604–531 BC) who had first written about the nature of Tao, first cause and creator of everything. Maybe only thirty or so of the master artists of the 1650–1950 period should be called classical artists. Other artists qualify, but following the bad example set by lesser Chinese artists, they produced literati paintings using puns and hidden messages, and although these merely literati paintings did not form a big part of their output, such pictures caused many of them to be classified together as the merely literati painters.

The merely literati painters drew pictures in order to show off their education, their skills in calligraphy and their ability to draw. These literati artists had the same Confucian education as the classical artists, and came from the same ruling class, the *yangban* class. Their art is very similar to that of the classical artists but their motives are different.

As previously noted, these examples of literati paintings were dismissed by artists of the twentieth century who saw them purely as examples of superficial hidden symbols and wordplay. In recent years, however, it has been recognized that these pictures are an essential part of Korean art, that they have formed much of the symbolism that is found in popular art, and that many of them are really works of art despite the fact that they carry hidden meanings.

Modern artists try to follow the path laid down by the classical artists. They believe that their art should show not only the beauty of the world but also the peace and harmony that comes when men follow the will of Heaven.

Part I of this book has been divided into ten chapters. Each chapter starts with a general explanation of the theories and symbols used in that chapter. This is followed by a narrative that tries to show the meaning of individual symbols. Accompanying each narrative one or more pictures have been used to illustrate what was said in the text.

The pictures shown in Part I are nearly all from a private collection. Most of them have been drawn in the second half of the twentieth century by contemporary artists. A few have been taken from art books of classical masterpieces. I give the dates for these old masters if I have been able to find them. Ordinary Koreans would not be able to buy these pictures as they are very expensive, and, more to the point, most of them are now in museums. The popular art that people use in their homes is relatively cheap and is produced

by living artists whose prices are still affordable. As most of the artists represented here are still living I have not put in any dates for them.

Artists in Korea use a second name called a '*ho*'. This is a pen-name or *nom de plume*, usually given by the teacher when the pupil has finished training. It is like a graduation certificate. This is the theory, but in practice artists change their pen-name when they change their address, status, style, or for various other reasons. To identify an artist one has to know the artist's name and all the pen-names used over the years. Professional artists who have earned their *ho* have drawn most of the pictures reproduced in this study, but talented amateurs who have no *nom de plumes* are also represented.

Part I could have twenty or even thirty chapters to cover more fully all the subjects and symbols used by Korean artists because the same theories and symbols spill over into other art forms such as ceramics, metalwork, furniture decoration, embroidery and manuscript illumination, and even from section to section within the same ink-brush art form. For example, the pine tree appears as a fifth symbol in Four Gentlemen pictures; it is found in the Flowers and Trees chapter, the Landscape chapter, the Birds and Animals chapter, and often as a backdrop to genre paintings and paintings of Immortals. No matter where the pine tree is found, it carries its full cargo of symbolism. Many other symbols also carry a lot of baggage with them from chapter to chapter. To explain these symbols again and again each time they appear would mean a lot of repetition; to leave out the explanation because it has been given before would self-evidently make things too difficult for the reader; and to put in cross-references and have the reader chasing all over the book would not make for easy reading either. An attempt has been made in Part I, therefore, to strike a balance between these extremes. As Part II takes the form of a dictionary, very little attempt has been made to avoid repetition. Many cross-references have been inserted to make it easier to track down information on the various symbols.

The McCune-Reischauer system of Romanization is used for Korean terms; pinyin is used for Chinese.

PART I

Symbolism in Korean
Ink Brush Painting



People enjoying a peaceful life (*anmindong*)

Chapter 1

Calligraphy



To the East Asian artist, writing and painting are not two separate arts; one is an extension of the other. The two meet in calligraphy. Calligraphy is making a work of art out of writing Chinese characters, which are made up of brush strokes. Emperor Zhang of the late Han dynasty said there were fourteen strokes; Lady Wei said there were seventy-two; the famous calligrapher, Wang Hiezhhi, maintained there were only eight basic strokes. Most modern calligraphy teachers hold that there are about thirty-two. One of the problems in calligraphy is how to keep a balance of size and weight between the characters when some are drawn with one or two strokes, while others use fifteen strokes or more. Another problem for the artist is what style to use for a particular text or quotation. Different styles engender different feelings. Some archaic styles suggest a feeling of great age. These ancient styles conjure up images of the first golden age of Chinese history when sage kings made just laws, taught the people how to practise agriculture, fortified the cities and formed huge armies to protect the state. Cursive styles give a restless feeling and remind one of the strivings of philosophers, alchemists and poets to discover the deeper meanings of life. The later rigid styles feel more suitable to our modern scientifically-organized, materialistic society.

The calligrapher must know how to use the various styles; he must know the proper character and how to write it correctly; he must have the skill to draw it in harmony with all the other characters, and he must have the artistry to produce a document or scroll that is pleasing to the eye, satisfying to the mind and decorative enough to be hung on a wall.

▣ CHINESE CHARACTERS

Purists say that all Oriental paintings developed from Chinese writing. By this they mean that it is the same brush, the same ink, the same paper or silk and the same skills that are used to produce both. A Chinese character

is written to convey an idea or thought; similarly, a picture should be drawn to convey the idea or thought that is in the artist's mind. As each Chinese character has to be in harmony with every other character on the same page, so each part of a picture has to be in harmony with everything else in the picture.

Often a classical picture has a line or two of calligraphy written across the top or down the side. There should be a harmonious relationship between the picture and the inscription. The meanings should complement or provide a counterpoint to each other. As the style of the painting can vary, so too the style of the calligraphy can vary. The words and teachings of the ancient philosophers and sages look better if written in an ancient style. Pictures drawn using these ancient quotations should also look other-worldly, old-fashioned, even slightly fantastic. Modern poems and modern ideas look better in more modern-style writing. Pictures drawn to match these new quotations should be modern, colourful and well rooted in present-day reality.

The relationship between writing and drawing, between calligraphy and painting, becomes easier to understand if we remember that Chinese characters started as little pictures of the things they represented. They were pictograms – something like the hieroglyphs that the Egyptians used. Many Chinese characters still retain some of their original picture shapes.

PRIMITIVE CHARACTERS

Chinese historians say the first characters, used for divination on bones and tortoise shells, date from around 4000BC. The bones or shells were cracked by heating. Depending on which picture or character was cracked or left intact, the will of heaven could be discerned, and the outcome of some future action could be foretold.

Very early on, two or more of these little pictures or pictograms were united to form a new character. These more complicated characters were used to express an abstract idea rather than to act as a symbol for a concrete thing. This new character, representing an idea or an abstraction, is called an ideogram. Pictograms and ideograms made writing possible. Chinese historians say that Emperor Fu Xi (2953BC) invented writing.

Archaeology tends to date the first human settlements in China after the year 3000BC, while the earliest divination bones are dated to about 1500BC. Actually, the earliest written history of China dates to about 200BC. The compilers of this history had to depend on oral traditions for their facts. Oral traditions are more about good stories than good history! Still, as we have no other history of the development of Chinese characters, we have to stick with what we have for the time being. The dates between 3000BC and 200BC are very suspect as they are not backed up by documentary or archaeological evidence.

Even among modern scholars, the classification of Chinese characters seems to be very arbitrary. English scholars use one system, Americans another and Korean scholars use a third. The names they give to the different styles and scripts are different. I am sure that different styles were used in different parts of China during the same time period, so scholars studying

in South China would make a different list from those working in North China or Korea.

The list I give below is not definitive. One could add many more styles. For example, the bronze script could be subdivided into metal script (jinwen), ancient script (guwen), and large seal (dazhuan). One could also add the special styles developed by individual calligraphers such as Hsun Ouyang, You Shinan and Yen Chenqing of the Tang dynasty, and Zhao Mengfu of the Yuan dynasty. Perhaps the *New Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1993, Vol. 29, under 'Writing') is correct in saying that bird, bronze, small seal and clerk styles evolved into the standard style and that these five styles in turn show the main developments of Chinese writing, which has remained essentially unchanged over the last two thousand years.

BIRD-TRACK SCRIPT/SHELL AND BONE SCRIPT

The first legendary Emperor Fu Xi (2953BC) is said to have invented the first Chinese characters. These characters were made with long lines (—) and broken lines (--) placed in groups of threes, called trigrams. (Incidentally, four of these three-line characters are used on the Korean national flag.) These trigrams produced the first eight characters (bagua). Later, Wen Wang (twelfth century BC) doubled these lines into groups of six, called hexagrams. These combinations gave sixty-four characters that later became the basis of the *Book of Changes*. These sixty-four characters could express all the important features of the world: heaven, earth, religion, relationships, mountains, rivers, heat, cold and even private property.

The first kind of picture writing is traditionally ascribed to the third emperor, Huang Di (2698–2898BC), also known as the Yellow Emperor. One day, he was walking by the river when he saw the tracks birds had made in the mud and the claw marks animals had left on the trees. Looking at these, he was able to say which birds and which animals had passed that way in the morning. He concluded that people should be able to leave a record of their activities and thoughts that others could read. So he invented writing. This writing was made up of small, simplified pictures. His official recorder, Zang Cheih, developed many of these early characters, which were first used extensively for divination on bones and tortoise shells. Many more were invented over the next two hundred years, so it became necessary to standardize them. Emperor You did this about 2205BC. He was said to have been the first ruler to use writing extensively; he used it to promulgate his laws and his teachings.

BRONZE SCRIPT/TADPOLE SCRIPT

These characters were used to decorate bronze vessels, especially those used in religious ceremonies. The lines were curved and twisted to make them look better and more ornamental on bronze and stone. Many of the bronze-style characters depicting concrete things kept their original picture shapes, but individual artists changed the shapes of the other characters to make them more decorative so that over a long period of time these characters moved a long way from their original picture form. This style used

many circles and curvy lines. Because of this it was often called the tadpole style.

GREATER SEAL

Writing became widespread in the Zhou dynasty (1039–256BC). The simple pictograms had become very stylized to make them more impressive-looking. It is said that the highly ornamental styles used on bronze vessels were standardized by the Zhou dynasty Imperial Recorder, Shi Zhou, about the year 800BC. Some say he invented the greater-seal style, others say he invented the *zhouwen* or the *guwen* style. His style, with all its curves and curlicues, was used on the emperor's seals. Later, it became known as the greater-seal style.

LESSER SEAL

The Zhou dynasty eventually disintegrated into the Warring States. Subsequently, a ruthless king named Cheng, also known as Qin Shi-Huang-Di, took absolute control and united the empire for the first time. He destroyed the feudal system that had existed up to that time, introduced a new and very harsh legal system, and set up the Jin dynasty (221–207BC). In the process of wiping out the old systems, he burned every book he could lay his hands on, and sometimes burned the scholars who tried to save their precious manuscripts. As time went on, he found that he could not run such a vast territory without the use of writing. His chief adviser, Li Si, reintroduced writing, but he invented a new standard and style for all his scribes. He not only standardized the characters but he also added a new phonetic element. He added a sign to the primitive characters that gave some idea of how the character should be pronounced. This new form of writing is called lesser seal style. It was based on the older form of tadpole script, which at that time was only used on ancient bronzes and monuments. In this style, each character stands in its own imaginary square and each column of characters stands neatly and well balanced in tidy rows. All lines are of equal thickness and curves are used to improve the looks of the finished document. Although this style eliminated most of the useless curves and squiggles of the greater seal style, it was still slow to write and very hard to remember. As this style was used throughout China, local forms and variations of the characters became obsolete.

Paper was invented about this time. With paper came the writing brush, and the new inks made from carbon instead of the old lacquers. Because lesser seal characters used a lot of straight lines, they were easier to write with the small pointed brush and remained in use for a long time. The lesser seal characters numbered just over three thousand.

SQUARE SEAL/LI CHARACTERS

The use of paper, the new ink and the writing brush also caused a new style of writing to be invented. The trouble with lesser seal characters was that they were very difficult to learn. Furthermore, because of the rounded and curved shapes of the characters they were difficult to write with the new

writing brushes. At the end of the Qin dynasty, sometime around 200BC, an official named Cheng Miao had been put in jail by the king Qin Shi-Huang-Di. While in prison he made another revision of the characters. He went back to the simpler forms of the tadpole script pictograms (some scholars say he even used the bird-track script) and incorporated some of the old picture elements into his new style. These characters are called square seal style. This style became very popular during the next dynasty, which was the Han dynasty (206BC to AD229). This style is also called the Li Si, which is translated as clerk or official writing. 'Li' means a scribe or an official who was responsible for writing the records and doing the correspondence for the rulers. This style became popular because it was easier to remember, and it was easier and speedier to write with the new small pointed brushes. It has circles, but they are flattened and the curves are gentle. It uses short vertical lines and long horizontal lines, but the lines are allowed to bend freely and to thicken and thin as the brush moves over the paper. Three major styles emerged from this style during the Han dynasty: regular, running and grass styles (*kaishu*, *xingshu*, and *caoshu*). Square seal style, mainly because it looked nice, remained in use for a long time and is still written by the calligraphers. Square seal style is called *chǒnsǒ* in Sino-Korean.

REGULAR

A freer style developed from the square seal/clerical style/*li* characters. It is called *chenshu* or *kaishu* in Chinese, which means regular writing. It is not recorded when this style was invented, but it must have been in the first century AD. The new style gave freedom to vary the lines, dots and angles of the writing. The basic shape of the characters remained the same, but each writer was allowed to develop his own style. In a sense this is the style that allowed the art of calligraphy to come into being. This style exists to the present day. During the Tang dynasty (AD618–907), it became the basis of standard style, which is described below.

Chinese scholars make a clear distinction between the square seal style and the regular style because the writing in the two styles is so different. Korean scholars, looking at the shapes and forms of the characters used in these styles, conclude that both styles are essentially the same. They give the same name to both this pre-Tang style and the style standardized during the Song Dynasty. In Sino-Korean it is also called *chǒnsǒ*.

CLERICAL/RUNNING

Although square seal characters were a big improvement on lesser seal, they were still cumbersome, so in the Han dynasty yet another style developed, based on tadpole style and greater seal characters. These characters were so easy to learn it was said 'they could even be learned by a servant-man'. We would probably say that even a 'gentleman's gentleman' could learn them. These simplified characters, known as clerical style, could be written fairly quickly; they were used by the scribes to record all official business. During the Six Dynasties (AD265–581), this style was standardized by Wang Xizhi (AD312–379) of Eastern Jin and his son Wang Xianzhi. In Chinese this style

is called *xingshu*, meaning imitative symbols or images; many of the characters are sketches of the objects represented. This style is called *haengsǒ* in Sino-Korean.

CURSIVE

At the end of the Han dynasty, about AD200, the clerical style underwent another evolution. This time it was so simplified that 'even a slave could learn it'. It was so fast it could be used to take notes, which later could be transcribed into standard characters. This is called the cursive or running hand style. By the end of the Han dynasty, the number of characters had increased to over ten thousand. In Sino-Korean this style is called *yesǒ*, which means slave-writing (*noye* = slave).

GRASS

Some time during the fourth century AD, cursive style was all run together to make it even faster to write. This became grass style, called *caoshu* in Chinese. This is the true shorthand of Chinese writing. The brush or pen is very rarely lifted off the paper; the lines of each character run into one another, until the result looks like a ball of grass. In Sino-Korean this style is called *ch'osǒ*.

STANDARD

The last great style, called standard or printer's style, was developed in the Tang dynasty (AD618–907) and was standardized during the Song dynasty (AD960–1279). In this style, a development of the regular style mentioned above, the number of strokes in each character is set and the order or sequence of writing the strokes is laid down and must be rigorously followed. This is the style that children learn in school, the style that all printers use. It is the style that has been used for all official documents during the last thousand years.

In modern times the number of standardized characters has grown to well over half a million. Standard style is called *haesǒ* in Sino-Korean.

The ten styles above have all been used at different periods of Chinese history. Within each style many variations are found. This increases the number of forms of characters that an expert has to learn. Besides these styles, there are two other styles that are only used on personal seals. These personal seals are used for signing your name to a document or cheque. The two styles are *yinzi*, (female characters) of an ancient and irregular form; and *yangzi*, (masculine characters) of a very linear and squared form. Reading personal seals is a skill that takes many years of special training to master.

Chinese writing is different from other types of writing in that it was written for the eye, not the ear. The scribe read it, but then had to translate the meaning into his own words so that others could understand the message. It was not until after AD500 that Chinese writing started to be written so that it could be read out loud. From today it is easier to understand Chinese if you

read it yourself than if somebody else reads it to you. Also, as Chinese characters convey ideas rather than the sounds of words, people who do not speak standard or mandarin Chinese can read the characters, and people who use different Chinese dialects can understand them. Koreans and Japanese who speak completely different languages use the characters. To be able to read with ease, one would need to know in excess of four thousand characters.

▣ KOREAN CALLIGRAPHY

Of the many styles of Chinese characters, the Koreans only use five. Actually, it would be more accurate to say that they only use four, but as the word 'four' (which in Chinese also means death) is avoided at all costs, they subdivide the fourth category, the ornamental style, into two classes to bring the total to five, the number that echoes the five elements. Three of these styles are in everyday use; the two ornamental styles are only used on scrolls and paintings, and for decorative purposes.

The five styles are described below:

(1) **Standard** (*Haesŏ*)

Korean books say that this straight-line style was invented during the Qin dynasty (221–207BC) and reworked during the Wei dynasty (AD386–554). Chinese writers called these earlier forms the regular style. These characters became standardized in China during the Song dynasty (AD960–1279). It is now known both in China and Korea as the standard style. (Some Korean dictionaries call it the square hand style.) This is the style used in printing, and it is the forms of the characters used in this style that have been taught in schools for the last one thousand years.

(2) **Running** (*Haengsŏ*)

This style is also called semi-cursive or clerical style. It is really a style that lies halfway between standard and grass style. The shapes of the regular characters are kept, but the ends of the strokes are bent in the direction of where the next stroke begins. The brush is lifted at the end of each stroke, but it looks as if the scribe was writing so fast that he did not raise it in time, or lift it high enough, as the tip of his brush left a very thin line heading down to the start of the next stroke.

(3) **Grass** (*Ch'osŏ*)

In this style the scribe writes so swiftly that he has not time to lift the brush off the paper. All the strokes are joined together. This is called grass style because the characters look like a ball of grass, or as we would say, a bowl of spaghetti. The characters are not the standard style (*baesŏ*) mentioned above. They are very simplified forms developed in square (*chŏnsŏ*) and cursive style (*yŏsŏ*). Grass style was developed so that scribes could take down dictation at high speed. It is the original Chinese shorthand.

These three styles (standard, running and grass) are used every day in Korea by students, office workers and business people. Besides these three practical styles, there are ornamental styles used by artists and calligraphers. The ornamental styles are square seal (*chönsö*) and ornamental seal (*yesö*).

(4) **Square Seal** (*Chönsö*)

Square seal style was developed at the end of the Jin dynasty about 200BC. These characters go back to the old pictograms of the Zhou dynasty (1030–256BC). This was done mainly to make them easier to remember. They look a bit like the tadpole characters; they are curvy, and look really ancient, characteristics that calligraphers like.

(5) **Ornamental Seal** (*Yesö*)

Ornamental Seal style was a simplified version of the lesser seal style. This style, called scribe's writing or clerical writing, developed during the Han dynasty (206BC–AD220). It used a lot of straight lines, which made it more suitable for writing with a brush. A more simplified version of these characters was developed later in the Han dynasty, called 'the writing used by the slaves of the Han gentlemen', or simply 'slave's writing' (*noyesö*). It was called this because even a slave could learn it. This very simplified style later became the basis of grass style.

Nobody would write a book in any of these ornamental styles. Only meaningful texts or famous quotations are written in these styles. Texts are mounted and hung on a wall to edify (or maybe to baffle) the beholder, and to decorate the wall. It is mainly because of their decorative value, in fact, that they are called ornamental styles.

FIVE STYLES OF KOREAN CALLIGRAPHY

Three Practical Styles



Standard (*Haesö*)

'The teaching on the mountain.'

Artist's name: Pak Kyöngnae. Pen-name: Maehön (also Nog'yang)

仁德不孤
 成
 辰
 九
 日
 打
 字

Running (Haengsŏ)

'A man of virtue and mercy is not melancholy.'

Artist's name: Kim Sanggyu. Pen-name: Songchŏng

東西彼處
 可
 王
 首
 於
 茲
 蘇
 洋

Grass (Chosŏ)

'United, people of the East and West can make paradise.'

Artist's name: Pak Kyŏngnae. Pen-name: Maehŏn (also Nog'yang)

Two Ornamental Styles

冒
 可
 鞅
 中
 文
 君
 子
 執
 中
 丁
 卯
 秋
 前
 打
 字
 蘇
 洋

Square Seal (Chŏnsŏ)

'The perfect man follows the golden mean.'

Artist's name: Kim Han'gi. Pen-name: Ansong

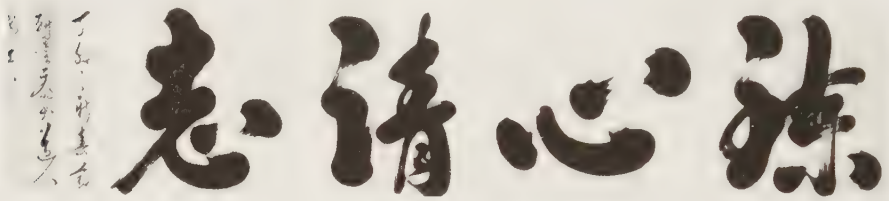
玩物喪志
 丁
 卯
 秋
 前
 打
 字
 蘇
 洋

Ornamental Seal (Yesŏ)

'Good things if not used properly can destroy a man.'

Artist's name: Kim Han'gi. Pen-name: Ansong

OTHER EXAMPLES OF KOREAN CALLIGRAPHY

**Running** (*Haengsŏ*)

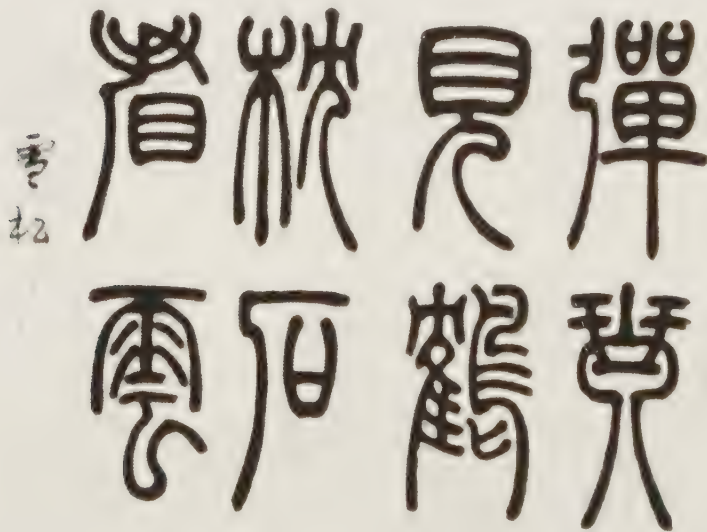
'A man with a well-trained mind can do all things well.'

Artist's name: Kim Sŏngshik. Pen-name: Sŏgang

**Square Seal** (*Chŏnsŏ*)

'Mountains and rivers are deep and beautiful.'

Artist's name: Yu Yangdae. Pen-name: Tonggok

**Ornamental** (*Yesŏ*)

'The warm winds of spring make young men want to play the *kayagŭm* (Korean harp).'

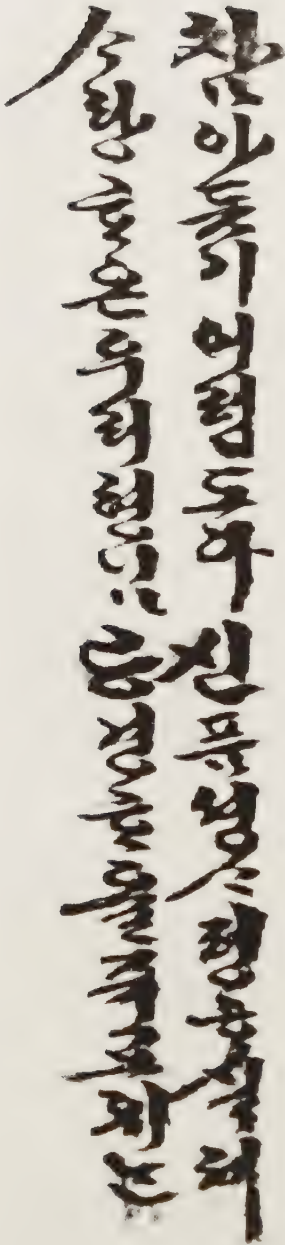
Artist's name: Buddhist Monk Kyusang. Pen-name: Sŏlsong

□ KOREAN ALPHABET

In 1443, King Sejong ordered his scholars to develop a method of writing the Korean language so that it could be read and written by women, and by the common people, who did not have the benefit of a classical education. The result was the Korean alphabet.

By the fifteenth century, the Chinese had invented some phonograms that hinted at how certain characters should be pronounced. At this time, Korean Buddhist monks had travelled to North India in search of information about Buddha and had returned with books written in Sanskrit and other North Indian scripts. These scripts were written using alphabets. The scholar who headed the team commissioned by King Sejong to invent a new way of writing Korean was Shin Sukchu. He knew Chinese, Japanese, Junchen (the language used by the people living to the north of Korea) and Mongol. The Mongol language had an alphabet developed by the Tibetan lama Phags-pa for the Mongolian Emperor Kublai Khan (1216–94). It is probable that Shin Sukchu also knew this alphabet. Using all these sources, the scholars came up with a very good alphabet, which is easy to write and easy to read and which can render all the sounds of the Korean language very accurately. The Korean alphabet is now called *han'gul*, but this word is a twentieth-century coinage.

Although the new alphabet was very successful in doing what it was designed to do, it was not put into general use until nearly five hundred years later. The scholars were the ones who fought against its use, as their jobs were in jeopardy. Their main expertise was in Chinese characters. If Chinese was no longer used, their expertise was useless. To this day, therefore, Chinese characters are mixed with Korean script in books, newspapers and advertisements. In North Korea only the Korean alphabet is used.

1. 

참아듯기
 사랑흐온
 신품성스
 공경흐을

어렵도다
 우리형님
 텅흐실제
 주교위는

차마듣기
 사랑하온
 신품성사
 공경하을

어렵도다
 우리형님
 청하실제
 주교위는

A verse from a Korean poem written in manuscript. The original is on the left. The old form of the letters is given above and the new form beneath. When the poem was written, it was customary, following the Chinese practice, to write from top to bottom, starting in the top right-hand corner.

The poem is called 'Ibyöl ka' (Song of Parting), written about a hundred years ago by Francis Lee Söngsu.

활대로 다라시오라 다 말진부디마소
 라고다시라서 재될법은 하거니와
 라다가 남은 동강은 쓸 곳이 없느니라
 반라 고커질진대 아에라지말으소서
 차라 리아니라 고생남으로있으시오
 활진대 재고것조차마저람이웁으니라

활대로 다라시오라 다 말진부디마소
 라고다시라서 재될법은 하거니와
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 차라 리아니라 고생남으로있으시오
 활진대 재고것조차마저람이웁으니라

Calligraphy using the Korean alphabet

Written by Lee Ünsang (1903–82), the patriot poet, the poem compares love to wood. Wood is useful as timber, but it is also good fuel. If burned, it must be burned completely. Half burned and quenched is a waste, because the wood cannot be relit to make a good fire. Half-committed love is also useless.

The calligraphy is read from top to bottom, beginning in the top right-hand corner.

Artist's name: Fr Ignatius An Söngwan. Pen-name: Chaho

Chapter 2

Four Gentlemen



The Four Gentlemen are the first pictures students learn to draw. The classical sequence is orchid, bamboo, chrysanthemum and plum blossom. Although classical scholars say there is no connection between these four and the four seasons, Chinese writers associate the orchid with spring, the bamboo with summer, the chrysanthemum with autumn and the plum blossom with winter. Korean writers use a different sequence. They associate the plum blossom with spring, the orchid with summer, the chrysanthemum with autumn and the bamboo with winter. This is because Korea is different both in its climate and in its geography.

Art students learn to draw these pictures in the classical order, learning the easier ones first, progressing to the more difficult ones later. Drawing the orchid teaches them brush control. Knowing how to draw from the bottom to the top, and from right to left is essential for drawing orchid leaves. These strokes are not used in writing Chinese characters.

To draw bamboo, one has to know how to control the ink. A little ink ground into the water on the ink-stone gives a very light grey; grinding in more ink gives darker shades. When the water is fully charged with ink, the resulting colour is a glossy black. Most Korean artists use five shades made from black ink. Seven shades are allowed, but as it is more difficult to grade these shades evenly and use them properly, most artists keep to five. On the other hand, some artists restrict themselves to just three shades and are able to produce very beautiful results. (Chinese artists were allowed to prepare several different inks, and even to use different ink sticks, before painting.) These greys and blacks are used to produce highlights on the shiny stems of the bamboo, and to indicate a depth of field by making the bamboos that are further away lighter than the closer ones. The black is used to point the leaves and make them stand out like well-placed stars. The black is also used to mark the joints between the segments of the bamboo stalk.

Drawing the chrysanthemum presents new challenges. The flowers are very big compared to the stalks and leaves. Getting a proper balance

between the white flowers and the dark leaves is one of the problems. Marking the veins on the grey leaves with black ink while the grey ink is still wet is a new skill that has to be mastered, the skill of blending wet inks on paper.

The plum blossom is the most difficult to draw. Different size brushes have to be used, wide for the tree trunk, very fine for the flowers. But getting vitality and life (*ki*) into the flowers is the biggest challenge.

While learning how to draw these four pictures, young artists are taught that these flowers and trees symbolize the qualities and virtues of a true Confucian gentleman. They are taught that it is by the acquisition of these qualities and virtues that one becomes a perfect Confucian gentleman, on a par with the sages and those who attained immortality in the Confucian world. This is one reason why these pictures are called Four Gentlemen pictures (*sagunjado*). There is another explanation of the origin of the name. Knowledge of the arts, and the ability to draw and produce paintings, were essential for young Confucian students if they were to become gentlemen. Learning how to draw these four pictures – rather than painting nudes – contributed to their moral education while training them in artistic skills. As these four pictures were regarded as the only proper subjects for young gentlemen to draw, they became known as the Four Gentlemen pictures.

Usually, the Four Gentlemen are done in black and white. This is because they are done in the Southern Song style, which followed the old Zen dictum: 'Express the most with the least.' The Northern Song School also followed Zen philosophy in painting, but their dictum was: 'Show the perfection of the whole by painting the perfection of the part.' They used coloured inks to show the colour of things as well as their shapes. Both schools tried to depict Tao, the creator of nature. Of course, it was impossible to draw Tao because Tao was infinite. All the artist could do was draw a part of creation in such a way as to show the beauty, intelligence and perfection of Tao. The Northern School drew a bird or a flower, with every feather or petal drawn perfectly and with every colour reproduced. The Southern School tried to suggest the essence of a bird or flower – in black and white if possible – or by using only three colours if colours were necessary. They reasoned that not even a detail of Tao's creation could be reproduced on paper; all that could be done was to hint at perfection by capturing the spirit of the subject (*ki*), and filling in the rest with one's imagination.

Geographical differences may have contributed to producing two different solutions to the same problem. South China enjoys almost a tropical climate with the surrounding scenery colourful in all seasons. North China has a long, cold, drab winter. Colourful pictures are more pleasing to live with during the long, dark days. But from earliest times, the Northern Song and the Southern Song Schools were distinguished by their styles rather than by their geography.

Korea learned its classical painting from China. It adopted both schools. North Korea seems to prefer the Northern Song style. South Korea uses both styles, but the people in the southern provinces seem to prefer the black

and white, or the three-colour pictures, while city-dwellers seem to prefer the more colourful styles, which probably do a better job of decorating their city homes.

As this book is an explanation of the symbolism that ordinary Koreans find in Korean art today, I have followed the popular order of the Four Gentlemen rather than the classical order. The classical and literati meanings of the symbols are given in Part II.

▣ PLUM BLOSSOM

In Korea, the plum blossom is a symbol of spring; in China it is a symbol of winter. China, however, is a lot nearer the equator and plum blossoms bloom a lot earlier there. The Chinese have a list of twelve flowers that correspond to the twelve months of the year. On this chart the plum blossom represents the first month. Korean artists accepted this and made the plum blossom not only the symbol of the first month, but also of the New Year and the first day of the New Year.

In East Asian pictures, plum blossoms and plum trees carry the same symbolism. The plum tree grows to a great age, so it is a symbol of a long life. Plum blossoms also carry the message: 'Live to a great old age like the plum tree.' Even though the tree looks old and dead, when spring comes, it sends out new shoots on which the flowers can form. Thus, it is a symbol of vitality, rebirth, new life, and resurrection. New flowers spring from the apparently dead wood; new life comes from apparent death.

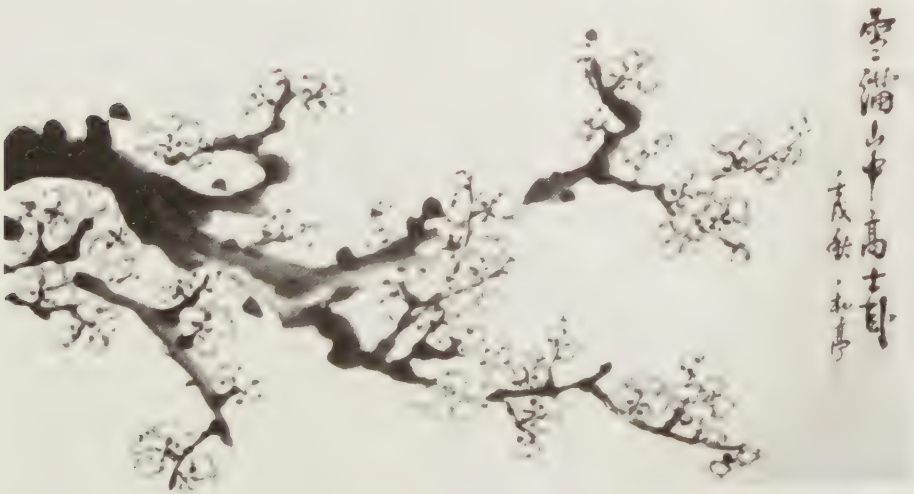
Plum blossoms bloom very early in spring. Often the frost kills them, yet they are not afraid to bloom even though they may get killed. The Confucian gentleman, too, must do what is right and not count the consequences. Better to do what is right and only live for a day than to spend one's life in shame. To Korean scholars the plum blossom was a symbol of courage and devotion to duty. We find the same kind of symbolism used in Japan where the soldier class, the samurai, used the cherry blossom to signify that it was better to have a short life with glory than to have a long, inglorious one.

There is confusion in English books about translating the Korean word for plum blossoms. The word *maehwa* covers all the trees of the prunus family, so in different books it is translated as plum blossom, apricot blossom, cherry blossom, and even in some older books as the hawthorn blossom.

Old Chinese manuals give detailed instructions for drawing classical pictures. Two of these manuals became very famous. The first was the *Ten Bamboo Studio Manual on Calligraphy and Painting* (*Shi zhu zhai shu hua pu*) printed in 1633. The second was *The Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting* (*Jie zi yuan hua pu*, which used to be known as *Chieh tzu yuan chuan*). This manual, explaining why and how the ancient Chinese masters drew their famous paintings, was written between 1679 and 1701 and has remained in print ever since. It was illustrated by Wang Gai, pen-name Lu Ch'ai, and his brothers, at their home which was called the Mustard Seed Garden.

This manual gives instructions about how to draw plum blossoms. It tells us that first there must be harmony between the yin and the yang. There must be a balance between the empty white space and the area worked on with brush and ink. Next, the four directions must be indicated by a branch to the right, a branch to the left, one moving into the background, and one coming forward. The centre also must be indicated. Thirdly, the passage of time must be shown. Time is caused by the progression of the four seasons. This passing of time is shown by drawing buds, new flowers not fully opened, fully-formed flowers in full bloom, and flowers that have gone beyond their prime and are beginning to fade and die. The vitality of the tree must be shown; new flower bearing branches shooting from old gnarled tree trunks, fresh branches sprouting from broken branches. The shiny, new pliant twigs that bear the flowers must be contrasted with the old, weathered wood. The manual goes on to stress the skills needed to draw plum blossoms. Fast moving brush strokes for the small branches and twigs; shading on the trunk and big branches by controlling the shades of the ink. The whole should have a dashed-off look. The flowers should be drawn from the front, from the back, from the side, and from all angles in between. These pictures show the artist's ability to observe nature, his ability to reflect the Tao, the Creator, in his work, and of course they show the skill of the artist.

Plum blossom time was the best time to get married. At this time, around the Lunar New Year, farmers were resting, barns were full, and the spring work as yet had not begun. It was the time for feasting, merriment and marriages. So, pictures of plum blossoms are a reminder of these times, a reminder of marriage and a symbol of a happy wedding. As such they make a very good wedding gift.



Plum Blossoms

Artist's name: Lee Kangsul, Pen-name: Hwachǒng



Plum Blossoms on a Fan

Artist's name: Kim Sŏnghyŏn. Pen-name: Yul Ch'on



Plum Blossoms with Butterfly

Artist's name: Hwa Min

Sometimes plum blossoms are used as a symbol of young students. As the flowers change into fruit, so too the children must change into adults. It is the teacher's duty to turn them into sweet fruit!

Literati pictures (explained in Part II) use elaborate puns and juggle Chinese characters to produce hidden meanings. Two of these literati pictures are often used as greeting cards. The first of these is a moon over plum blossoms and a plum tree. This reads: 'Wishing you a long life and happiness.' The other depicts one magpie sitting on a plum tree in full bloom. This reads: 'New Year's Greetings, and may you only hear good and joyful news during the New Year.'

□ ORCHID

The orchid is the second of the Four Gentlemen in the Korean system; it represents summer. In the Chinese or classical system, it is the first and represents spring. No matter what its seasonal connection may be, it represents the qualities, virtues and life-style of a true Confucian gentleman.

The orchid is a small plant. It blooms alone on the hillside hidden by other vegetation. It can grow in dry and arid soil, even on the side of a cliff; it can grow in shadow where the other grasses and plants cut off the light of the sun; it can survive and bloom in the poorest conditions. The Confucian gentleman should be like the orchid. He should be able to grow in wisdom and virtue even in the hardest of circumstances, whether in poverty, alone, or even surrounded by evil men.

Although the orchid grows in obscurity, it emits a beautiful scent when it blooms, which is borne by the winds until it perfumes the whole valley. In the same way, the Confucian gentleman can influence for better the lives of everybody around him by his learning, virtue and good example.

The sage king was the model for all Confucian gentlemen. The scent of the orchid is a symbol of the good influence that a sage king has on his kingdom. As the scent spreads out over a wide area, the rule of a good king spreads justice, harmony, peace and prosperity to all his subjects.

Even the place where an orchid grows is special. It is like the place where the sage king resides. The sage king never ceases to do good but always radiates blessings to his people. The orchid likewise never ceases to give its gifts to man. It pleases man with its flower and with its scent, and always teaches by its example.

In the Confucian context, the perfect gentleman is one who has perfected himself through the study of the Confucian classics and the practice of virtue. The most perfect men were the sage kings. Next to them came the sages, who although not kings, were able to advise the kings and indirectly bring harmony to the kingdom. The perfect man, or the perfect gentleman, was one who brought virtue and justice to the state and so brought down blessings from heaven. The greatest of these blessings was peace and prosperity for all.

In Confucianism, the perfect gentleman holds the place that is occupied by the Immortals in Taoism and the Enlightened (Bodhisattvas) in Buddhism.

Some writers say that the orchid is a symbol of true friendship as 'it shows no hint of self-consciousness', but this is just one of the lesser lessons drawn from the orchid. The big lesson is that good example changes the world just as the scent of the orchid changes the valley.

There is confusion about translating the Korean word for orchid – *nan*. This word can also mean iris, and some artists draw the iris instead of the orchid in the Four Gentlemen pictures. Some English books use the word iris instead of orchid, but the more correct word is orchid. The iris is definitely a summer flower. It is very colourful, but it grows in clumps in wet soil and has very little scent. The orchid is a solitary flower; it lives on mountains and in rocky ground; its flower is almost insignificant; but it does have a subtle and pervasive scent.

The Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting gives pages of instructions about how to draw orchids properly. Here are some of the highlights. 'The art of painting orchids depends entirely on the drawing of the leaves.' The manual goes on to say: 'Leaves should bend one way and be raised in another way, leaves should cross and overlap but not appear tangled and in confusion.' The first stroke, starting from the base, should form an arc. The second stroke, always drawn from the base, should cross the first to form 'the eye of a phoenix'. The third stroke should divide this 'eye' as it goes up and curves off to the opposite side. The brush stroke should thicken out to draw the part of the leaf that is facing you. It should thin out to nothing where the leaf is on edge to you. The brush continues on again, comes down on the paper, widens a little and narrows again to the point at the end of the leaf. Although there is a hiatus in the middle of the stroke, the mind connects the two parts of the stroke. This is 'Idea present, brush absent.' It is also called a 'flying white' line. Although the stems drawn near the bottom cross one another, they should not look like the plaited canes of a wattle fence. The flowers should be drawn in a lighter shade. Some should stand, others bend over; some should be facing, others have their backs to you; some should face up, some should be half hiding behind their leaves. Dotted the eyes of an orchid with the black ink is like drawing the eyes of a beautiful woman: dotted the heart of the flower gives the finishing touch. The essence of the flower is contained in that small touch. The orchids should convey a light mood, the leaves grow as if they were flying and fluttering in the breeze, the buds open joyfully. The mood is a happy one. A good picture should convey not just the image of the orchid, but its very essence. It should be alive with the energy of nature, *ki*. (*The Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting*, pages 272–4.)

There is a Korean story about the orchid. Long ago, a people like the gods and goddesses lived in the mountains and valleys of Korea. They were a happy people who lived in perfect harmony with nature. These people looked and acted like present-day people, but they were far more beautiful, more skilful and more intelligent. They had bodies like ours, but theirs were made of a spiritual stuff, made more from the spirits of the five elements than from the solid parts of the elements.

One of these young spirit-maidens was living on Chiri Mountain in the most southern part of Korea. She had heard that the Spirit of the Winds was very beautiful and so she became most curious to see him and to meet him. After much diligent inquiry, she found that on such and such a day he would be passing through a certain valley in Chiri Mountain.



Orchids

Artist's name: Kim Okhyŏn



Orchids

Artist's Name: Han Myŏngjin, Pen-name: Ch'ŏngp'a.



Orchids

Artist's name: Yun Chonghwa
 Pen-name: Ch'öngsan



Orchids

Artist's name: Kim Söng'ok
 Pen-name: Chöngnong

On the day he was due, the maiden got up early and went to a hill beside this valley where she could see him clearly as he passed – and where he could see her. As she did not know the exact time of his passing, she had to wait. From early morning she waited, but still there was no sign of him. To pass the time she began to pluck the shining gossamer that was lying on all the trees round about. This was sparkling in the morning sun with every colour of the rainbow. When she had gathered enough, she spun it into threads and then wove it into a cloth from which she made the most beautiful dress. She put on this sparkling dress, the most wonderful she had ever worn. But she wished to see how she looked in it, so she ran down to a pool of water to look at her reflection, to admire her new dress, to see how well it fitted her and to see how much more beautiful she looked in it.

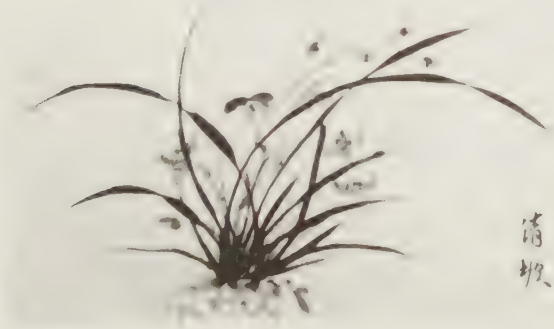
While she was looking at herself and the new dress, she heard the Spirit of the Winds coming. She immediately ran up to her lookout on the hill, but she was too late. The Spirit of the Winds had passed by. She did not see him, but worse, he did not see her.

She was angry with herself, but even angrier with the dress that was the cause of her failure to meet the Spirit of the Winds. She tore the dress off, ripped it into a thousand bits and threw them in the air, which had been stirred by the passing of the Spirit of the Winds. These pieces of her magical dress floated all over Chiri Mountain. Wherever a piece landed, a beautiful white-faced flower grew. These flowers are the Chiri Mountain orchid.



Orchids

Artist's name: Chu
Wönch'an
Pen-name: Nosök



Orchids

Artist's name: Han Myöngjin. Pen-name: Ch'öngp'a

▣ CHRYSANTHEMUM

The chrysanthemum is the third of the Four Gentlemen and it is a symbol of autumn. In the lists of flowers of the twelve months of the year, it is a symbol of the tenth lunar month.

The chrysanthemum blooms merrily even in the winds, rains and snow of late autumn and early winter. It keeps blooming until it is cut down by the harsh frosts of winter. It follows its nature and is unafraid of danger or of death. It symbolizes the attitude that a true Confucian gentleman should have: loyalty, commitment to ideals, and courage to live one's life according to one's conscience. It disregards rewards, hardship, suffering, and even death itself as it follows the path of loyalty, commitment and fidelity to conscience.

The chrysanthemum has other symbolic qualities. Some of these will be explained later. Here just a few are listed. The chrysanthemum is one of three flowers – peony rose, chrysanthemum and lotus blossom – that are symbols of the three major ambitions or life-styles of man. In this triad, the chrysanthemum is a symbol of the civilized and easy life-style of the country gentleman. This symbolism dates back to the time of the Chinese poet Tao Yuanming (AD365–427) (To Yŏnmyŏng in Korean) who, even though he was poor, refused to keep a salaried position in the court for he preferred to live in the country where he devoted his life to poetry, wine, music and the growing of chrysanthemums.

The chrysanthemum is also a symbol of retirement to the country after a strenuous life in the service of the king. This symbolism is derived from another famous Chinese poem by Tao Yuanming. (See Part II, Eight Episode Pictures, fifth episode). He wrote that he wished to retire to his mother's little house on the side of a hill, beneath an old pine tree, with chrysanthemums growing in the garden, where he could take his ease and watch the sun shining over the Great Southern Mountains.

The chrysanthemum symbolizes the Confucian gentleman who lives by the rules laid down by the ancients, who continues to better himself by study and the practice of the virtues while he lives far away from the seats of power. The model of this life-style is Jiang Taigong (Kang Taegong). (See Part II, Immortals.)

The chrysanthemum is also a symbol of filial piety. A man should never forget his origin or how much he owes his parents and ancestors. The stalk is the ancestors, the leaves are the parents, the individual is just the flower. The honour and glory he accrues are also the result of the efforts and sacrifices his parents made, and of the education they gave him. His privileged place in society and his very name have been handed down to him from his ancestors. So he should always honour his parents and offer due sacrifices to his ancestors.

There are many literati pictures of chrysanthemums. If another object is drawn with the chrysanthemum, such as a stone, or a cat, then it is probably a literati picture. (The hidden meaning should be looked up in Part II.)

The Chinese masters have worked out guidelines for drawing chrysanthemums. They say that drawing the stem is the first and most vital part of drawing chrysanthemums:

The stem is solitary and strong, yet as supple as the stems of spring flowers. . . . When the flowers are fully opened, the stem is weighted and therefore bends, while a stem bearing only a bud is naturally lighter and stands straighter. . . . Flowers should cover the leaves, the leaves in turn should cover the stem. The main stem and base should first be sketched in with charcoal . . . flowers and leaves, facing in various directions, may be made to hide the main stem at certain points. If the sketching in with charcoal is omitted, it will be impossible to establish the direction of the flowers and the leaves, and it will be difficult to know where to ink in the stem after the flowers and leaves have been drawn. Getting the stems right makes it possible to integrate the whole picture. . . . So as to show the passage of time, the flowers should include buds not yet open, buds just opening, flowers half formed, and flowers fully in bloom. They should be shown from the front, from the side, and from the back so as to indicate the four directions. . . . The leaves, too, should be shown from all directions. The tops of the leaves are darker than the bottoms, so different shades should be used.

These quotations are from the 'Book of the Chrysanthemum', one of the sections written by Wang Shih, in *The Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting*, pages 353–4.



Chrysanthemums

Inscription: 'This flower shows the face of autumn.'
Artist's name: Kim Yŏngmin.



Chrysanthemums

Artist's name: Kim Ŭnho (1892–1979).
Pen-name: Idan.

Korean artists usually draw the veins with black ink while the grey ink is still wet. They draw the petals at the hearts of the flowers with a darker ink than those at the outer edges. They usually keep the leaves and the stems to a minimum, while emphasizing the flowers. Some, following the Chinese masters, try to balance the light coloured flowers against the dark foliage, which is a very difficult thing to do properly.

▣ BAMBOO

The bamboo is the fourth of the Four Gentlemen. In Korea it symbolizes winter, but in China it is a symbol of summer. It does not lose its leaves in winter; it is always green and alive, so it is said to be unchanging. A gentleman should always be a gentleman.

The bamboo is a very strong plant. When gales blow, it bends but does not break. The true gentleman should be resilient like the bamboo. He may bend but he never breaks. Even though pressed down, he sticks to his principles and immediately resumes his upright posture.

The bamboo does not die if cut down; it sends out new shoots. The Confucian gentleman does not despair if he is blocked from doing good; immediately he starts some other worthwhile works. Like the bamboo he has vitality, resilience and is upright.

The bamboo has many other symbolic meanings. This is not surprising, seeing how important the bamboo is in East Asia. In the third century Zhu Bu wrote his *Treatise on Bamboo*, which gives 1001 uses for bamboo!

A few of these symbolic meanings are listed here.

For instance, bamboo is one of a group of trees called the Three Good Friends; pine, plum and bamboo. These trees grow for a very long time, so they are symbols of a very long life or a great old age. They recall the fifth of the five relations that Confucius made the keystone of his teaching, the relationship between friends. (These five relations are given in Part II under Friends.)

Bamboo symbolizes a long life. It is used as such in the Ten Long Life Pictures, which are explained in Chapter 4, Landscapes.

Three bamboos drawn together make a picture that is called The Three Old Friends. The friends grow old together, always help each other. These pictures are explained in Chapter 3, Flowers and Trees.

The bamboo is also used as a symbol of the continuity of the family, the clan and the family name. The individual shoots grow, are cut down, are used, but the root does not die, it sends out new shoots that carry on the family.

Many stories are told about the bamboo. Probably the most famous is the story of Meng Zong (Maeng Chon) in old China, who watered the ground with his tears and heated it with his body in order to make the bamboo shoots sprout in winter and thus cure his ailing, aged mother of her maladies. This story teaches the importance of filial piety and gives an example of duty to parents. Stories like this have made the bamboo a symbol of love of parents. (See Part II, Bamboo)

The bamboo was supposed to bloom once every sixty years. As a result of this belief, it became a symbol of the sixty-year cycle, and especially the sixtieth birthday. (See Part II, Celestial Stems).

Literati artists use the bamboo to carry many hidden meanings. These are explained in Part II.

Some instructions for drawing bamboo are as follows. The bamboo stems should be drawn apart so that the light shines between them. The nearer trees should be drawn in darker shades; those behind are done in lighter shades. The stems are done in sections, quickly with a wide, fairly dry brush, but space must be left between the sections for the knots. The knots are drawn in black with a small brush. The knots should firmly join the sections above them to the sections below them.

The edges of the stems should be well defined. Highlights should be put on the stems to show that they are round. This can be done with light grey ink used as a wash to shade the edges.

Some five knots up from the ground, the side branches shoot from the knots, and the leaves are drawn on these. The brush for these should be well saturated with ink. The nearer bunches of leaves are black, those further back are done in lighter shades. These dark brush strokes should be done smoothly and without hesitation. The leaves should be well attached to the small side branches.

Bamboo behaves in different but characteristic ways in wind, fair weather, rain or dew. In wind, the stems bend and the leaves flutter like flags; in rain, the whole tree seems to droop; in fair weather, it reaches for the sun; in dew, it spreads itself and glistens in the dim light.

Pictures of bamboo should therefore show the nature and vitality of the bamboo; they should show the weather and the season of the year. As the leaves on the little branches shoot out in all directions, the picture symbolizes the Four Directions. Time, space, seasons and directions are all manifestations of Tao, the Creator. The vitality, perfection and beauty of the bamboo all manifest Tao. This manifestation always delights and moves the beholder.

春三月 動秋思
美在山房 牛甫



Bamboo and Bamboo Shoots
Artist's name: Anonymous



Bamboo

Artist's name: Pak Chinhwan
Pen-name: Talmok



Bamboo

(from a post card)
Artist's name: Pak Sullye
(Sister Catherina)

Chapter 3

Flowers and Trees



East Asian artists draw flowers and trees for many reasons. Flower pictures are reminders of the season in which the flowers bloomed; they recall the beauty, vitality, and joy of that time. Various memories may be associated with place, time and the flowers themselves.

Korean artists draw flowers and trees because they believe the pictures have a magical power to grant what they symbolize. Flowers are symbols of feminine beauty, but artists use only the more beautiful flowers to mirror this beauty. Such pictures are often given as a wedding gift to a bride. They remind her to remain beautiful and to look after her appearance so as to hold the attention of her husband. These pictures also have the power to make the bride beautiful and to keep her young and joyful, in mind, at least, if not in body.

Trees, especially plum, pine and bamboo, symbolize long life, vitality, virility and dependability. A picture of one of these trees can be given to a young man who is getting married. It wishes him a long and happy life, and has the magic power to give him these blessings.

The peony rose, the chrysanthemum and the lotus signify three distinct and different life-styles and life ambitions. They can be used to remind one to follow the path that one has chosen in life. These three flowers are explained later in this chapter under Three Flowers of Ambition.

In China, some pictures of flowers are used as symbols of wealth or money; they are regarded as good luck charms. This meaning is seldom found in Korea.

Pictures of a group of three trees of the same species, such as bamboo and pine, are called Three Old Friends Pictures. These pictures are explained later in this chapter. Groups of three or four different trees, drawn with their flowers and with birds, are usually symbols of friendship. They are called Four Friends Pictures, or the Three Friends of the Cold Pictures. These pictures are explained in the Fish, Birds and Animals chapter, where the symbolism of other flowers and trees not treated here is explained.

Flowers and trees are also used to depict Tao, the creative principle of the universe. These pictures should not only show the beauty, perfection and vitality of the flowers and trees themselves, but also the beauty, perfection and vitality of the Tao that created them. They should always show the yin and the yang; the passage of time, by specifying the season; and place, by showing the four directions. These are all manifestations of Tao.

Literati painters use flowers, combined with fruit or other different flowers or trees, or in combinations with other objects, to carry hidden meanings. These pictures are treated in Part II. But even without going into the literati meaning of these pictures, one can understand and enjoy them by just using the popular interpretation of the symbols.

▣ ROSE OF SHARON

The rose of Sharon is the national flower of Korea. It was picked as the national flower when South Korea won independence from Japan at the end of the Second World War (1945). Different dynasties in China, Korea and Japan picked different flowers such as the peony rose, the plum blossom, the chrysanthemum and the cherry blossom as their emblems. The Koreans wished to pick a flower that was beautiful, indigenous to Korea, and not already heavy with symbolism. The rose of Sharon grows everywhere in Korea. It has a beautiful flower that blooms on a rather slow-growing bush, anything from one to three metres tall. The rose of Sharon blooms in the



Rose of Sharon

Artist's name: Chang Sǒngdo. Pen-name: Sǒun



Rose of Sharon

Artist's name: Chŏn Kongju. Pen-name: Ilshik

summer and puts on a very nice show of colour, especially if different varieties are used together, The flowers vary in colour from almost whites, through pinks and into bright reds.

Butterflies love this flower, as do their caterpillars. The Japanese say they tried to root out every rose of Sharon tree in order to control pests. Korean nationalists say the Japanese tried to eradicate the rose of Sharon from Korea because it was a national emblem. Today, the rose of Sharon emblem is seen on all Government buildings, on the law courts, on police stations and even on postage stamps. Many Koreans like to have a picture of this flower hanging in their homes. It reminds them of the struggle they had to regain independence and it instructs them to be vigilant lest they lose their hard-won freedoms.

▣ AZALEA

There is no classical or literati symbolism attached to the azalea, yet most Koreans like azalea pictures. Azaleas bloom in the early spring and in some areas blanket the mountains with their sparkling pinks and crimsons.

The azalea belongs to a family of shrubby plants common in north-east Asia and closely related to the rhododendron. In Korea, the first azalea to bloom in the spring is called *chindallae*. The flowers bloom before any leaves appear, bursting into bloom before the other plants and grasses have



Azaleas

Artist's name: Ch'oe Ilsŏng. Pen-name: Ch'unnonng

time to mantle the hills with their new green growth. It is always amazing to see so many flowers blooming in what is as yet a winter landscape. Within a week, many other types of trees and plants start to sprout new leaves. When this happens, the *chindallae* flowers start to fade, but just then the

second azalea, called the dog azalea in Korea, starts to bloom. This plant sends out flowers and leaves together. A little later, the cultivated azalea, which the Koreans call the Japanese azalea, blooms in the gardens. By this time spring has fully arrived.

The azaleas are a symbol of beauty and of spring. They are often seen in Mountains and Water pictures. It is immediately apparent that these landscapes depict spring as the first of the four seasons.

In China, the azalea is a symbol of feminine beauty. From ancient times the Chinese knew that several varieties of the plant were strongly narcotic and some very poisonous. They used the juices in their medicines. One wonders what they really mean when they say a beautiful woman is like an azalea. Are they saying that such a woman is capable of destroying a man's reason and maybe even his life? Sometimes the Chinese show a rare sense of humour!

In Korea, the flowers of the *chindallae* are collected and eaten or are made into wine. They are believed to be medicinal; they carry many vitamins and help to cure colds and coughs. They say the flowers of the second azalea, the dog azalea, are highly poisonous, so these are never collected or brought into the house.

To sum up. In Korea azaleas are just beautiful flowers associated with the spring. Pictures of azaleas are suitable decorations for a woman's room. They have magical properties, conferring beauty and the vitality and happiness of spring on a woman. But not all women would be happy with a picture of azaleas because of the myth that explains how the azalea got its red colour. The story is as follows:

There was a young girl whose mother died. Her father married again, but her new stepmother treated her so badly that she cried all day and all night. Eventually, her throat bled from all the crying. The gods took pity on her and changed her into a bird so that she could enjoy her life. But even though she was changed into a bird, she could not forget her pain. She still remembered her mother. Every summer she comes back to Korea and cries every day as she thinks of her mother. She cries so much that her throat bleeds and the blood falls on the azaleas and turns them red.

The bird she was changed into is the little cuckoo, a rare summer visitor, which hides in the forests and cries *tok-tok-trrook tok-tok-trrook* all day long. Poets sometimes call the azalea the cuckoo flower.

▣ PLUM BLOSSOMS AND ROCKS

A plum blossom picture is usually treated as one of the Four Gentlemen, but here another image – rocks – has been added. The combination of two objects not usually associated with one another suggests that this is a literati picture with a hidden meaning. However, there is no way that the Chinese characters for plum blossoms and rocks can be combined to form a message. Thus, it is not a literati picture. So what is it?

This is a typical modern popular picture, which draws on the symbolism developed over the centuries by the classical painters of China and Korea, and by the Korean literati painters. In the classical tradition, the plum tree with plum blossoms is a symbol of a long, vital life; the rocks are symbols of permanence, stability, and the harmony that comes from living according to Confucian norms. In Korean literati pictures, plum blossoms are often read as 'till your eyebrows grow white', so they are symbols of great old age, and the rocks are read as 'long life'. So in this picture, the artist borrows from all these traditions and produces a picture that wishes the viewer a long, peaceful, active life, in harmony with the world and everyone in it, and in accordance with the teachings of Confucius.

The classical symbolism of plum blossoms is treated under Four Gentlemen. The literati meaning of plum trees, plum blossoms and rocks is explained in Part II. Rocks appear in many East Asian pictures. Here is as good a place as any to examine their classical symbolism. Wherever they are found, the same symbolism can be read into them.

ROCKS

Rocks take their symbolism from the musings of the Taoist philosophers, many of whose ideas later found their way into Neo-Confucianism. So it is natural for Korean painters, who were trained in the Neo-Confucian system, to reach back to Taoism and its symbols to justify their love of beauty and nature, and to help them express in their paintings their vision of total harmony and peace as taught by the Neo-Confucianists.

The classical scholars said that Tao is the source, the prime mover, the creator of everything. Tao is the One, the God of nature. Then 'Tao revolved and produced the Two.' The Two are yin and yang. 'Yang things ascended and became heaven, yin things sank and became the earth', or as we find elsewhere in the ancient books 'Tao separated and became heaven and earth'. Although yang and yin, or heaven and earth, separated to make the Two, the Two are still parts of the One. They are Tao. (See *Li Chi*, Book of Rites, Bk VII, Sec. I, 4 Legge, *I Ching*, Book of Changes, Appendix III.)

The Two unite to form the Three. Yang and yin, or heaven and earth, together produced man. Man is made up of a heavenly or spiritual part and an earthly or material part. He is a new being co-equal with heaven and earth. Heaven, earth and man make up the Three. The Three are three parts of Tao. They are Tao, the indivisible One. (*Tao Te Ching*, The Book of Tao, Ch. 42, Legge.)

The four seasons, the five elements and the ten thousand are also different aspects of Tao, but they are not necessary for an understanding of the symbolism of rocks.

Rocks are essentially yin or earthly symbols. The earth is made up of rocks; the mountains are made up of rocks. There are rocks under the soil; there are rocks under the sea. But rocks have yang or heavenly qualities too, especially the rocks that form the mountains, for as the ancients said, 'Rocks and mountains make up the framework of the heavens and earth', and



Plum Blossoms and Rocks

Inscription: 'Spring breezes blow gently and plum blossoms bloom with innocent beauty.'

Artist's name: Lee Kyewŏn. Pen-name: Yŏndang

'Rocks are the roots of the clouds.' (*The Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting*, Shan Shih P'u, 'Book of Mountains and Rocks'.) They stand over men and reach up to the sky; they stand over lakes and seas and make the waters, which are totally yin, flow down to their proper places.

In pictures of rocks, the duality of yin and yang must always be shown. Rocks have dark sides (yin), but they also have bright sides (yang). Although dead, they contain the life of Tao. The cracks and edges are regarded as the veins of the rocks, so these must be drawn properly to give life to the rocks. By showing the interaction of the yin and the yang principles, the Two is shown. In this way the vitality of the rocks and the vitality of Tao is made manifest.

Rocks by their very shape symbolize the Three. To draw a rock properly, one has to draw three faces: front, side and top. The ancient writers make a fine distinction when they say: 'Drawings of rocks do not portray the Three, but they can symbolize the Three.' (The symbolism of the Three Faces of a Rock is referred to in the *Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting*, Shan Shih P'u, Book of Mountains and Rocks. See the footnote added by Mai-mai Sze to the section on Establishing the Three Faces of a Rock where she refers to *Tao Te Ching* Ch. 48 and *I Ching* Appendix III.)

Great skill is needed to draw rocks. The volume and size of each rock, its weight and power must be shown. Its vitality must be shown as well. The brush strokes define the edges and cracks that are the life veins of the rock. 'Each brush stroke should move and turn with abrupt stops.' The masters used different brush strokes to draw rocks (and mountains). These strokes acquired special names such as 'spread out hemp fibre strokes', 'ravelled rope strokes', 'big axe-cut strokes', 'small axe-cut strokes', 'brushwood in disorder strokes', 'iron band strokes' and many others. All were used to make the rocks look real, to give them vitality. Experts look for these 'strokes' in a picture and get great pleasure in identifying them, and then further pleasure in judging if they are the most appropriate.

In the classical tradition, every artist must learn to draw rocks. As the masters say: 'The mountains are made up of rocks. If the artist cannot draw rocks, how can he possibly draw mountains?'

Many famous Chinese artists have drawn pictures of rocks, and Chinese people like to hang these pictures in their homes. Pictures of mere rocks are not popular in Korea. If rocks are drawn with other things, flowers, for example, in landscapes, or in pictures of Immortals, then Koreans like them. Of course many of them know the classical symbolism of the Two (yin and yang), and of the Three (heaven, earth and man), but this will not be what comes first to mind. Koreans will say first that rocks are one of the ten long-life symbols. Next, they will say that rocks are the abode of the mountain spirit (*sanshin*). In Korean Shamanism, big rocks and mountains were regarded as the dwelling places of the mountain spirit. Pictures of such rocks and mountains symbolize this deity and so have a certain magic whereby they can give the same blessings that the mountain spirit himself can give. The special gifts that the mountain spirit gives are long life and protection from evil.

Koreans who have had a classical education look for other symbols in pictures of rocks. Confucian scholars say that there is a kindred spirit among rocks. All are not the same size; there are large ones and small ones, important ones and less important ones. Rocks are just like people in human society. There are elder rocks and child rocks, there are rocks of nearly equal size grouped together like friends, there are great kingly rocks surrounded by vassal rocks. All these show the relationships that exist in a harmonious Confucian society.

So what is the meaning of a picture of plum blossoms and rocks? Each viewer is free to make his or her interpretation in the light of the above explanations. Obviously, it is a magic picture to give long life and happiness. Maybe the two big rocks are the parents surrounded by their children. If, as the inscription says, the children are beautiful, innocent and humble like the flowers, this is because the parents reared them well. This picture would be very appropriate for children to present to their parents.

▣ CHRYSANTHEMUMS AND ROCKS

This picture looks like one of the Four Gentlemen, but the two unrelated objects make us suspect it is a literati picture.



Chrysanthemums and Rocks

Artist's name: Han Myōngjin

Pen-name: Ch'ōngp'a

At face value, the chrysanthemum is a symbol of an easy life in the country, a life of refinement after retiring from a busy career. The rocks symbolize a long life because they remain unchanged for a long time. The rocks bring to mind the One (Tao), the Two (yin and yang) and the Three (heaven, earth and man). The rocks also recall the mountain spirit who dwells among rocks in mountains and gives protection, good health and long life. (See: Plum Blossoms and Rocks). Chrysanthemums and rocks can also be a magic picture with the power to grant the gifts symbolized.

In the literati context, the picture can be read in three ways:

'Live to a ripe old age.'

'Live a long and healthy life and enjoy an even better time in the future.'

'New Year's greetings and may you live longer and healthier in the future.'

Literati meanings are explained in Part II.

▣ THE THREE FLOWERS OF AMBITION

The peony rose, the chrysanthemum and the lotus represent three life-styles or life ambitions that are mutually exclusive. They make a set, but they are never drawn together or hung together in one room. An ancient Chinese poet, Zhou Maoshu, gave these three flowers a special symbolism. He wrote his poem in three stanzas. In each stanza he uses a different flower to illustrate his thoughts about the different life-styles and ambitions that a person can have. In the third stanza he tells us his own personal choice.

PEONY ROSE

The poem says that one of the early Chinese emperors liked the peony rose better than all other flowers. The people, following the emperor's example, also loved the peony rose, but they loved it, not for its beauty, but because they thought it would make them powerful and wealthy like the emperor. Thus, men hung a picture of the peony rose in a place where they could see it every day to remind themselves to act each day in such a way as to advance themselves in their positions so that ultimately they, too, could become powerful and wealthy.



Peony Roses

Artist's name: Lee Yongyǒng. Pen-name: Sǒngsan

收
李
羅
辰



Chrysanthemums

Artist's name: Im Samhyŏn (1874-1948) Pen-name: Hösŏk

CHRYSANTHEMUM

In the second stanza the poem says that in later times people came to love the chrysanthemum because it was more refined. Such people pursued



Lotus Flowers

Artist's name: Yun Sŏngjung

Pen-name: Mukchŏng

refinement because it gave them security and the easy life of the landed gentry. Thus, men hung a chrysanthemum picture in a prominent place to remind themselves to pursue a 'more refined life'. They sought to rid themselves of raw ambition for power and wealth. They did not confront the king or any high official. They held onto their jobs and salaries in the belief that in the future they would have enough to retire to a nice place in the country where they would enjoy peace, freedom and comfort. The message was not to rock the boat, to play for security!

LOTUS BLOSSOM

In the last stanza, the poet says he prefers the lotus blossom because like him it had to struggle through darkness, dirt and suffering to come to the sunlight above the muddy water where it could bloom into a flower famous for its beauty. His struggle did not give him power, wealth or security, but it gave him beauty, peace and recognition. So the man who hangs a picture of a lotus blossom where he can see it often is one who tries daily to become more learned and more virtuous, and who follows his conscience along the path of truth no matter what the cost. This is certainly the noblest ambition, but it is also the most difficult.

▣ PEONY ROSE

Peony roses come in all sizes and shapes. Their colours range from white, through pinks and reds, to very dark reds, which are called black. In ancient times the Chinese emperors loved peony roses and planted thousands of them in the imperial gardens. The emperor's wives, concubines, mistresses and their handmaids, decked in their most colourful dresses and gowns, rambled and played in these gardens, adding to the beauty and fame of these pleasure grounds. The poets used to say these gardens were so beautiful that the mythical phoenix lived among the peony roses and roosted in the magnolia trees. Because of its association with the imperial

此花名曰牡丹
 惟其色紅
 則有玉蕊
 今冬月廿
 初十日
 畫於
 畫堂
 畫人
 畫堂
 畫人
 畫堂
 畫人



Peony Roses

Artist's name: Chu Haengbok. Pen-name: Tojŏn

秋
 來
 未
 晚
 翠
 葉
 已
 生
 石
 城



Chrysanthemums

Inscription: 'In autumn everything takes on its own beautiful colours.'

Artist's name: Pak Pyŏngshik. Pen-name: Sŏksŏng



Lotus Flower with Calligraphy

The first and third stanzas of the poem by Zhou Maoshu 'Three Flowers of Ambition' comprise the calligraphy. Artist's name: Yang Yongbōm
Pen-name: Tongsan

gardens, the peony rose became a symbol of beauty, feminine beauty in particular, and also of wealth and power.

In China, a picture of the peony rose is not just a symbol of wealth and power, it is also a talisman or charm that gives wealth and power to the viewer. Koreans do not believe in charms that give wealth. They have a saying that sufficient wealth is got by hard work; great wealth is only given by the God of heaven, and no charm or magic is able to influence Him.

Confucian scholars look on the peony rose as a yang symbol. In their way of looking at things, only the man could wield power and own wealth in the house, just as the king or emperor held all wealth and power in the kingdom. Most flowers are regarded as female or yin. The peony rose is an exception; it is always male or yang.

Chinese artists used various sets of four flowers to represent the four seasons. In one of the most commonly used sets, the peony rose is a symbol of spring, the lotus blossom represents summer, the chrysanthemum represents autumn and the wild plum blossom symbolizes winter. They also used twelve flowers to represent the twelve months of the year. In this set, the peony rose represents the third lunar month.

Korean scholars and classical artists were well educated in Chinese beliefs, but they did not incorporate everything Chinese into their own culture and art. For example, Korean classical artists use the peony rose as a symbol of beauty but do not use it as a symbol of feminine beauty. They prefer to use other flowers such as the orchid, the plum blossom and the lotus blossom to represent the beauty, charms and virtues of a beautiful woman. Nor do Korean artists use the peony rose as a symbol of the third lunar month, because in Korea the peony rose blooms later. Instead, they use it as a symbol of the joys and happiness that accompany the summer season.

In modern Korea, because pictures of peony roses are symbols of beauty, joy and happiness; they are regarded as magic pictures that bestow these blessings on the viewer. They are often given as a wedding present to be hung in the bride's room to remind her to remain beautiful, and to wish her joy and happiness.



Peony Roses

Artist's name: Lee Manshik

Pen-name: Yǒngbo

Pictures or screens of peony roses can be used as a backdrop for all joyous ceremonies such as weddings, birthday parties or presentation parties. Because these pictures have such a joyous connotation, they are very popular and can be seen in nearly every house in Korea.

In literati paintings, the peony rose has hidden meanings. By juggling with the Chinese characters for the peony rose, the literati artist wished wealth, prosperity, high position and fame on the recipient. Usually, only people who have had a classical education can read these meanings; people with a modern university education may not even know that such hidden meanings exist. (See Peony Rose, Part II, for an explanation of how these meanings are arrived at.)

The peony rose is one of a set of three pictures, which symbolize the three different life ambitions one can pursue. The peony rose symbolizes the pursuit of wealth and power, the chrysanthemum symbolizes a refined life in the country and the lotus blossom symbolizes the arduous life of the scholar. These three were explained under Three Flowers of Ambition.



Peony Roses

Inscription: 'May your noble house become wealthy and illustrious.'

Artist's name: Lee Yongyŏng

Pen-name: Sŏngsan

Although peony roses come in a wide range of colours, Korean artists are careful not to draw more than two different coloured peony roses within the same picture. The reason for this is that every child in Korea has heard the story of the three sisters, White Peony Rose, Red Peony Rose and Black Peony Rose. (Their real names were Sŏndok, Chindŏk and Chinsŏng.) As the daughters of the wealthy and influential king of Shilla, the three girls grew up loved dearly by their father and provided with everything that money could buy. They were clever and very quick to learn. Each grew to be a stunning beauty and each married a handsome, rich and well-educated prince. Each grew up full of joy and happiness and seemed destined after marriage to live happily ever after. But the Fates decreed otherwise. Each of the girls in turn became the ruling queen of Shilla but each met with different tragedies; each ending up with tears, pain and terrible suffering. As most Koreans have heard this sad story, they do not like pictures of peony roses in three distinct colours. (See Peony Roses, Colours Used in Part II.)

▣ PEONY ROSE AND BUTTERFLIES

All pictures of flowers and insects have the same meaning. Flowers are symbols of beauty and are reminders of the season when they bloom. Each season has its own joys and happy moments, so these pictures carry the wish that the beholder will be able to recapture the joys and happiness of that season. Insects, especially flying insects such as bees, butterflies, dragonflies and crickets, as well as being reminders of the season, add colour, movement and vitality to the picture. All pictures of flowers, and of flowers and insects, and most pictures of flowers and birds are symbols of beauty and happiness. They are magic pictures that not only symbolize beauty,



Peony Roses With Butterflies

Artist's name: Lee Yǒng'u. Pen-name: Hwagang

happiness and seasonal joys, but also have the power to grant these blessings. Pictures of peony roses and butterflies show the beauty, vitality, happiness and joy of summer and bring these pleasant thoughts and feelings back into everyday life.

Pictures of peony roses and butterflies have an interesting history. Long ago, a painter presented a painting of peony roses to the Queen of Shilla. The queen wondered why there were no butterflies in the picture. She asked her handmaids why there were no butterflies flying around the flowers. None of them could answer her. The queen took it upon herself to give an explanation. She said it was because peony roses had no scent that butterflies avoided them. She turned to the painter and asked him was that not so? The amazed painter, who thought his picture was perfectly beautiful without adding butterflies, who in fact had never even thought of butterflies, had no alternative but to agree with the queen. Nobody had the courage to tell the queen that peony roses did have a scent, and that butterflies did land on them, because this would be the same as telling the queen that she was wrong. From that day on, no Shilla painter ever drew butterflies with peony roses. It was easier to leave them out than to contradict a queen – and a lot safer too!

Modern Korean artists have never been constrained by this tradition. Popular artists put insects in or leave them out depending on their artistic vision. When literati painters drew butterflies with peony roses, they intended the picture to carry the message: ‘May you live with wealth and fame for over eighty years.’ To the young students who invented most of the literati meanings, to live to be eighty years old seemed like living for an eternity. If this picture were drawn later in life, and given as a gift on an eightieth birthday, it carried the message: ‘May you live a long life with wealth and honour as you celebrate your eightieth birthday.’ (See Peony Roses, Colours Used, and also Peony Roses and Butterflies, Part II.)

▣ LOTUS BLOSSOM

The lotus blossom is regarded as one of the most beautiful flowers in the world. There are many different varieties producing many different colours, ranging through whites, pinks, reds and various shades of yellow. In some varieties the flower blooms on the surface of the water, in others it stands a few inches above the water. In some varieties the leaves float flat on, or just under, the water. In other varieties they rise above the water and look like floppy flags turning and twisting in the breeze.

Because of its beauty, the lotus flower is used as a symbol of everything that is beautiful – spiritual beauty, natural beauty and feminine beauty. In Korea the word for a lotus flower is joined with another word, such as a word for a virtue or for joy, to form a girl’s name. To tell a young girl that she is as beautiful as a lotus blossom may provoke blushes, but it will also be taken as a compliment.

The lotus blooms in the middle of summer when the days are warmest. In the Chinese lists that symbolize each of the four seasons with a different

flower, the lotus blossom symbolizes summer. One should always remember that in East Asian cosmology each of the four seasons is regarded as an aspect of Tao, so symbols of any of the four seasons can be regarded as symbols of the creator.

In the lists that match a flower to each of the twelve months, the lotus is the seventh lunar month.

The lotus blossom is called the flower of light. In the morning, when the light of the sun shines on it, it opens its petals to the heat of the sun. In the evening, when the sun starts to sink, it closes its petals again. It is also called the shy and virtuous flower, because it only opens its eyes to look up at the sun, its lord, and then closes them again at night when its lord is gone.

A lotus blossom picture not only symbolizes beauty, the joys of summer, goodness and virtue, but also has the magical power to grant beauty, goodness and all the other radiant virtues that it symbolizes.

Because the lotus blooms in the summer, the season of heat, vitality and growth, and because its blooming is directly influenced by the sun, the great yang principle, it is believed that besides the yin or female principle, which all flowers carry, the lotus blossom is also infused with a lot of the yang principle. Proof of this is found in the fact that the seeds and stalks are edible and have many medicinal qualities. They cure many ailments, and give vitality and robust health. The giving of life and vitality are male prerogatives, properties of the yang principle.

The literati painters explored these yang qualities of the lotus blossom and used this flower as a symbol of sons and young male students. If the lotus blossom had been a 'girls only' flower, containing only the yin principle, the literati scholars would not have used it so often to carry their hidden meanings. (Many of these hidden meanings are given under Lotus Blossoms in Part II.) Just a few of these meanings are given here.

In literati pictures, the lotus blossom can often be read as a bright son who is capable of passing the state examinations and becoming a successful scholar-official. Sometimes the lotus blossom is read as the examination itself. If the roots are drawn, they are usually read as the parents, who made the effort and sacrifice needed to educate the son. If the seedpods are drawn, the picture is probably carrying the wish that many children, especially sons, may be born.

In the classical tradition, a picture of a lotus flower can be looked at as one of the Three Flowers of Ambition. The lotus blossom is the third of this set and symbolizes the life of a scholar who studies long and hard, often in poverty, privation and obscurity, like the lotus plant that grows for a long time in dark and muddy waters. But just as the lotus plant eventually reaches the surface and gets into the clean air and sunlight where it becomes a beautiful flower, so too, the scholar who passes the state examinations eventually gains recognition for his achievements, gets an official position, and acquires power, wealth and fame. (This symbolism is explained under Three Flowers of Ambition.)

The lotus blossom is also a flower beloved by Buddhists. The Buddha is often shown as seated on a lotus blossom. The lotus flower is painted on



Lotus Blossoms

Artist's name: Yun Sŏngjung

Pen-name: Mukchŏng



Lotus Blossoms

Inscription: 'Flower that blooms in a poor swampy place.'

Artist's name: Hwa Min

doors, walls and ceilings of Buddhist monasteries. The lotus motif is found on candlesticks, drums, bells and furniture. To Buddhists it is a symbol of enlightenment. Enlightenment came suddenly to the Buddha as he sat meditating under the bodhi tree. But before he attained enlightenment, he spent many years doing penance and engaging in ascetical practices. These years correspond to the time that the lotus spends in the dirty water. Enlightenment corresponds to the blooming of the flower when it reaches the surface of the water.

When the lotus flower blooms, the seeds in the pod beneath the flower are fully formed and are edible. In the same way, enlightenment brings sudden perfection and the ability to transcend the world, and it brings knowledge that can transform the person and reform the world.

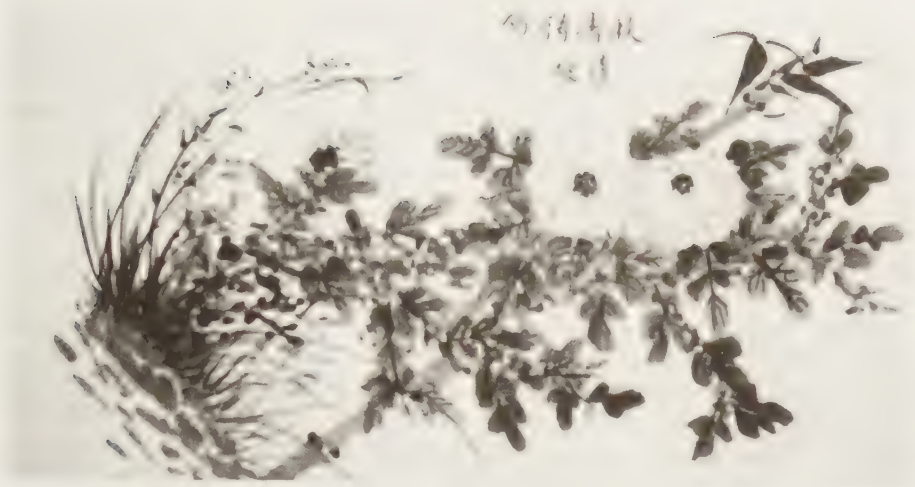
In the Buddhist tradition, the lotus is a symbol of radical change, a change of heart and lifestyle, a change to a better and more spiritual type of life. It symbolizes conversion from an aimless, meaningless and perhaps even evil life to a life geared to attaining enlightenment and to doing good. It also symbolizes the change that believers undergo at death when they are freed from the bonds of this world and enter the bliss of nirvana. In a word, the lotus blossom is a symbol of new life and eternal life.

Buddhists have a very beautiful phrase, which they use as a prayer of praise. 'Om mani padme hum.' (This prayer is in Sanskrit, the language that Buddha himself is supposed to have used.) It means 'Jewel in the lotus flower.' This brings up the image of a drop of clear water, or a dewdrop, sitting in the heart of an open lotus blossom as it spreads its petals to the sun. The sun lights up the flower and glints off the drop of water. The glittering multicoloured rays of sunlight pouring out of the heart of the beautiful flower are like the light and glory that comes to one who follows the teachings of the Buddha.

The lotus blossom is a symbol of beauty, but it is also tied up with the important teachings of Buddhism and Confucianism. It is a symbol of goodness, truth, happiness, parenthood and the virtue of filial piety, as well as being a symbol of life, conversion, eternal life and even resurrection.

▣ SCENTS OF THE FOUR SEASONS

This type of picture is made up of the plants and flowers that form the Four Gentlemen pictures. Korean artists never draw the four gentlemen together, as the word for four (*sa*) in Korean is pronounced the same way as the Sino-Korean word for death. Sometimes the artists put in a fifth symbol, usually the pine tree, to get rid of the hated 'four' word, but more often they only draw three symbols. They explain the absence of one of the flowers by saying that as the bamboo is always alive and grows throughout the year, it is able to absorb the scents of all the flowers that bloom during the year into its sap, and as it continually grows, it locks the scents of spring plum blossoms, summer orchids and autumn chrysanthemums into its fibres. So there is no need to draw all three flowers as long as the bamboo is drawn.



Scents of the Four Seasons

Inscription: 'The autumn scents of the chrysanthemum lean against the bamboo.'

Artist's name: Han Myöngjin. Pen-name: Ch'öngp'a

There are two ways in which this picture can be interpreted. First, we can say that all the beautiful things of spring, summer and autumn are held in our memories and stay with us right into winter. The inscription, in the typical Zen tradition, implies all this. It says: 'The autumn scents of the chrysanthemum lean against the bamboo.' The chrysanthemums are autumn flowers, but as orchids are also drawn, summer scents also lie against or in the bamboo. The orchid and the chrysanthemum do not bloom together, so it is obvious that this picture is a symbolic picture. The presence of three of the Four Gentlemen symbols automatically suggests that the fourth, namely the plum blossom of spring, should be present. This is because its scents, too, are tied up in the fibres of the ever-growing bamboo. So the Zen dictum of 'Implying the most with the least' is fulfilled.

From the Confucian standpoint these pictures of the scents of the four seasons can be read as follows: the Confucian training received while young, which fostered the Confucian virtues and ideals symbolized by the Four Gentlemen, carries on through the summer and autumn of maturity, and remains valid right up to the winter of old age. Nothing good or beautiful is lost. All is locked up in one's personality.

☐ FLOWERS OF THE FOUR SEASONS

Pictures of flowers of the four seasons are very popular in Korea. Most of these pictures are done by artists of the Chindo School.

THE CHINDO SCHOOL

Chindo is an island off the south-west coast of Korea. During the Chosŏn dynasty this remote island was a place of banishment for nobles that displeased the king. Nobles found guilty of big crimes were jailed and executed; those found guilty of lesser crimes were exiled to far distant islands. The king, of course, made the laws, decided what was a crime, acted as judge and even sometimes as executioner. Those banished to the islands could not take servants, money or food. Many died of starvation because they did not know how to look after themselves. Some managed to eke out a living by teaching the sons of the better-off farmers. The Chindo School is believed to have been started by these well-educated exiles. The youths of Chindo Island studied the Chinese classics and drawing, and learned all the theories of East Asian art. These young men got a good classical education, but because they were not the sons of nobles, nor wealthy enough to finish their studies in Seoul, they could not advance up the social ladder and get positions in the government. Still, many of them were later able to make a living for themselves either as teachers, scribes or artists.

Chindo artists developed characteristics that distinguished them from other artists, so much so that they are known as the Chindo School. Some of these special features are as follows. They show a solid grounding in the theories, philosophies and styles of the classical Chinese artists of the Northern and Southern Song Schools (960–1280). This was the golden period of Chinese and Confucian art. The Southern Song developed the ideals of the Zen philosophers and applied them to art. Zen defined Tao as being essentially 'thought' or 'idea'. Through thought Tao made all things and controlled all things. Art then became an instrument to show this 'thought'. Drawing an object, or expressing one's feelings was not the aim of the artist. Rather his purpose was to illustrate profound thoughts, to express lofty ideas, to manifest Tao in the clearest way possible and with the minimum amount of clutter. Such phrases as 'Less is more' and 'Idea present, brush absent' were the guidelines. Using only three shades of black or only three colours in a picture became part of this process. Expressing the 'idea' was the important thing.

The artists of Northern Song used a different approach to depict Tao. By taking a small part of the world that Tao had created, such as a bird, a flower or a landscape, and by drawing this in perfect colour and detail, and with all its parts in proportion, they tried to show the perfection, beauty and harmony of the Tao that created the original object. Chindo artists, by using the theories, philosophies, styles, skills and symbols developed by the ancient masters, always call the viewer back to the roots of classical East Asian art.

The Chindo artists used the vivid colours of the Northern Song School and still managed to hold onto the Zen concepts of the Southern Song School. Combining the best of both schools was not original to Chindo artists; this was accomplished by the more famous Korean artists of the nineteenth century. Probably Chinese artists could not have done this as they were bound by tradition to one school or the other.

The bright colours used by the Chindo artists are much appreciated by owners of modern city houses. Ordinary oriental pictures, using the subdued

colours of Confucian artists, do not suit modern homes. Colourful splashy Western oil paintings seem to blend in better with ultra-modern furnishings. The bright colours of the Chindo artists are not out of place in such surroundings. This might be a factor in the popularity of the works of this school in recent years.

Another characteristic of the Chindo School is their mixing of the two different media in their works. Within the same frame, they mix black and grey and multicoloured pictures.

The Picture

Here we return to the picture of the flowers of the four seasons. As it is a Chindo School picture, we can expect a lot of classical symbolism. Firstly, this picture is read from right to left, just as Chinese script is read from right to left. On the right are plum blossoms representing spring. They bloom over a sprig of bamboo, which is battered and browned by frost and winter storms but is still alive. Korean houses are normally heated by *ondol*, a system that uses flues under the floor. In the early spring there is no need for a fire in the *ondol* during the day, so only a brazier, that is a brass three-legged pot containing burning charcoal, is used in the room to take away any chill that might be in the air. So the plum blossoms indicate the first days of spring and the brazier shows that the weather is still cold.

Next, come the magnolias with the peony roses beneath them. East Asian pictures, as stated above, are read from right to left, but they are also read from top to bottom, because Chinese characters can be written in both of these orders. The red or purple magnolias bloom early in spring. The peony roses bloom in summer. Then we have the loquats. These fruits ripen in the early summer. Beneath them is a twig of bamboo. This has the shade of green that the new leaves of the bamboo have in autumn. Next on the left is a rock, covered with mosses and grass. This represents the earth, which here is read as a yin principle to balance the fire of the brazier, which is a yang principle. Finally to the far left are camellias, which bloom in winter.

All four seasons are represented in this picture. The inscription reinforces this interpretation as it can be read: 'These flowers of the four seasons bestow riches, honour, happiness and joy.'



Flowers of the Four Seasons

Inscription: 'These flowers of the Four Seasons gathered together give the blessings of wealth, happiness and joy.'

Artist's Name: Kim Kiltong. Pen-Name: Namjin

In this picture we find the Two (yin and yang). The background of the picture is the sky. The flowers are of the earth. The five elements also are present: fire, the charcoal burning in the brazier; wood, the flowers and bamboo; metal, the brazier; earth, the rock; and water, which is contained in the flowers. The brazier is an artefact made by man. So the Three (heaven, earth and man) are shown. The vitality and beauty of the flowers is captured. All of these things are representations or manifestations of the One, Tao, the creator.

□ FLOWERS OF THE FOUR SEASONS ON A SCREEN

These eight pictures, mounted on a folding screen, collectively have the same symbolism as the previous picture. As each picture can stand alone, each carries its own particular symbolism. The individual symbolism of many of the flowers in this set have already been explained. Those that have been missed will be dealt with below.

As folding screens are very popular in Korea, many artists make sets of pictures specifically for mounting on different sized screens. This set was made by a Chindo artist in the typical Chindo School tradition. But before examining the symbolism of the pictures, first a few words about screens and their uses.

SCREENS

During the Chosŏn dynasty (1392–1910), screens had a minimum of eight panels; some had ten, many had twelve. Screens of six panels or less were only made in the twentieth century. Older screens were usually big; modern screens are usually small. Many old screens are too big to be used in modern houses, so the smaller six-panelled screens are more popular with today's homeowners. Screens were primarily used as draught excluders in the big houses of the nobles, but as time went on they were prized for their decorative value.

Nowadays, screens are rarely seen in everyday use, they are only used as a backdrop to special ceremonies, such as funerals, weddings, birthdays and special parties. In the old days a screen was placed behind the king's throne; in modern times, they can be seen behind the president's chair, or behind an official presiding at a party or at a meeting.

Screens are covered in paper or silk. Some are embroidered. All the panels should be the same size. Each panel should be able to stand alone, that is, it should be a complete picture. All the panels should match each other in their colour scheme, style or subject matter, so that together they make a set. Sometimes, when all the panels are put together, they connect into a new picture that spreads right across the screen.

Some screens can be used anywhere; custom restricts the use of others to particular places and occasions. Some are done in black and white; others in colour. The objects drawn in the pictures vary considerably, but the following are the most common: calligraphy; virtuous plants; decorative

symbols; flowers; landscapes; Immortals; fish, insects, birds or animals; and hunting scenes.

Calligraphy

Poems, famous speeches or quotations are the subject matter of calligraphy screens. They can be written in Chinese characters or in the Korean alphabet. These screens can be used any time and anywhere. They are suitable for solemn occasions such as funerals, as a backdrop for the altar when the sacrifices are being offered for ancestors, behind tables or desks during a formal meal, or when a meeting or conference is being conducted.

Virtuous plants

These plants are called virtuous because they teach virtue. The Four Gentlemen pictures are examples. They are also called virtuous because they have medicinal or magical properties and can cure illness or give blessings. Lotus plants, vine trees, pine trees, willow trees and many others fall into this category of virtuous plants. These pictures are nearly always done in black and white. They are suitable for a man's quarters, and can be used at all public ceremonies, whether they are sad or joyful occasions.

Decorative symbols

These screens are made up of drawings in various shapes of old vases, old coins, fans, military badges, weapons, flags, different styles of clothes. Any collection of things that can be associated together can be used. Although these screens are painted in vivid colours, they can be used on all occasions, sad, serious or joyful, because they do not carry any particular message.

Flowers

Screens of flowers always carry a happy message. They are usually very colourful and denote joy, beauty and vitality. These screens are suitable for a woman's room and as a backdrop for all joyous occasions such as wedding ceremonies, birthday and congratulatory parties. These screens cannot be used at funerals, ancestral sacrifices or other serious meetings.

Landscapes

Many types of pictures fall into this category: Mountains and Water pictures, map-type pictures, sacred mountain pictures and ten long life symbol pictures. Really only the first two can be used as a backdrop at ceremonies. Mountains and Water pictures and map-type pictures can be used at all ceremonies whether public or private, whether joyous, solemn or sad. They can also be used in any room in the house. The others are better kept at home in the men's quarters or at the office.

Immortals

These screens have pictures of Taoist Immortals, Old Immortals, New Immortals, famous Confucian scholars, characters immortalized in poetry,

novels, myths or history. These screens can be used in the women's as well as in the men's quarters, but they are not suitable for use at public functions.

Fish, insects, birds, animals

Pictures of insects, fish, birds and small or docile animals such as rabbits, cats and deer, especially if drawn with flowers or trees, can be used in a woman's room, and can be used in public but only on joyous occasions. Pictures of big animals, such as dragons or tigers, can only be used in the men's quarters and are not suitable for use in public.

Hunting scenes

In the old days, hunting screens were very popular. These pictures were really a record of a big hunting trip done with the king or some other high official. They could only be used in the men's quarters. They could never be used as a backdrop to a ceremony or a public function.

Screens are very popular in Korea. Nearly every house has one or two. If there is only one, it is probably a landscape of the Mountains and Water type because it can be used on all occasions. If they have two, one is of the sombre type such as the calligraphy or virtuous plants type, used at funerals and for the various ancestral sacrifices; and the other one is probably a colourful one of flowers, or flowers and birds, which can be used at parties, birthdays and weddings. If there are more than two, they are probably being collected for their artistic value, or maybe for their monetary value!

Screens are always read from right to left. In screens where different seasons are depicted, spring is always the first on the right, and winter is always the last on the left. As the different seasons are credited with having yin and yang qualities, a screen should always be shown to have more yang than yin. A screen where the yang principle predominates is full of vitality and life-giving energies. Nobody wants a screen where the yin principle predominates, as this would produce listlessness and death. Spring has a mixture of yin and yang, but the life-giving energy of the yang is in the ascendancy. Summer is full of yang. Autumn again brings back a balance between the two forces, but the flowers that bloom in autumn show that the vital forces of yang are still present. Winter is all yin. Flowers that bloom in the winter show that yin, or the death principle, has not taken over completely, that yang, the life principle, is still around and will revive everything once again in the following spring. To keep this predominance of yang in the screen, artists usually draw two spring pictures, three summer pictures, two autumn pictures and only one winter picture. No strict rule is followed except to make sure that there are more yang than yin pictures.

The Picture

In China, there are well-known lists of flowers and fruits that correspond to the twelve lunar months of the year. The most popular list is the following:

January – plum blossom	February – peach blossom	March – peony rose
April – cherry blossom	May – magnolia	June – pomegranate

July – lotus blossom	August – pear	September – mallow
October – chrysanthemum	November – gardenia	December – poppy

In this list I have used the Western names of the months. Strictly speaking, the lunar months do not match the months of the solar calendar but the order of the flowers is the same.

This order is followed in Chinese pictures where many flowers are drawn together. In Korea the list is not followed. Korean artists feel free to draw any flowers, fruits or trees that they think are suitable. They use only one rule and that is to keep the flowers and fruits of the same season together, but they do not have to be in chronological order. The seasons, of course, have to be in the right order, with spring on the right, followed by summer and autumn, and finishing up with winter on the left. Plum blossoms and azaleas signify spring; peony roses, lotus blossoms and loquats denote summer; roses and chrysanthemums symbolize autumn; and camellias represent winter.

Plum blossom, azaleas, peony roses, lotus blossoms and chrysanthemums have been explained already. Here we will just look at the Chinese characters on these pictures. The script on the plum blossom picture reads: 'Flowers bloom, not afraid of the cold.' The azalea picture reads: 'The red blood from the bird (the Little Cuckoo) reddens the flower.' The script on the peony roses reads: 'All like to be rich and famous, the peony rose has this meaning.' The lotus blossom picture reads: 'The lotus is the most beautiful of all flowers.' And the script on the chrysanthemum picture reads: 'Alone in the fields it blooms in spite of the cold of winter.'

The other three pictures – roses, loquats and camellias – are explained later. Here just a synopsis is given of the things that they signify.

The roses are symbols of beauty and unending youth. The word for a rose in Sino-Korean (*changmi*), by a process of substituting other characters for the two syllables, can be made to mean 'youthful and beautiful for a very long time'. Roses in the orient start to bloom in the late spring and continue to send out flowers till the frosts of late autumn kill them. So they are truly the flowers that bloom and remain beautiful for a very long time. A picture of roses carries the message, 'May you stay young and beautiful forever', or at least for a very long time.

The loquats are regarded as strange because they flower in the autumn, form fruit in the winter, ripen in the spring and hang on the tree during the summer, and even into the early autumn, when they start to bloom again. They do not follow the normal order of the four seasons. Because loquats ignore the progression of the seasons, they must have the awesome powers of the four seasons within themselves. This picture expresses the wish that you, too, always have these great powers within yourself.

The camellias bloom in Korea in the winter, even in the snow. In Korea they are symbols of winter. They carry the message and wish that you retain your youth, vigour and beauty even until the winter of old age.

There are birds and bees in some of these pictures. Insects are always reminders of summer and the happiness that summer brings. Small birds can be regarded as sparrows. The Sino-Korean word for a sparrow (*chak*) is

pronounced the same as the Sino-Korean word for happiness (also *chak*). So these birds also carry a wish that you be happy. The kingfisher has a different meaning. It is used as a substitute for the mythical phoenix, which personifies summer. It carries the special wish that you always carry in your heart all the joys and happiness of summer.

□ VINE TREE AND GRAPES

Artists used only black Chinese ink to make these black and white pictures (see page 63). The black soot that comes from burnt pine knots produces the best of these inks. This carbon is mixed with horn glue and formed into



Spring 1
Plum Blossoms and Birds



Spring 2
Azaleas and Birds



Summer 3
Peony Rose.

Eight-panel screen with flowers of the four seasons
Artist's Name: Kim Talsök. Pen-Name: Chöngwön

an ink stick. The end of the ink stick is ground on an ink stone and mixed with water. At first, the water turns grey, but with more and more grinding, the water turns darker and darker. Finally, after rubbing the ink stick on the ink stone for over thirty minutes, the ink turns jet black.

The best Korean artists think out the whole picture in their minds. As they grind the ink, they draw in the grey parts. As the ink gets darker, they paint in the dark grey areas. When the ink becomes fully black, they finish the picture using the blackest black. Chinese artists did not follow this rule, they were even allowed to use different ink sticks to get different shades of black and grey.

Chinese artists were supposed to use only three shades: grey, dark grey and black. Korean artists, following their own traditions, use five shades. Some



Summer 4
**Lotus Blossoms and
 Kingfisher**



Summer 5
Roses



Late Summer or
 Autumn 6
Loquats and Birds

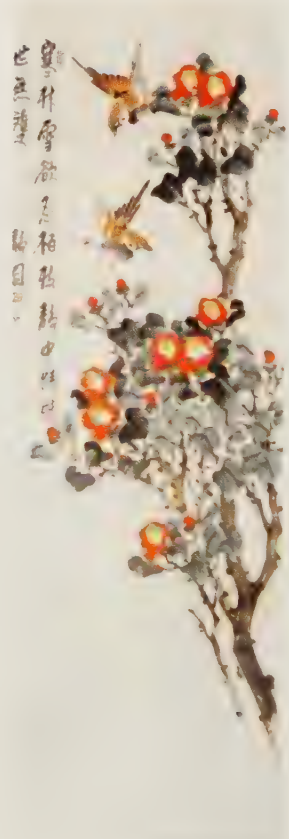
Eight-panel screen with flowers of the four seasons
 Artist's Name: Kim Talsök. Pen-Name: Chöngwön

modern artists say that the Korean tradition allows them to use seven shades. Although the artists disagree about the exact number of shades of black to use, they all agree that the shades should be related to one another in a regular progression. For example, the second grey should be twice as dark as the first, the third should be twice as dark as the second, and so all the way to black.

Although the pictures have to be fully thought out before any painting is done, and the order of the drawing and painting of the parts is dependent on the different shades of grey and black produced by the grinding of the ink stick, still the overall impression of the completed picture must be that the whole thing was dashed off in a few minutes. Without this look of spontaneity, the picture looks lifeless. Too much detail kills these pictures; the artist has to follow the rule of 'Using less to express the most.'



Autumn 7
Chrysanthemums and
Boxthorn



Winter 8
Camellias and Birds

Eight-panel screen with flowers of the four seasons

Artist's Name: Kim Talsök. Pen-name: Chöngwön

The Chinese loved to classify everything into fives: the five elements, the five blessings, the five colours, the five poisons, the five grains, etc. Things they were not able to classify into fives, they classified as a hundred. As they used many fruits, they referred to them all as the hundred fruits. Grapes fell into this class and so were called one of the hundred fruits.

Korean scholars did not think too much of this classification. They preferred to follow a classification based on whether the fruit was just good to eat, or whether it also had other virtuous qualities. They made up a list of virtuous plants. As mentioned above, these were plants or fruits that had either medicinal qualities or could be used to teach or illustrate important Confucian doctrines. Vine trees and grapes were included in this list of virtuous plants.

In a rural economy, having many children to help with the work, and to look after parents in their old age, was a very big consideration. In a Confucian society, having many sons who could carry on the family name and offer sacrifices for deceased parents and ancestors became even more important. Fertility and virility were the blessings most desired. Anything that could give these gifts was highly appreciated. Fruits that produced a lot of seeds must have something in them, some special power, to cause this fertility. Eating such fruits, so the reasoning went, should give this power to people who wanted to have many children. The vine tree must have this



Vine and Grapes

Inscription: 'This picture was drawn on Mudŭng Mountain (near Kwangju city) while living in a small hermitage amidst the foliage.'

Artist's name: Lee Kyewŏn. Pen-name: Yŏndang

power within itself because it produces many grapes, and each of these grapes has within it many seeds. According to this line of reasoning, the vine tree and especially the grapes must have the medicinal qualities to give fertility and virility. And, of course, the vine tree produced all these seeds to perpetuate its own species. In the same way, a good Confucian gentleman should get married, raise a family to carry on his family name and have many descendants who could offer sacrifices for dead ancestors to the end of time. In this sense, too, the vine tree was a virtuous plant because it taught what was the right thing for a Confucian gentleman to do.

Literati painters took the vine tree and grapes and made it one of their own pictures. They used a pun to carry their hidden meaning. All fruit plants with long trailing branches and stems such as vine trees, pumpkins, melons, can be called vines (*mandae*, many stemmed in Sino-Korean). This sounds like the Sino-Korean word (*mandae*) for ten thousand generations. So this picture, read as a literati picture, has the message: 'May you have many sons and grandsons to offer sacrifices for you down through all generations till the end of time.'

One final word. Pictures of trees and fruit always indicate a season, and have the magic power to grant the joys of that season. Grapes ripen in the early autumn. So this picture is a reminder of balmy early autumn evenings, of the eating of the grapes, and of partying under the shade of the vine trees.

▣ PINE TREE

The long-needled white pine, and the short-needled red pine or cypress, carry the same symbolism. Both grow tall and strong, remain green the whole year long, survive heat and cold, storms and adversity, and, although they lose a branch now and then and become gnarled, they live for over a hundred years.

Shamanism survives in many parts of Korea today. Many educated Koreans say that they are Confucianists or Buddhists, but deep down they are also influenced by Shamanism. While Confucianism tells one how to live, and Buddhism tells one what will happen after death, Shamanism explains and corrects the things that go wrong; the mysteries of good health and sickness; success and failure in business, farming, fishing; harmony in the home or the perpetual fighting of relatives. Shamanism says that these things are caused by the spirits. If the spirits are displeased, they cause all sorts of disasters. To get blessings, one has to placate them with rituals and offerings. There are many spirits of sky, stars, mountains, wells and rivers, who are responsible for causing all natural phenomena, but only a few are involved in the day-to-day lives of men and women. Of these few, three are intimately connected to the pine tree: the mountain spirit who lives among the pines and rocks on the mountain and is responsible for giving fertility and good harvests to all who live in the valleys beneath his mountain; the tree spirit who lives in the oldest and biggest pine tree in the village and is responsible for giving good health to everybody in the surrounding houses;

and the house spirit who lives in the roof space of the house among the beams and rafters and is responsible for peace and harmony in the house and for the success of all those who dwell there. Up until recently all Korean houses were made of pine. So this house spirit, too, is associated with the pine tree. Some modern scholars say that these three spirits are one and the same; they are three different manifestations of the mountain spirit, who in turn, with the sky god and the star god, is one of three manifestations of the One True God. The scholars may know this, but uneducated grandmothers living in remote villages have not worked this out yet!

There is a saying in Korea that a man is born under the pine, lives under the pine and is buried under the pine. He is born in a house built of pine. He lives in such a house and works in the fields in the valleys that lie beneath the pine covered mountains. He is buried in a pine box on the side of the mountain surrounded by pine trees. His whole life is influenced by the spirits who dwell in or among the pines. These spirits give the blessings of fertility and wealth, health and long life, peace and harmony to all in the village and in the home. The pine tree is the symbol of these spirits and it acts as a charm in bestowing these blessings of the spirits of the pine tree.

The pine tree is one of the ten long life symbols. Pictures of these ten have magic properties to grant health and long life to the people in the house. (The ten long life symbols are treated in Part I under Landscapes. See Mountains, also Pine Trees, Part II.)

Different cultures have had different reasons for making lists of trees. In Europe poets made lists of trees linked to the seasonal calendar. In the Celtic cultures trees were associated with each letter of the ogham alphabet (See *Ogygia* by Roderick O'Flaherty). The Brehon Laws in Ireland divided trees into four categories: chieftain trees, peasant trees, shrub trees and bramble trees, each with seven varieties. The laws defined a scale of fines for unlawfully felling any of these trees. The fines diminished in severity according to the category (See 'A Leafy Alphabet' by Chris Bailey in *The Irish Garden* Oct/Nov 2000). The Chinese had different reasons for making lists of trees. They made one list of five trees to reflect the order in nature as perceived by their philosophers. In this list the Chinese date tree (the jujube tree) ruled the east and all the trees in that area. The peach tree ruled all the vegetation in the west. The locust tree ruled the south and the elm tree ruled the north. The pine tree ruled the centre and just as the Chinese emperor ruled the whole country from the centre, so too the pine tree ruled the vegetable kingdom from its place of prominence. As the Emperor held the mandate of heaven, which entitled him to rule over men and to possess quasi-divine qualities, so too the pine tree had a mandate to rule over the vegetable kingdom. This mandate also entailed special spiritual qualities.

So, the pine tree is called the king of the forest. If it is king, it has precedence over all other trees. It is the First. As it is the First, it is used to symbolize the beginning, the start of the New Year. It is a symbol of New Year's Day. In literati pictures it is used to send New Year's Greetings. (See Puma, Magpie and Pine Tree, Part II.)



Pine Tree

A Pine tree cultivated as a bonsai

Artist's Name: Kim Talsök

Pen-name: Chöngwön

In *The Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting* (Mai-mai Sze's translation, page 177, Vintage Books, 1959) Wang Gai notes: 'Pine trees are like people of high principle whose manner reveals an inner power . . . they have an attractive air, yet one trembles to approach them, awed by the hidden power ready to spring forth. Those who paint trees should keep this in mind.' In other words, the strength, vitality and kingly qualities of the pine tree should be drawn to show that it is in charge, that it is first.

The pine tree is not one of the Four Gentlemen but it is often drawn with them to make a set of five pictures. As already noted, the Sino-Korean word for 'four' (*sa*) also means death so it is an unlucky number. Making the Four Gentlemen into a set of five pictures negates the bad omens and gives the 'five' which is beloved by East Asian philosophers.

The picture of a pine tree, or a part of a pine tree, always acts as a charm. This is true whether it is alone or drawn with other symbols, or even if used as a part of a literati picture. As a charm it has the power to grant the blessings of long life, vitality, health, strength, prosperity, peace and harmony. Because it is such a powerful symbol it is very popular and often found in Korean homes.

The picture of a bonsai pine carries the same symbolism as other pine tree pictures. Here however a few new elements are added. The tree has branches pointing in four different directions. They symbolize the Four: the four points of the compass, the places where the four seasons originate – spring from the east, summer from the south, autumn from the west, winter from the north. Wang Gai gives the following instructions for drawing trees.



Pine Tree

Drawn on a post card
Artist's Name: Pak Sullye
Sr. Catherina

'To draw trees one should first be able to draw the trunk and main branches . . . one should know how to lay out the four main branches. These four should be like the four paths which go out to the Four Directions.'

The background represents the sky or heaven, the tree growing in the clay represents the earth, and the tray or pot in which the tree is growing is a thing made by a man. So heaven, earth and man are shown and these, of course, are the Three.

The unworked area, and the area covered by the brushwork, represent yin and yang. These are the Two. The Four, the Three and the Two are all manifestations of the One, who is Tao, the creator.

So this picture is not only a magic picture but also a sermon on East Asian cosmology. (See *Flowers of the Four Seasons*, Part II, for a fuller explanation of the five principles.)

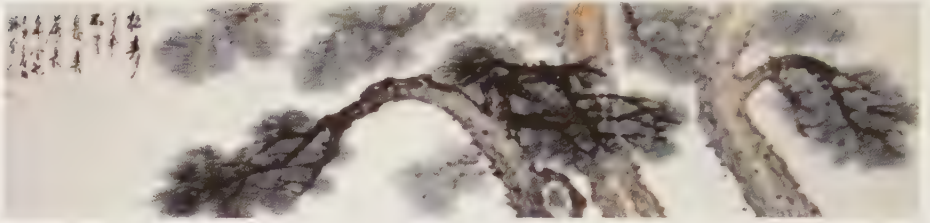
☐ THREE PINES

Before looking at the symbolism of the Three Pines, first let us look at what Wang Gai has to say about drawing trees.

Trees should be drawn in twos, threes or fives, but one should avoid making them all the same height with tops and roots at the same levels. That would make them look like a bundle of firewood. They should be painted so as to seem to yield place to one another and to stand together naturally . . . Old trees should show a grave dignity and an air of compassion. Young trees should appear modest and retiring. They should stand together gazing at each other.

From this we see that groups of trees were symbols of the relationships that should exist in a true Confucian society. They should portray the harmony that comes when the ritual relationships are observed. They should show the relationships between old and young, superior and inferior, and even the gradations within the groups.

A group of trees of the same age is a symbol of a group of friends, and it should show the relationship that exists between them. One is taller than



Three Pine Trees

Artist's Name: Kim Yongjun. Pen-name: Kŭmdang



Three Pine Trees

Artist's Name: Kim Pyŏngnae
Pen-name: Ch'ŏngsan

the others; he is the leader. One is older than the others; he is the wisest. One is stronger than the others; he is the one who does all the heavy work. They stand close together showing that they are friends, always ready to support and protect each other, and to help each other through every adversity.

In Confucian philosophy, the peace, prosperity, unity and harmony of nation and family depended on the proper observance of the five relationships: the relationships between king and subject; father and son; elder brother and younger brother; husband and wife; and friend and friend. These relationships give rise to the Five Virtues: benevolence, justice, wisdom, propriety and sincerity. These five are called the Five Rules, that is the five ways a civilized man must act. By keeping these rules and practising these virtues a man could get heaven's blessings and become a perfect gentleman.

Three Pines pictures teach and demonstrate the fifth of the five relationships, namely, the relationship between friend and friend. They remind friends of their duties and obligations to each other.

In Korea, the three pines represent three friends of the same age, all growing old together. Although the three trees are the same age, they are never the same size or shape. Confucian society did not teach equality or democracy. Order was based on hierarchy; one should know one's place and stay in it. Each tree spreads its branches in different directions so as not to encroach on the space of the others. Still they stand close to each other to protect each other and to use their combined strength to stand up to the fury of the storms. One may be damaged by age, disease or by the severity of the gales of fortune, but the other two trees support it and protect it, so that even though battered, it can survive and enjoy life within the friendship of the group. In this way friends should remain friends forever. They help each other and protect each other even in adversity. Their friendship is always governed by propriety and sincerity.

▣ THREE BAMBOOS

A picture of bamboo is normally regarded as one of the Four Gentlemen. But if there are bamboo shoots, it is probably a literati picture, and if there are exactly three bamboos we know it is a picture of Three Good Friends.

Bamboo in a stand are usually grown from the same root. A bamboo grove then is a symbol of solidarity among relatives and friends, not just those who are bonded by common bloodlines and roots, but also those who are connected by common interests and friendships.

According to common belief the bamboo lived for sixty years, bloomed once and then died. In an age when life expectancy was very low, to live to the sixtieth birthday was to live to a great old age. Also, as the bamboo does not lose its leaves in winter, it seemed to be always alive, always vital, always healthy and always enjoying life. So it is a natural symbol of a man who is blessed with a long life, who lives his full span, the sixty-year cycle, always vital, healthy and joyful.



Three Bamboos

Artist's name: Han Myōngjin

Pen-name: Ch'ōngp'a

The three bamboos in this picture have been through many storms and hardships. Still they stand together, supporting each other, helping each other. True friends should be like this, always loyal to each other, helping each other through all trials and tribulations, growing old together, enjoying their lives and each other's company.

Three Bamboo Pictures, just like Three Pine Tree Pictures, are symbols of the fifth relationship of Confucianism, the relationship between friends. Other symbols are used by East Asian artists to portray this doctrine. In China, a picture showing a pine tree, a plum tree and a bamboo, represent the three friends. In Korea, pictures called Three Friends of The Cold, or Four Friends Pictures, also deal with this theme of friendship. Very often these pictures have small birds drawn with the trees and flowers. Some of these pictures can be found in the section dealing with Fish, Birds and Animals, Part I, Chapter 5.

OTHER FLOWERS AND TREES

Other flowers, trees and plants are also described in Chapter 5. These include loquats, magnolias, millet, peach blossoms, persimmons, reeds and willow trees. (The Buddhist symbolism attached to the willow tree is explained in Part I, Chapter 10 under Kwanseŭm.)

The wisteria tree and its flowers are found in Chapter 5 under Birds and Trees. Many other flowers, fruits and trees and their symbolism as used by the literati painters are given in Part II.

Chapter 4

Landscapes



In a certain sense, Korean landscapes are the most Chinese of Korean paintings. And at the same time, Korean landscapes are the most Korean of Korean paintings. They are Chinese in the sense that their main purpose is to express the cosmology of the Chinese philosophers, whether this is to express the Tao or the divine first cause of the Taoist philosophers, or to express the harmony and totality of the Confucian philosophers. They are also Chinese in the sense that they follow the traditions and techniques of the great Chinese masters. As China was the home of high culture in East Asia, the Korean gentlemen painters had no choice but to become as Chinese as possible. Only in this way could they show that they were cultured. To reinforce the Chinese flavour of their pictures, Korean artists wrote their poems or inscriptions on paintings in the most difficult forms of Chinese writing, either using unusual or difficult forms of the characters, either in grass style, or archaic forms, which only the very learned could read. The illegibility of the script became a hallmark of the education of the artist, a sign of his attainment to high culture. So the inscriptions are not there to be read by the ordinary person but to show the erudition of the artist and to increase the foreignness, the exotic atmosphere or the Chinese look of the paintings.

Korean landscapes are very Korean in the sense that they now depict typical Korean scenery. Korean scenery is different from Chinese scenery. It is formed by a different geology and has a different climate. Also the Korean eye for beauty is different from the Chinese. These differences are so marked that it is easy to distinguish between a Korean landscape and a Chinese landscape.

Korean landscapes go back to before AD600. There are landscapes on tiles found in Paekche (18BC–AD663) tombs at Kyuammyōn in Puyō. The Paekche kings set up their third and last capital in Puyō, so these tiles date to the sixth century at the latest. Also there are types of landscapes, backdrops actually to paintings of Bodhisattvas, which were done by Koryō dynasty artists in the fourteenth century. The famous 'Kwanseūm posal With Willow Branch' in Nara, Japan, painted by the Korean artist Sō Kubang, is a typical example.

Present-day landscapes are not descended from these, but from Chinese sources. During the Tang dynasty (618–906) and during the Period of the Five Dynasties (907–59), there was a revival of the original philosophy of Taoism. This was made popular by the writings of the poets who were later known as the Eight New Immortals. Taoism had never been forgotten, but for many centuries Confucianism had pushed it into second place. Old-style Confucianism, however, had shown again and again that it had flaws. The king's word was law, but often the laws he made did not produce peace, harmony or prosperity as theory predicted. Taoism said that these blessings could only be obtained by living in harmony with nature, away from the artificial order imposed by society. But as yet nobody had been able to translate this into a political system.

When Buddhism came to China in the first century, there was great difficulty in translating the Buddhist texts as there were no corresponding philosophical or devotional terms in Chinese. The Buddhists were forced to use the vocabulary of the Taoists to express their meanings. This brought about a strange marriage between the two religions. The union caused many problems, but it helped the spread of Buddhism. One of the sects of Buddhism that developed from this union was Chan, or, as it is better known in the West, Zen. To put it simply, the universal spirit of Buddhism was identified with the universal mind of Tao. This universal mind controlled everything through thought. Man's mind, although capable of thought, by itself was very weak. United with the universal mind, however, it could control all the forces of nature. This was the enlightenment that Buddhists were looking for; this was the power that Taoist magicians and philosophers were looking for, the power that would give them access to all the secrets of life and give them immortality. This power could also give wisdom to a Confucian adept; he could become a sage gentleman.

Since the Han dynasty (207BC–AD220), Confucianism had been the official philosophy of the Chinese throne and government. During the Tang dynasty (618–906), Confucianism was influenced by the new ideas developed by Zen Buddhism and Taoism. It started to absorb the idea of the universal mind, so that by the beginning of the next dynasty, the Song dynasty (960–1280), it had developed into Neo-Confucianism, or as it was then called, Tao hsueh jia, the School of the Study of Tao. This school put the universal mind at the top of the Confucian pyramid, at the top of the five relationships. It was no longer the king that produced harmony in the kingdom, but the God of creation acting with the king. The king had to obey a higher law, the law of heaven. The path to unity with this universal God was through the observance of the rules, rites and ceremonies of Confucianism, and through study, especially study of the classics. This brought about a gradual union with the universal mind. When this union eventually became complete, the scholar obtained wisdom. He became a sage gentleman, able to bend all men to his wisdom and will, and able to produce harmony among all the people.

So by the beginning of the Song dynasty (960–1280), all three Chinese religions or schools of philosophy recognized a universal spirit that caused and

controlled the visible world through its mind or thought. This God was a divine power rather than a person. None of the ancient East Asian philosophers ever developed the idea that the all-supreme God was a person. They did concede that beneath this God there were lesser gods who ran different parts of the world. These lesser gods had personalities, but often very imperfect ones. Only the great God, the universal mind, the Tao, the source of all power, the God that created everything, that controls everything, and that will eventually reunite everything harmoniously within itself, is all perfect. But it is an impersonal God.

So to sum up: union between the universal mind and man could be achieved, but in different ways, depending on one's basic beliefs. Buddhists said it could be achieved by austerity and meditation. Zen Buddhism used koans to detach the mind from this world. Both of these methods brought about enlightenment. Taoists postulated union with the universal mind by bringing the body, emotions and mind into harmony with nature. The five elements in the body had to be in perfect balance. Proper food, proper exercise, proper breathing, all helped to bring harmony to the body. The mind had to be reformed by learning and contemplation, contemplation of nature, especially its transcendental qualities, its immensity, its beauty, its peacefulness and its harmony. This brought magical powers and immortality to the Taoists. Neo-Confucian scholars said that the practice of the virtues as taught by Confucius brought about this union with the universal mind. This produced the sage gentleman.

The artists of Song set out to 'Paint the face of Tao.' The only way they could represent this universal spirit was by depicting Tao through creation. The Northern School depicted the beauty, perfection and creative power of Tao by drawing just parts of its creation, by drawing flowers, birds, trees and mountains with perfect lines, perfect form and true colours. The Southern School took a more abstract approach. They portrayed Tao by showing its attributes: harmony, through the balance of yin and yang; immensity, through indicating the four directions; control over nature and man, by the changing of the four seasons and the passage of time; and creative power, through landscapes showing the totality of creation, that is heaven, earth and man. To show the spiritual dimension of Tao, they used just the minimum of lines and colours, only showing essences. Mai-mai Sze notes in *The Way of Chinese Painting*, page 109:

While innumerable quotations could be cited from the Chinese literature of early periods, in particular the Taoist, to show how space was regarded as an equivalent of Tao, it was mainly the influence of Chan or Zen Buddhism that led to the supreme statements about Tao in the works of the Southern Song painters, and in particular the landscapists. In the handling of vast space, their ink paintings are some of the greatest expressions of the human spirit.

Where the Northern Song painters excelled in height, in towering mountain peaks rich in detail, conveying an impression of the magnificence and multiplicity of nature, the Southern Song painters merged the details in mists,

obliterated them in space, and emphasized by depth of distances the silent majesty of nature and the mystery of Tao. Both styles of painting lifted the spectator from the earth into liberating space. Both were virtually maps of the cosmos, for underlying philosophical ideas inspired these sublime views of nature.

In time, the two schools borrowed each other's ideas and techniques until the distinction between them became blurred. Korean artists claim that they contributed a lot to this blending of the two styles. The Chinese for centuries had drawn a clear line between the two schools. Their artists drew in both styles but dared not mix the two styles together. Korean artists of the nineteenth century were not so restricted by the Chinese traditions and so were free to experiment. Once the ground was broken, Chinese artists started combining both styles.

Yet the aims of both schools have always remained the same, namely, to show through their paintings the vitality, beauty, perfection and unity of Tao, the universal mind, the creator, the One God. All classical East Asian art has the same aims, for it all had the same beginnings in the academies of the Northern and Southern Schools of the Song dynasty. Korean classical landscape painting also has its roots firmly planted in this era, the most glorious period of Chinese culture, philosophy and art.

The master painters of the Song dynasty worked out a language of symbols. They could show some of the attributes of Tao through such simple pictures as the Four Gentlemen, or pictures of flowers and trees. In Mountains and Water landscapes, they could show more of Tao's attributes. In pictures of insects, birds and other animals, they could demonstrate still more of its attributes. According to the Neo-Confucian scholars, these were the only pictures worth painting. As time went on these pictures became the only appropriate ones for a Confucian gentleman to paint. This list was very restrictive, but this restriction became part of the discipline needed to become a perfect gentleman.

The gentleman scholar had to learn how to use the brush properly, how to use and control the ink, how to use the proper colours, and how to organize his picture. In the manuals only thirty-two different kinds of brush strokes were recognized. Students were not allowed to break the rules. The masters broke the rules to achieve the effects that they wanted, but then they only became masters by first observing the rules until they became perfect. If a master achieved something new that worked well, his method became accepted and became a new rule. The rules of ink brush painting were not made to make life hard for the artist. The masters worked them out over a long period of time as being the best way to do things. They were not restrictions on the artist's talents; they were there to help him express not himself or his feelings but the essence of the divinity.

The symbolic language contained in the classical pictures must be interpreted in the light of the Neo-Confucian, Zen and revitalized Taoist philosophies.

The balance of sky, clouds, mountains and water showed the balance of yin and yang.

The universe was made up of three distinct parts: the heavens above, the earth and the underworld below, and man who lived in between, and who was composed of elements from both, namely spirit and matter.

The universe was spread out in space, spread out to the four quarters of the world. From the four directions came the four seasons, each in its own appointed time. So everything lived in time and everything changed with the passage of time. These changes were regulated by heaven through the progression of the four seasons. (See *The Writings of Chuang Tzu* [c.370–314BC], bk XXV, part III, sect III, *The Texts of Taoism* translated by James Legge, Dover Publications, Inc. New York NY, page 128.)

The cosmos was made up of five elements. They were not five atomic substances, but rather five spiritual energies or powers, which reside in different quantities in different things. The five elements were fire, water, wood, metal and earth (clay or mud). The spiritual element of fire was not only found in fire, but also in the sun, in the light that came from the sky and from white clouds. Likewise the spiritual energies of metal were not just found in gold, silver or iron, but were also found in mountains, rocks, and in man himself. In fact, man was made up of all five elements. If they were balanced in him, he remained healthy. But if the balance was upset, he became sick and would die unless the balance could be restored. In paintings, the five elements were symbolized by the five colours. The colours themselves contained the five elements and so had to be used properly. For example, red, a fire symbol, was so powerful that using just a little of it could destroy the colour balance of the whole picture. This balance and harmony of all the parts to the whole was precisely what the philosopher artists wished to achieve so that they could show the unity and perfection of Tao, which creation reflected.

To sum up: East Asian artists always try to show Tao, the One, in their pictures. They do this by showing some of its attributes: the Two, yin and yang; the Three, heaven, earth and man; the Four, the four seasons; and the Five, the five elements. The five elements combined in different ways make up the Ten Thousand, the sum of all things. These Ten Thousand make up Tao, which is the One. Neither the Ten Thousand nor the One can be drawn by artists.

In *Masterpieces of Korean Painting* (Chishik Sanŏp Publication Co.), the following explanation of Korean landscapes is given:

Sansu (mountains and water landscapes) in the oriental sense embraces not only the world which comes into the painter's view but that which is beyond the painter's view. This identification of the two different worlds or scenes implies the view that interprets creation and extinction as a continuity of movement. In this sense the two are in a complementary relationship. The forms of mountains and rivers and the blank spaces between them are symbols of this. The blank spaces (*yŏbaek*) help the forms to expand into infinity and gain boundless meaning, while the forms fill the blank spaces with a 'void full of meaning'. This is why oriental landscape painting is sometimes called the painting of blank spaces, ideological painting, or metaphysical painting.

Although the list of subjects that a Confucian gentleman should paint was restricted, the ways he could go about painting these subjects were infinite. Western painters use one viewing point and one disappearing point in their pictures. They use the laws of geometry to build up a perspective in the picture as viewed from one fixed place. East Asian painters had a lot more freedom. Like Western painters they could draw a landscape as viewed from the ground, as viewed from the top of a high tree, or even from an eagle's viewpoint up in the sky. But they were free to use all three viewpoints in the same picture.

Mai-mai Sze sums this up well:

The essential element of movement, illustrating the processes of transformation in nature, is evident in the fact that both painter and spectator move through the painting; the painter draws and paints and the spectator views the results from many points, never from a single position or at one moment of time. Mountains are seen from heights and figures on the level, and the eye travels, ever conscious of depths of distance and vast expanses of sky and mists. (*The Way of Chinese Painting*, page 107.)

East Asian artists used different rules to build up perspective. Objects that were near were drawn at the bottom of the picture. As the distance increased, the artist drew them higher up on the picture, until the furthest mountains and the sky were at the top of the picture. Things did not have to get smaller the further away they were. A tree, a house, or a man in the top scene of the picture could be drawn the same size as those in the bottom scene. Usually there were three such scenes drawn one above the other. These scenes were separated by water, mists or clouds.

Other artists used this rule of ascending perspective but reduced the scale of each higher scene to indicate distance. The lowest scene, because it was near, had things drawn big with a lot of detail, the middle scene drawn above it had everything drawn smaller with less detail, and in the top scene things were even smaller with very little detail shown. Also the colours faded as the distances increased. Some books call this atmospheric perspective.

Korean artists look for a balance of the distances between the viewer and the first scene in the picture, the first scene and the second, and the second scene and the third. It is impossible to define this balance, but if it is present the whole picture has a stable look; if it is missing the picture looks wrong. Blank areas that look like water, mist or clouds help to separate the three scenes and also help to establish the balance of the distances.

If one reads a Korean landscape picture from the bottom to the top, one finds that the scene disappears into the distance in at least three steps. One can read it from the right bottom corner to the left top corner, or from the left bottom corner to the right top corner and find the same regression of things into the distance. One may find three or more disappearing points in the same picture. Some of these lines of perspective sweep quickly into the distance; other lines in the same picture move more slowly. This gives an

appearance of motion or vitality to the picture, the vitality of Tao. To give this feeling of life is the essential aim of all ink brush pictures.

Ink brush landscapes should first be read from top to bottom and from right to left. This is how Chinese writing is read. If one reads a picture this way, one may find more detail in the bottom left hand corner than in the top right hand corner. This is a reminder that a good story should get more complicated and interesting towards the end!

Over the years, there have been many changes in landscape painting. Changes in style, changes in meaning and even changes in aim. The early styles were unreal, Utopian, and had a fairyland quality. Mountains, rivers, trees and rocks were drawn in a highly stylized fashion. This was to emphasize the spiritual qualities of the Tao of nature. Later, the artists drew real scenes from the beauty spots of China. Even the early Korean scholar artists drew their landscapes with Chinese type scenery. This was not just copying, it was a deliberate attempt to capture the exotic, the other worldliness, the spiritual dimensions in their pictures. In a very short time, Korean artists started to use Korean scenery for their pictures. But they did not draw photographic copies of the scenes. The East Asian landscape painter never drew a scene as it was before his eyes. He contemplated a scene, searched for its beauty, and then went home and drew a picture incorporating the details from his memory, but the organization and development of the whole picture came from his imagination. Classical landscapes are all abstractions; no such place exists, but it looks as if it could exist either in China or in Korea.

The older landscape artists put a lot of emphasis on the discipline of the brush strokes, the control of the ink, the proper use of the five colours (black, white, green, yellow and red), the portrayal of the beauty, power and vitality of the creator. Modern painters find this discipline too restrictive. They want freedom to be able to express themselves. Classical artists wanted to express Tao or the divine in nature. Modern painters want to express their feelings and emotions through their paintings. This is a movement away from Zen towards the aims of Western art. In their attempts to produce Western-style landscapes, these modern artists are dropping the restraints that the masters put on the use of colours; instead, they are using bright colours, which almost imitate oil paints. They not only paint on the front of the paper or silk but also on the back to give the colours more body.

The old artists were refined gentlemen from the upper end of society, the new artists wish to be identified with the common people and so they abandon the strict control of brush and ink, and seem to prefer to use a rough style, where the strokes and the inks seem to be splashed on. It is inevitable that a living art should change and produce pictures that are suitable for modern buildings with their modern decor. But one wonders how many of the old aspirations and techniques can be lost before the ancient art dies.

What the artists write or draw into their pictures, and what the ordinary person, who has not been trained in the Confucian, Taoist, or Zen Buddhist philosophies, reads into them can be two different things. To the ordinary

person, landscape pictures can mean one, or many, of the following things: a dreamland of beauty, peace and ease, often called Shangri-La, where strange and exotic scenery and lush and colourful foliage and flowers add to the otherworldly attractions; an ideal place to retire to after a hectic life of work; a place of beauty, peace and rest; a clean place far from dirty town or city, with no noise and no industrial pollution; a place where one can be alone with nature; a place where one can have a slow, natural, healthy life, not regulated by a clock; a self-sufficient life in the country, where one grows one's own rice and vegetables, catches one's own fish, lives away from crowds, meets only congenial friends, and has enough time and solitude so that one can think; a place where one can find one's roots. Many Koreans living in cities and towns were born in the country. To them the country is home, a place where their relatives live, a secure place. They have a nostalgic longing to return to the home place.

Landscapes with temples and pagodas inspire religious feelings. A remote beauty spot with a temple nearby is a peaceful place where it is easier to get closer to God.

To Koreans who come from a strong shamanistic background, the magical symbols in landscapes take on special meanings. They like to have as many as possible of the ten long life symbols. Some people just like to have a nicely-coloured landscape to fit in with the decoration of their house. These people are only interested in decorative values. When such people look at a picture, they probably wonder if the price of the work has gone up since they bought it!

Most people get great pleasure from looking at a favourite landscape picture. Some think of the teachings of the ancient philosophers and the attributes of Tao, the God of creation. Others just enjoy the picture's beauty and dream of happy places, hidden in their memories or imaginations.

Modern Chinese scholarship is casting doubts on the causes and origins of the two great schools of Chinese painting.

Richard M. Barnhart writing about paintings of the Five Dynasties (905–60) and the Song period (960–1279) gives political reasons for the development of the different styles during these periods, yet he does say that Chan (Zen) Buddhism did have an influence on Chinese art. He says in *Three Thousand Years of Chinese Painting*, Yale University Press, 1997, page 157:

Scholars will argue about the nature of Chan painting but it is likely that the central fact of Buddhist art is the consistent effort to illuminate spiritual values through pictorial images. This is different from the illustration of Confucianist ideas through stories of human action, or the suggestion of Taoist immortality through the depiction of odd Taoist eccentrics in odd ways. It is more subtle and more difficult because it puts art to a different kind of use, a use closer to the expression of meaning in landscape painting than to other subjects.

Yang Xin writing about the Ming dynasty (1368–1644) says that it was Dong Qichang (1555–1636) who first explained that the Northern and Southern Schools of Chinese painting were different because 'the Chan (Zen) sect of



Mountains and Sea

Painted using only black inks.

Artist's name: Kim Yŏngju, Pen-name: Asan

Buddhism was divided into Northern and Southern schools in the Tang dynasty. The Northern and Southern Schools in painting also appeared at the same time.' The Northern school of Chan was headed by Shenxiu and the Southern school was headed by Huineng who were both trained in the Chan disciplines introduced by Bodhidharma. (See Iconography Chapter, Darhma). Yan Xin says: 'Dong's theory influenced Chinese art circles for nearly three centuries' (*Three Thousand Years of Chinese Painting*, page 233).

Maybe in China it is now politically incorrect to assign any great cultural change to religious or philosophical causes. Korean scholars and artists to the present day follow the explanations given by the Ming scholar Dong Qichang.

☐ MOUNTAINS AND WATER PICTURES (*SANSU*)

There are many types of Korean ink brush pictures that could be called landscapes. The artists make a very clear distinction between those that are Mountains and Water pictures and those that are not.

Mountains and Water pictures are called shanshui in Chinese and *sansu* in Sino-Korean. They are the most important pictures an East Asian artist can paint. *Sansu* pictures are very popular in Korea. Nearly every house, business place and office, has one proudly displayed in a prominent position.

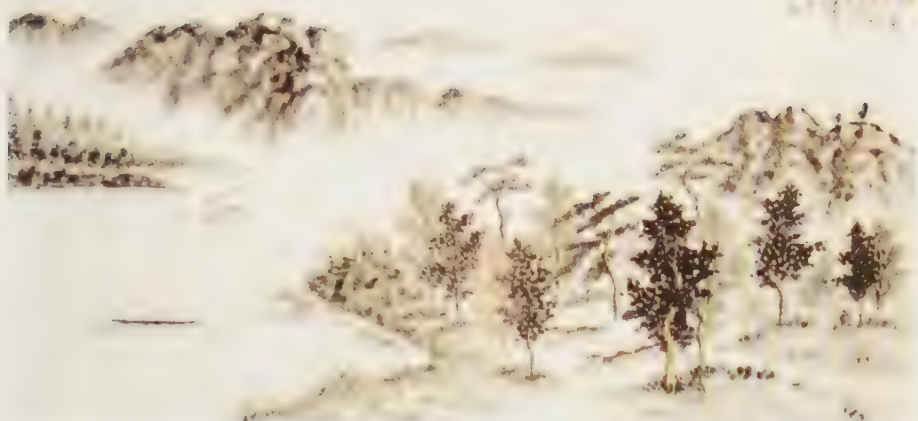
Every art museum has many *sansu* pictures, done by the best artists, displayed in their most important halls.

Landscape pictures that are not Mountains and Water pictures are dealt with in Part II under Landscapes. Just a quick listing of them will be given here.

1. Ten Long Life Pictures are dealt with in a special section in Part I and also in Part II.
2. A single mountain with nine peaks is a nine *ye* picture. It symbolizes the nine attributes of a king. These nine attributes are described in the poem named 'Tianbao' (*Ch'ŏnbo*) in the *Book of Odes*. (Legge, page 196.)
3. The Kunlun Mountains, also called the Five Peaks, are five mountains with the one in the centre taller than the others. These represent the king's power and his right to rule the whole kingdom. This picture was usually used as a backdrop to the king's throne.
4. A landscape with nine separate mountains also symbolizes the nine attributes of a king. This picture was sometimes used as a backdrop to the king's throne. It has the same symbolism as the nine *ye* mentioned in 2 above.
5. Landscapes with Immortals. (See Immortals, Part II.)
6. Landscapes used in genre pictures, which really show the life of the ordinary people. These pictures are dealt with in Chapter 7, Part I.
7. Pleasures of fishing. These are riverside scenes with people fishing. Some Chinese writers classify these pictures as Mountains and Water pictures. Koreans classify them as genre pictures. See below.
8. Landscapes that are really maps showing mountains, rivers, roads, temples and houses, often with the names of important places written in beside them.
9. Journeys recorded. These are very long pictures showing the scenery along a river, or along a path through a scenic mountain range.
10. Hunting scenes. A record of a hunt, showing different terrain, and where and how the different game was caught.
11. Eight Episode Pictures. (See Eight Episode Pictures, Part II.)

Water and Reed Pictures were common in China along the river plains of the south-eastern coast. Some writers say that because there were no mountains in those regions, the artists used banks of reeds instead of mountains. So, according to these writers, these pictures should be classified as Mountains and Water pictures. Other books say that these pictures are really about fishing, and that they should be called Pleasures of Fishing, and therefore should be excluded from Mountains and Water pictures. As these pictures are not very common in Korea, they do not really present any problem. Korean artists regard them as genre pictures.

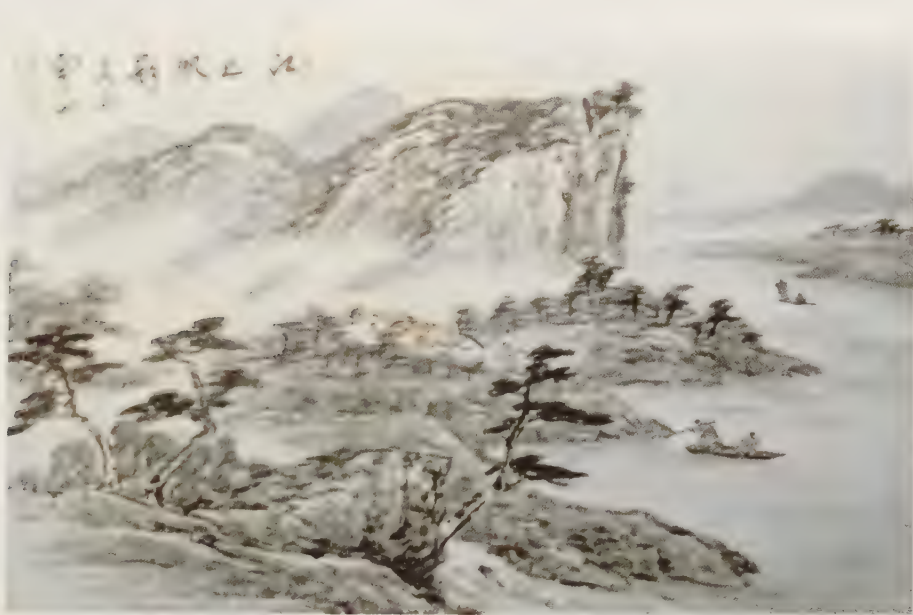
Having eliminated all the above, we should be left with just Mountains and Water pictures. These are imaginary scenes, abstracted by the artists from their contemplation of real beauty spots in nature, in which they depict Tao, the God of creation, by showing the Two of yin and yang, the Three



Mountain Scene with Boats

Inscription: 'Sailing a small boat he returns to his home in Kangnam where it is warm.'

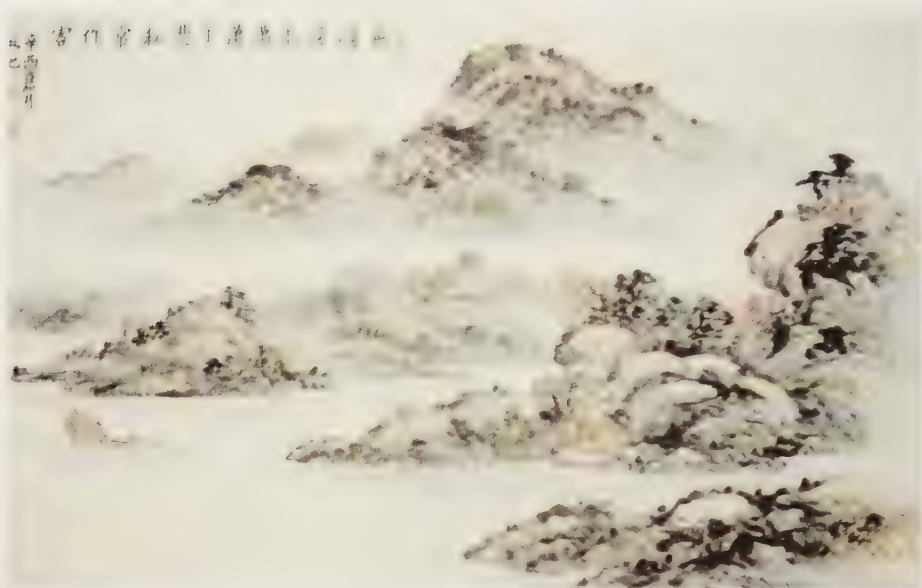
Artist's name: Chang Cheyŏng. Pen-name: Mokche



Coastal Village Under the Cliffs in Summertime

Inscription: 'The boat floating on the water is like a shadow.'

Artist's name: Pak Chŏngguk. Pen-name: Naman



Autumn

Artist's name: Cho Hyöndaе. Pen-name: Pip'a



Autumn

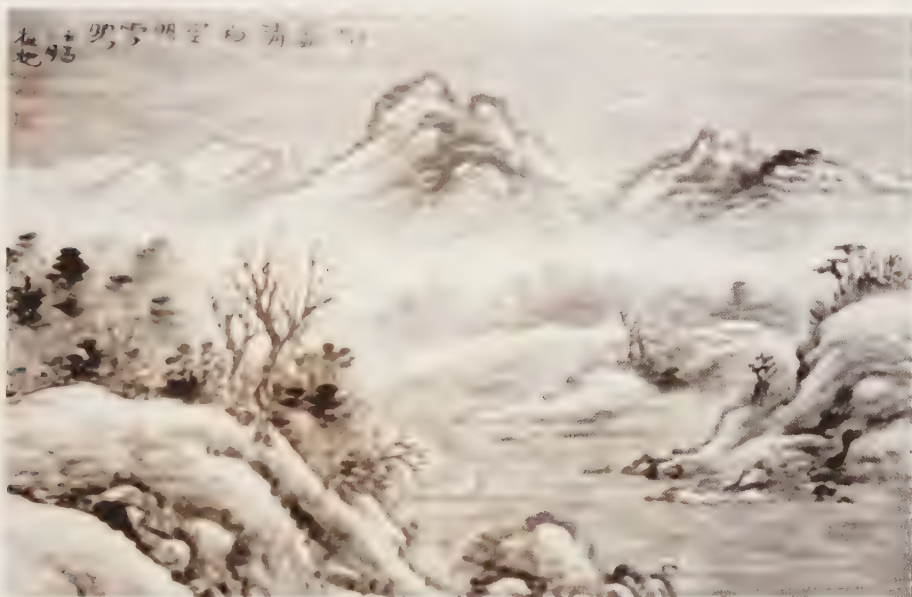
Artist's name: Cho Hyöndaе. Pen-name: Pip'a



Winter Landscape

Inscription: 'Heaven decrees man's work for the seasons. In the last month of the year, the snow prevents work, but it also gives hope as it signals that spring will come soon.'

Artist's name: Pak Ilyun. Pen-name: Ch'un'gang



Winter Snow on the Mountains

Artist's name: Cho Hyöndaë. Pen-name: Pip'a

of heaven, earth and man, the Four by the progression of the four seasons, and the Five by symbolizing the five elements through the five colours.

Many Mountains and Water pictures show a small drawing of a man, or maybe more than one man, either walking in the mountains or near his house, or show a man fishing in the river or lake, or maybe just sitting in a boat. This man represents man, one of the Three (heaven, earth and man). Some pictures do not show a man. Instead they just show an artefact, something made by a man, such as a house, a bridge, a road, a rice paddy or a boat anchored close to the land. These things are drawn to represent man and so complete the Three.

Some pictures show neither a man nor any of man's artefacts. It looks as if man has been left out. This is not so, as the picture itself is an artefact; it

is something made by a man. So in these pictures it is the painting itself that represents man and completes the Three.

☐ WATER AND WATERFALLS IN MOUNTAINS AND WATER PICTURES

Every civilization has been concerned about water. Without water life is impossible. Fresh water, the water from wells and rivers, was so essential for man's existence that only a very benevolent spirit, god or goddess, could have given such a great gift to man. Men worshipped the spirit of water under many different names and offered sacrifices in thanksgiving.

In East Asia, the water spirit was the dragon. There were many dragons; some lived in the sea, some in the rivers, some in the underground waters inside the mountains that fed the wells, and some in the rain clouds that floated through the sky.

For communities of rice-growing farmers, water for flooding their rice paddies at the proper time was always a major concern. Too little, or too late, meant no rice crop that year. Too much, and it washed away not only the rice plants but also the soil. Is it any wonder then that farmers showed a particular fascination with water?

- Water was classified as one of the five elements.
- The spirit of water was personified as the dragon and was worshipped.
- Water has cleansing powers; it cures diseases and gives health. So it has magical powers.
- Water is transparent, so it looks spiritual.
- Water reflects things as in a mirror. But it reflects them backwards, so it shows another world.
- Water is a door to the underworld.
- Water is soft, yet it can cut rocks and wear them away.
- Water is always moving, so it is vital; it has a life of its own.
- Water is a yin symbol and is closely related to the moon, which is the yin principle.
- The tides and waves of water, which raised the levels of navigable rivers, were all connected to the phases of the moon.
- Water irrigated the crops, supplied fish, and allowed travel and commerce by boat.

How could East Asian artists ignore water? It had to be part of their pictures depicting the totality of nature. They drew the placid water of lakes with the shoreline reflecting in its glassy surface, and the roaring waters of the sea breaking in wild waves. They drew the white mists that filled the valleys between the mountains, and the great water-laden clouds in the sky, often drawing them to look like sea waves. They drew the water rushing down mountain streams, and the water tumbling down spectacular waterfalls.

Some ancient artists considered waterfalls so important that a proper Mountains and Water picture could not be drawn without one. In *The Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting*, we find the following:

Rocks form the bone structure of mountains, but waterfalls form the structure of the rocks. Although water appears to be weak, it cuts the rock and forms the structure and shape of the mountain, 'the waterfall is the blood and marrow of the mountains, it gives them life and strength, because the water is what gives life to Heaven and to the Earth, and because it is stronger than the rock. The Chinese master painter, Chiao Kung, for these reasons, said that water was structural, that it forms the structure of the rocks and mountains.'

Mountains are the bones formed by rocks, but water is the marrow that formed the rocks. For this reason the ancients paid careful attention to painting waterfalls. Wang Wei said: 'When one is painting a waterfall, it should be so painted that there are interruptions but no breaks. The brush stops, but the spirit continues. The appearance of the flow of water has a break, but the idea of it is uninterrupted. It is like the divine dragon, whose body is partly hidden among the clouds, but whose head and tail are naturally connected.' (*The Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting*, Book of Rocks, Painting Waterfalls, page 225.)



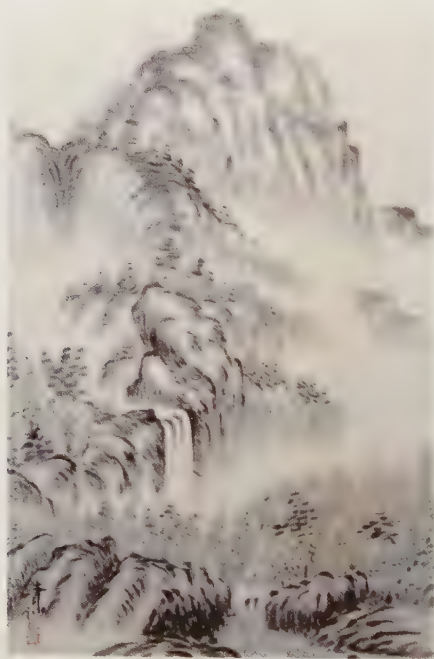
Sea Breaking on Rocks

Artist's name: Kim Yonghŭi. Pen-name: Ch'ŏngnang



Mountains, Waterfalls and Cranes

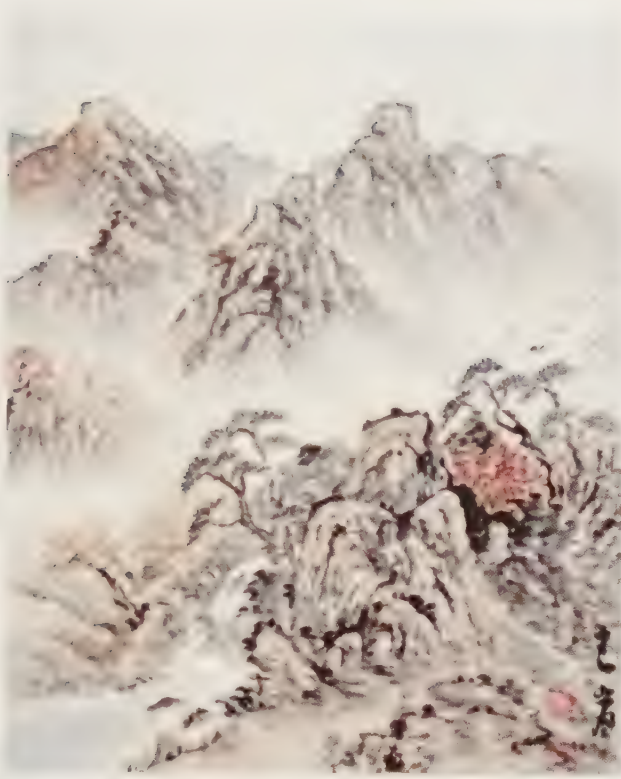
Artist's name: Chang Töksu. Pen-name: Yusan



Mountain Peaks and Waterfall

Artist's name: Kim Pyöngnae

Pen-name: Ch'öngsan



Mountains with Waterfall in Autumn as Wild Geese Come to Winter by the Lake

Artist's name: Shin Ch'angsŏn

Pen-name: Kŏam

☐ MEN IN MOUNTAINS AND WATER PICTURES

Men are drawn very small in East Asian landscape pictures. Many Western commentators say that this is to show the insignificance of man compared to the greatness of nature, to stress that man is but a tiny speck in the order of the universe. This could not be further from the truth. In all three East Asian philosophies, man is the centrepiece. He is one of the Three, on an equal footing with heaven and earth. Man is the only intelligent being in this world; he is in charge here.

The philosophers of Taoism rejected the gods that the popular Taoist religion invented. Buddhists at first denied the existence of other gods or powerful spirits. It was only later, when the Mahayana form of Buddhism came along, that they allowed that some gods or spirits existed, but that all of these were subject to the Buddha. Confucian scholars seem to have rejected all spirits except the spirits of ancestors. Neo-Confucian scholars admitted that there was a supreme God or Lord of Heaven. These believed

that although man was controlled to a certain degree by Heaven, still he was the lord of the Middle Kingdom, that is, the world that lies between heaven and earth. All three philosophies eventually agreed that man when young was weak, but that his mind could be developed through proper training and discipline. A man with a fully developed intellect was able to unite his mind to the universal mind.

Why then did the artists represent man so small in their landscape pictures? Firstly, because man is small compared to the rest of creation.

Secondly, because even if man is small, he contains within himself all the forces and elements that make up the cosmos. He has yin and yang, body and soul; he is made up of the heavenly elements and the earth elements. He has within himself the energies of the five elements. Although he is localized in space by the four directions, he has freedom to move about. He is also controlled by time through the progression of the four seasons, but he has the ability to perfect himself so that he passes from mortality to immortality, to a state of union with the universal mind, where he will be able to control both time and space. How could one draw such a being as man and make a balance with sky, mountains and water. Man is so powerful that unless he is drawn small, everything else will melt down and become a mere background to his portrait.

Thirdly, man is represented by a small figure in the landscape because the whole picture, the painting itself, represents man. When one looks at a Mountains and Water painting, one can get lost for a while as one's eye rambles through the mountains, or follows the course of the river, or follows the coastline of sea or lake, but eventually one comes back to thinking about the skills of the artist and the ideas that the artist has expressed, or hinted at, in his painting. Tao might be the creator of the mountains and the water, but the artist is the creator of the picture!

So man doesn't have to draw himself big in an ink brush landscape. Many artists only put a symbol of man's presence into the picture. They draw a small house or temple, a bridge or a boat, or just a path used by man. Just one of man's creations in the picture is enough to remind people of man's place in the cosmos. Some artists draw mountains and water with no trace at all of man in the picture. Why bother, when the paper, the ink, the colour and the brushwork are all the products of man's hands!

In *The Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting*, Book of People, Things, Dwellings and Structures, page 234, we find the following instructions for drawing figures: 'In landscape paintings there should be figures of men. They should be drawn well and with style, though not in too great detail, and they should fit the particular scene.' They should be doing something that connects them to the things in the picture, such as contemplating the mountains, walking along a path, admiring the scenery, or else amusing themselves by playing a game of Chinese chess. These little figures should look alive and active as in this way they contribute to the vitality of the whole picture. 'Figures should be depicted in such a way that people, looking at the picture, wish that they could change places with them. . . . The figures in the landscape should be as pure as the



**Man Crossing
a Bridge**
Pen-name: Shimje



Two Men Playing Chess
Inscription: 'Quietness in an autumn mountain.'
Artist's name: Pak Samyŏng. Pen-name: Kisŏk



People Coming Home in the Snow

Artist's name: O Nŭngju. Pen-name: Songje

crane. . . . They should never bring into the picture the air of the city or the market-place.'

These pictures are rural scenes, so the people in them should look at home in the rural setting. These figures should be drawn swiftly in a style that just gives the impression of an idea. In this style it is important that the brush move with speed and vitality. 'Figures, even though painted without eyes, must seem to look; without ears, must seem to listen. Eliminate details to achieve the simplest expression and the effect will be the most natural. Remember there are things, and these figures are one of them, which ten thousand brush strokes cannot depict, but which can be captured by a few simple strokes if they are done right. This is truly giving expression to the invisible.' (Ibid.)

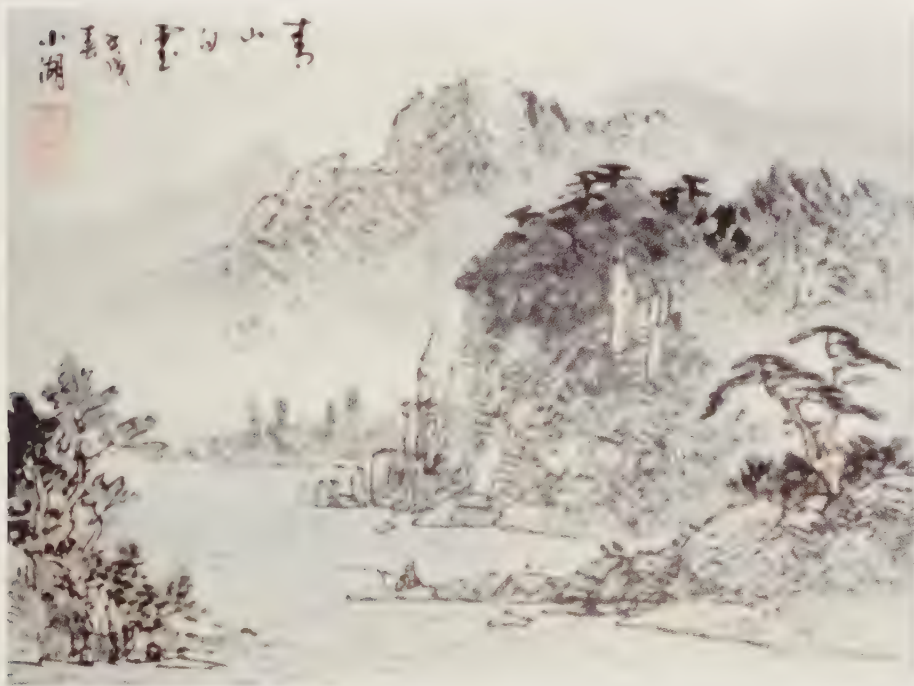
☐ FISHERMEN IN MOUNTAINS AND WATER PICTURES

The gentlemen of ancient times fished, not just to catch fish, but also to relax. While fishing they enjoyed the solitude; they had time to think and meditate on nature and on man's place in the world. The famous Chinese scholar Jiang Taigong (called Kang T'aegong in Korea) spent many years fishing on the banks of the local river, but while he was waiting for the fish to bite, he worked out a system of government, which he later helped to establish in the Zhou dynasty (1122–255BC), a system so good it lasted for over eight hundred years. (See Kang T'aegong or Jiang Taigong Part II.)



Fishing During the Summer

Artist's name: Kim Pyôngnae. Pen-name: Ch'õngsan



Fishing on a Mountain Lake in Summer

Artist's name: Lee Sanghwe. Pen-name: Soho



Fishing in Autumn Under the Mountains

Artist's name: Kim Insu. Pen-name: Paekdam



Fishing on a Lake in Autumn. From a hand-painted postcard.

Artist's name: Chŏng Munyŏng. Pen-name: Munch'o

But fishing is not just something to do while engaged in heavy thinking or deep meditation. It is a source of happiness; it is fun. So the fisherman in these Mountains and Water pictures is enjoying himself. He will probably catch some fish and have a tasty meal later, and so he can be regarded as a symbol of a self-sufficient lifestyle. But really he is just a happy man enjoying his sport. Essentially, he is a symbol of happiness.

A boat, or a man in a boat, whether he is fishing or not, carries a different kind of symbolism. In the olden days 'water was the highway'. It was easier to go from one place to another in a boat than by walking over mountains. It was the luxurious way to travel. As the boat could travel in any direction, it was a symbol of freedom. It was also a symbol of man's control over nature, his ability to conquer water.

Mountains and Water pictures, showing a solitary boatman sailing around the sea past islands and promontories, are popularly called Tong Pangsak pictures in Korea. Tong Pangsak (known as Dong Fangshuo in China), was a young fisherman who accidentally discovered the Eastern Paradise, went in uninvited, stole and ate one of the magic peaches, which gave him immortality for three thousand years. Because he had forgotten which river gave him access to the Eastern Paradise, he has spent the last thousand years sailing around the coast trying to rediscover it. (See Tong Pangsak or Dong Fangshuo, Part II.)

The boatman then can be regarded as a symbol of a philosopher who is looking for the key to the universe, for truth and for the underlying order in the world, one who hopes to find these in places that have great beauty, harmony and peace.

▣ MOUNTAINS AND WATER FANS

Fans have been made in Korea in every size and shape for hundreds of years. The bigger ones have been made from woven slivers of bamboo, others were made from split bamboo covered with paper or silk. The most popular type is the folding fan, made with thin spokes of bamboo, covered with paper.

Every sort of decoration imaginable has been printed or drawn on fans, from advertisements and photos to masterpieces of art. The most popular, and the most expensive fans, are the hand painted fans using traditional subjects, such as literati pictures, genre pictures, calligraphy, birds, trees, animals, and of course Mountains and Water pictures.

Fans present a special problem with perspective. The rules of ascending perspective, worked out by landscape artists, cannot be used on a fan. So Korean artists have worked out a different solution.

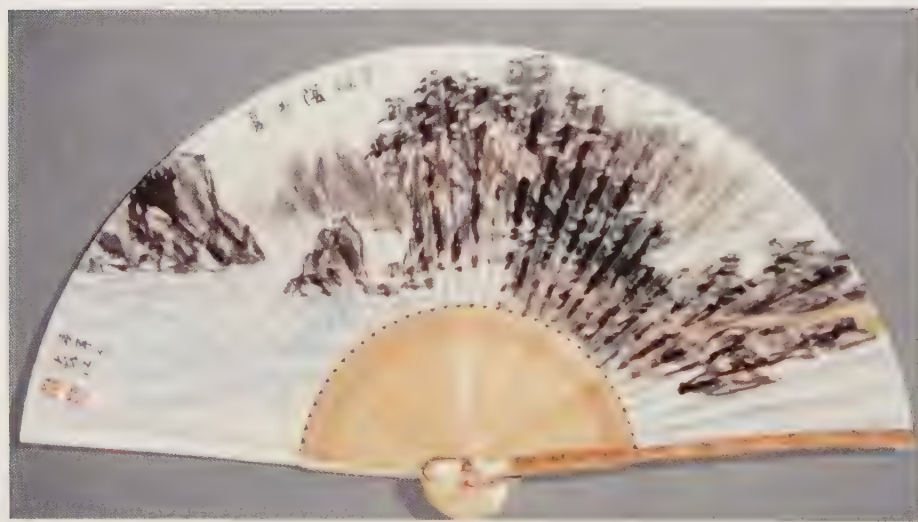
First, to view a fan, one should hold it in the right hand, and hold it at arm's length in front of one's eyes. Turn it at an angle of forty-five degrees, so that the right edge is nearer, the left edge is further away. The picture should be drawn to present the best perspective, at this angle, and at this distance.



Summer

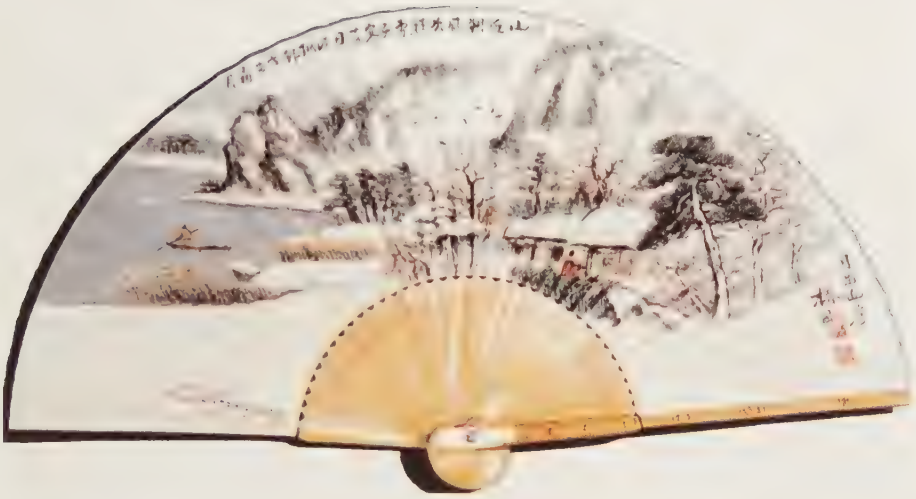
Mounted for hanging on a wall.

Artist's name: Kim Yongjun. Pen-name: Kūmdang



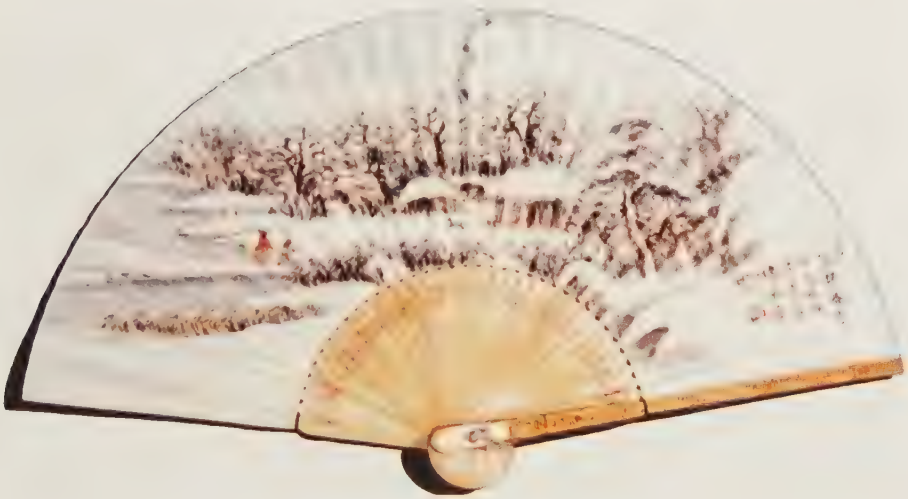
Summer

Artist's name: Kim Inhwa. Pen-name: Changgang



Winter

Inscription: 'The mountains are near. A strong wind piles the snow. The sky clears and the sun, just before it sets, shines on the silent village.'



Winter

Artist's name: Pak Ilyun. Pen-name: Ch'un'gang. (Both fans by the same artist)

The perspective is drawn by dividing the area of the fan into thirds, using two imaginary vertical lines to make three parts. Usually the nearest scene is put in the first third, the third that is on the right hand side, the part of the fan that is nearest. Near the imaginary vertical line that divides the first part from the second part, a dominant feature is often drawn to emphasize these divisions. The principle feature, the most interesting scene, is usually drawn in the second third of the fan. This scene should represent the middle distance. The last third is given to the far distant scene. Often this last scene overlaps into the second scene, and even starts in the centre of the fan. This is done to stress that the whole picture forms one unit.

This rule of vertical thirds is used in nearly all fans, but it can be varied to give different results. The first two thirds might show a distant scene, with the picture in the last third used as a stop to prevent the eye from going any further.

Knowing these rules will help in the appreciation of most Korean fans. But remember that the rules are there to help the artist, not to hobble him, and maybe he has found another way to make an interesting and beautiful fan.

▣ MOUNTAINS AND WATER SCREENS

Older screens had eight, ten or even twelve panels and were quite big; modern screens are smaller and have four, six or eight panels. Each panel in a screen should be a complete picture in itself.

There are two ways in which Mountains and Water screens are made. In one, each panel is drawn in connection with the other panels beside it so that the whole screen shows one big scene. In these screens only one season is shown, because all the pictures together form one scene. In the second kind of screen, again each panel is a stand-alone picture, but when the pictures are put together they do not form one picture. They harmonize with each other through style, size and colour, but they remain individual pictures. In these screens the four seasons are shown. In the eight-panel screen, reading from the right, two panels show spring, the next three show summer, the next two show autumn, and the last one on the left shows winter. The reason for this division is that the different seasons carry different amounts of yin and yang. The yang principle should dominate. The yang principle is the sun, which gives light, energy, vitality and positive vibrations. The pictures on the screen as a whole should show this active, life-giving energy. Summer is predominantly yang, while winter is mostly yin.

Screens were made to keep draughts off people sitting on cushions on the heated floor in a Korean house. So the pictures on the screen should be viewed from this angle, that is, from the bottom of the picture. Or at least the bottom third of the picture should be at eye level.

All long, vertical-format pictures, which are a bit like banners carried in a procession, should be viewed from below. Long horizontal pictures are different; these should be viewed from eye level. These horizontal pictures are related to the ancient long scrolls, which were thirty or even a hundred feet



1 Spring



2 Spring



3 Summer

**Eight Panel Screen with
Mountains and Water Pictures**

Artist's name: Pak Chongsök. Pen-name: Sökchu

long, and which were read, about two feet at a time, by unrolling the scroll from one roller to another, while being held before the eyes at arms length.

The pictures in this screen show a modern use of colour. Gone are the restrictions of the five colours, the black and white, and the red, green (blue) and yellow, at least in the bottom halves of the pictures. In the top halves of the pictures we still find the three colours, as the Koreans call them (because they do not regard black or white as colours), and this helps to give an unreal or fairyland look to the pictures. These pictures combine nicely the traditional with the new way of painting.



4 Summer



5 Summer



6 Autumn

Eight Panel Screen with Mountain and Water Pictures

Artist's name: Pak Chongsök. Pen-name: Sökchu

Pictures of spring are hard to find in Korea. There are two reasons for this. The first is that spring is a rather drab season in Korea. The azaleas bloom in patches on the mountains, and the willow trees put out their new leaves down by the rivers, but until the weather warms up, the colour of the countryside remains the same as it was in winter. Suddenly the temperature rises and everything turns green. Now everything looks like summer. So it is difficult to paint a Mountains and Water picture of spring and make it look good.

The second reason is that nobody hangs all four pictures of the four seasons together in a room. The four seasons do not make a set of four



7 Autumn



8 Winter

Eight Panel Screen with Mountain and Water Pictures

Artist's name: Pak Chongsök. Pen-name: Sökchu

pictures. Perhaps the Korean word for four, which has the same sound as the word for death, discourages people from using sets of four. Or maybe rooms do not have enough wall space to hang four pictures. Either way, people only hang one or two Mountains and Water pictures in their houses, so naturally they look for the more colourful pictures.

Only in a screen are the four seasons put together. This Mountains and Water screen shows two panels of spring. In the vertical format the azaleas can be made to give a nice show of colour.

A Mountains and Water screen like this can be very useful in a Korean house. It can divide a room, give a place of privacy, and cut out draughts from bad fitting doors or windows. It can be folded away when not in use, or it can be brought out for use in every kind of ceremony. This kind of screen can be used at weddings, funerals, parties, or official functions.

▣ MODERN MOUNTAINS AND WATER PICTURES

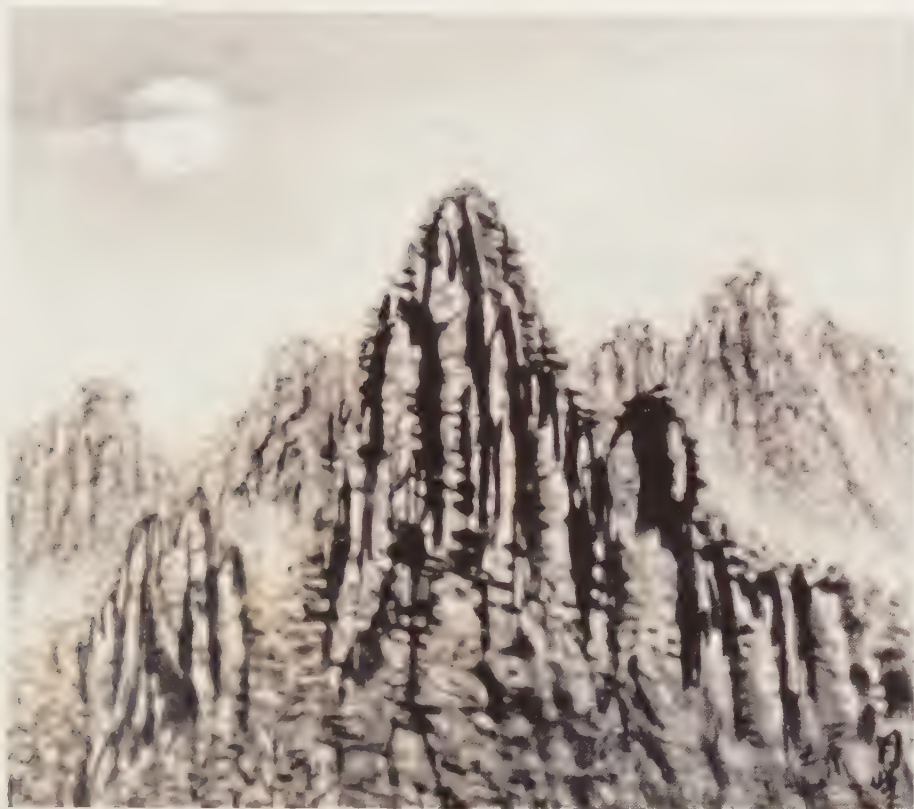
Chinese art, both Buddhist and secular, was known and copied in Korea before the thirteenth century, but it was not until Neo-Confucianism was brought in at the end of the fourteenth century by the kings of the Chosŏn dynasty (1392–1910), and made the official philosophy, religion and system of the state, that classical Chinese art, and it alone, was studied and practised by the educated classes in Korea. The classical Chinese art of Tang and Song was developed in Korea until Korean artists in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries started producing masterpieces that were admired even in China.

In 1910, the Chosŏn dynasty collapsed and Japan annexed Korea. Under the Japanese, all things Korean were suppressed: language, history, culture and art. All had to become Japanese. During the first half of the twentieth century, Korea nearly lost its culture, its classical art and its traditional skills, and it nearly lost the understanding and appreciation that goes with keeping an art alive. A very small group of teachers managed to keep classical Korean ink brush art alive. After the Korean war of 1950–52, this art revived and flourished.

In the last quarter of the twentieth century, many changes occurred. Democracy, Christianity, Western science and the materialism of the world market-place all brought about changes in spiritual and moral values. Some of these changes have been for the better, but some have been for the worse.

Very many people have rejected Confucianism. Young people especially do not like its class system and the dictatorial ways of elders. Women do not like the subservient role it hands them; they, too, want to be regarded as people.

The pace of modern life is another thing that is changing the way artists are viewing traditional art. It takes too many years to develop the skills, too long to become a recognized artist. It takes years and years to become an expert in Chinese characters. If one does not have an independent income, one has a big problem.



Mountains and Moon. (Without water).

Artist's name: Kang Myönggu. Pen-name: Wölbong

Young artists do not like restraints. They do not like to learn or keep too many rules. They want to be free, to draw what they like, and to draw how they like. They prefer to express themselves and their feelings rather than Tao.

These changes are happening all over East Asia. Things have to change, and things are changing. Over the last twenty years traditional artists from China, Korea, Taiwan and Japan have been meeting regularly and exchanging new ideas. Many changes have taken place in the last twenty-five years, and many more will take place during the next quarter century. This is a transitional period. Will a new classical style grow from it?

Some of the changes that have occurred in Korea are as follows:

- Changes in colours. Modern bright colours are being used. The old painters stressed the fairyland look of landscapes by over-stylizing them. Modern artists show this quality by over-emphasizing the colours. The use of many bright colours is against all the rules of the masters. The modern colours are really the colours of oil painters.



Trees Growing Beside a Stream. (Without mountains.)

Artist's name: Chŏng Sŏngbong. Pen-name: Tanhŏn



Poplar Trees Growing Beside a Hilltop Village

Artist's name: Kim Pyŏngnae. Pen-name: Ch'ŏngsan

- Some artists are leaving out mountains. Others are leaving out water. Can these landscapes still be called Mountains and Water pictures? So far, they are being accepted as such because they are still using the traditional skills, inks and styles. But they are very close to being Western-style landscapes.
- Some are using modern designs. The pictures are made of squares, circles and triangles. The design is made up of contrasting colours, shapes and sizes. Because the objects drawn are the traditional mountains, water, trees, fishermen and birds, they can still be called Mountains and Water pictures.



Mountain Village in Autumn

Artist's name: Yu Ch'ölsu. Pen-name: Tubong

- Some artists are using light to depict the spiritual in their pictures. The trees, rocks or rivers are there to show this light reflecting off their surfaces. Some of these artists are producing beautiful works; they are alive and full of a supernatural energy.

Korean traditional ink brush art is still popular, especially with older people. It is uniquely Korean, and this makes it important to many Koreans. It connects them to their past. Their culture and history are tied up in it. At the moment, at the beginning of the new millennium, it is alive and growing, and is well understood and appreciated. Will the next generation be able to enjoy it, or will it just become a valuable antique to be preserved in an art museum? Only time will tell.



Green Summer Mountains

Artist's name: Pak Pyŏngnak.

Pen-name: Paeg'am

▣ LANDSCAPES WITH TEN LONG LIFE SYMBOLS

Landscapes with the ten long life symbols are particularly Korean. In China, artists draw things that live for a long time: pine tree, plum tree, stork and tortoise. They also draw things like the magic mushroom (lingzhi) and the heavenly peaches that give eternal life. These are merely pictures of long-lived things and magic foods that give unending life. The ten long life symbols not only show things that live a long time, and foods that extend one's natural life, but they are magic charms that can actually give one the gift of a long life.

The Korean king was a priest-king. He offered sacrifices on behalf of his subjects; he was the mediator between heaven and his people. If he followed heaven's will, the kingdom prospered; if he neglected his duties, the country suffered.

One of the greatest disasters was a crop failure that brought on famine. To prevent this, the king had to go through a traditional ritual every year. Every spring he left his palace and moved into a farmer's house for about



Mountains and Sea with Fishermen and Storks

Artist's name: Pak Chong'wi.

Pen-name: Chihŭn



Late Autumn

Artist's name: Kim Hyŏngsŏk.

Pen-name: Yŏnsan



Winter

Artist's name: Kim Hyöngsök. Pen-name: Yönsan.

two weeks, where he lived as a farmer, wearing farmer's clothes, using simple furnishings, eating simple food, while he prayed for the blessing of a good harvest. After this period he emerged to plant eight small paddy-fields, which represented the eight provinces of Korea. The farmhouse and the paddy-fields were in the grounds of the palace.

Before the king entered the farmhouse, a new picture of the ten long life symbols was drawn and placed in a prominent position. This picture was used to protect the king and to wish him a long life. To put it another way, bad crops and famines did not help a king to reign long, or even to live long!

As this picture was so important, it was essential to get it correct. The scholars argued for many centuries and finally came up with this list: sun, clouds, rocks or mountains, sea or water, pine tree, magic mushroom, bamboo, stork or Manchurian crane, deer and tortoise or turtle.

Some of the old lists had moon instead of clouds. Scholars did not like the moon because it was the yin or dark principle. Again, some of the old lists used plum blossoms, peach blossoms or heavenly peaches instead of bamboo. Many scholars objected to these as they were too Chinese in origin or derived from Taoist myths, which the Koreans rejected.



Ten Long Life Symbols

Artist's name: Anonymous

When we examine these finally agreed upon symbols, we find that four of them are the homes of the most powerful shaman spirits. The sun is where the god of heaven resides. The mountain or rocks is where the mountain spirit lives. The clouds are the home of the sky spirit or the sky dragon. Under the water is the dwelling place of the sea king also called the sea dragon,

There are three animals that are the messengers of the gods. The stork is the messenger of the sky or heavenly spirit; it travels between heaven and earth. The deer is the messenger of the mountain spirit; it travels between the mountains and the plains where the people live. The tortoise is the messenger of the sea god; it travels between the water and the land.

There are three plants that are associated with a long life. The pine tree lives for over a hundred years; it is always green, so it is always fully alive. The magic mushroom gives eternal life to the deer that find and eat it. These deer become the messengers of the mountain spirit. If men could find this magic mushroom and eat it, they too would become immortal. The bamboo does not lose its leaves in the winter so it is regarded as being always alive. It is regarded as a symbol of vitality rather than a symbol of longevity. There wouldn't be much fun in living forever if one hadn't the vitality to enjoy it. In Confucian society the bamboo was a symbol of Confucian virtue. The practise of virtue gave immortality after death, the immortality enjoyed by sages and sage kings.

Pictures of the Ten Long Life Symbols wished a long life to the king, and because they had magical power, they gave this blessing to him. These pictures also wish, and even give, long life to anyone who is lucky enough to be presented with one.

**Ten Long Life Symbols**

These pictures of the Ten Long Life Symbols are taken from greeting cards. They are done in the traditional style.

Artists's names: Anonymous



The Ten Long Life Symbols in a modern style with sun and moon

Artist's name: Kim Yongjun. Pen-name: Kūmdan



Ten Long Life Symbols in a modern style with deer and plum blossoms

Artist's name: Lee Yǒngu. Pen-name: Hwagang

Chapter 5

Insects, Fish, Birds and Animals



Over the centuries, the Chinese emperors accumulated so many works of art that special officials had to be appointed to preserve them from the ravages of time and to protect them from thieves. The first thing these officials had to do was to catalogue them so that they knew exactly what was in their care. Their method of cataloguing pictures became standard throughout East Asia. In the old Chinese classification, fish were classified with Grasses, insects with Flowering Plants. Birds and animals were classified under Feathers and Fur. In modern times, Koreans have moved away from this old classification; they now catalogue pictures under a wider range of titles. In this book, insects, fish, birds and animals are collected together because they were all used by East Asian artists to portray the perfection of Tao.

INSECTS

Insects on their own are not a very popular subject for Korean artists. I have seen a picture depicting a hundred ants, but it really was an exercise in design. Perhaps the artist thought that his picture was a symbol of industry or of the frantic pursuit of wealth. The picture may have ended up in an art gallery, but I doubt if it was bought by a Korean to beautify his home.

Korean artists do draw insects such as butterflies, bees, praying mantis, crickets, grasshoppers or locusts as details in bigger pictures of grasses and flowers. They are put in to emphasize that the season is summer, the time when these insects can be seen in nature.

Literati painters use butterflies, crickets, grasshoppers or locusts in their pictures. The hidden meanings of these pictures are given in Part II.

FISH

Korean artists like to draw fish. The underwater world was regarded as a peaceful world where all the fish lived in harmony. Thus, fish are symbols of universal peace and harmony. In Sino-Korean, because the word for a

fish (d) sounds like the word for plenty (yō), the fish is more often used as a symbol of the good luck that brings success and profit. Anyone who has eaten a Chinese meal knows that the last course is a big fish. This is to wish you success in your business so that you can come again and buy another big meal!

Fish are free to move in any direction they wish; they move up and down; they travel during the night just as easily as during the day. They have absolute freedom and symbolize this freedom.

In every sea, river and lake there are thousands of fish. There must be plenty of food for them to eat in their underwater kingdom for even though they are so numerous they are always plump and healthy. So fish are also a symbol of a life of plenty.

Pictures with carp, crabs, goldfish, mandarin fish, minnows and shrimp are usually, but not always, literati pictures. These pictures should be checked in Part II to see whether the ordinary popular symbolism of peace, freedom and a life of plenty is present, or whether some other literati symbolism is intended.

In Korea, pictures of a pair of fish are only very rarely, used as symbols of a happy marriage. Two fish normally have only a literati meaning. Pairs of other underwater creatures are never used as a symbol of marriage. None of these pictures are regarded as magic pictures or charms to give marital happiness, or the blessings of fidelity. The only thing they wish is fertility to the newly wedded couple.

Pictures of fish and water, where the flowing and rippling water is emphasized, have a different meaning. In these pictures the fish and the water are regarded as an inseparable pair. They are a symbol of the king and his people, or of a husband and wife. Fish cannot become water; water cannot become fish. These two, although always different, must coexist in friendship. To do this they must follow the 'rules of relationships'. Pictures of fish and water are symbols of coexistence, friendliness and loyalty. Some people regard them as symbols of love between spouses. Well, maybe not love, but at least the sense of duty that should exist between husband and wife. In Confucian society most marriages were arranged by parents and matchmakers.

BIRDS

Pictures of birds are very popular in Korea. Paintings of birds, or birds and flowers, are appreciated primarily for their beauty. Sparrows and small birds, and birds such as ducks, geese, cocks and hens, magpies, cranes and storks are very popular. Pictures of birds are usually regarded as symbols of happiness.

There are a few exceptions to this rule. Pictures of owls and eagles are not symbols of joy and happiness. They are drawn in such a way as to show the strength of the birds and the beauty of their plumage. In the northern part of the country, especially around the capital Seoul, pictures of pheasants, especially a cock pheasant with a hen, are regarded as happy pictures, but in the southern part of the country these birds are associated with winter and are not very auspicious as they live on the mountains among the graves.

Pheasant is included in the set of the Seven Animals mentioned later in this chapter. In pictures of the Seven Animals, pheasant represents the mythical phoenix. (See Four Mythical Animals for an explanation of what the phoenix represents.)

Pictures with two birds are symbols of married bliss, faithfulness and fertility. Pictures of two birds of the same species are magic pictures with the power to give these blessings. Pictures with three or more birds of the same species in groups symbolize friendships, and a lifestyle of at least a sufficiency for daily living. These pictures carry the general message: 'May you have true friends and live with joy through all the hardships of life.'

Pictures of cranes and storks, besides being symbols of a happy marriage, are also symbols of a long life. These pictures have also the power to give these blessings.

Pictures of the farmyard cock are also popular in Korea. The malicious spirits that roam about at night have to go back to their underground dwelling places when the cock crows to announce the dawn. These spirits fear not only the cock but even pictures of the cock. In the not too distant past, nearly every home had a picture of a big red rooster displayed on one of the walls of the house to prevent all these evil spirits from entering. This picture was used as a charm to repel evil.

Literati painters use many different birds to convey their special messages in their pictures. Pictures with cocks and hens, crows, magpies, ducks, geese, cranes, storks, phoenix, kingfishers, quails and owls may also be literati pictures. These should be checked in Part II to see if they have a hidden meaning.

ANIMALS

Animals are not a strong feature in Korean art. The tiger and the dragon are the animals most often seen. They are part of the set of Four Mythical Animals that dominate the Four Directions; they are also part of the set known as the Twelve Zodiac Animals.

The tiger is the national animal of Korea and also figures a lot in mythology and folklore. So it is natural to see it in many pictures.

The deer is another favourite of artists. Like the tiger and the dragon, it has many associations with the myths of shamanism and popular folk tales.

The dog and the ox appear in some landscapes and in genre pictures, but just as a detail in a rural scene. In folk art, the pig is used as a magical picture to bring wealth. The horse, the ox and the donkey are drawn in some pictures but strictly as a means of transport. In the older pictures, with the exception of the tiger and the dragon, animals were very rarely drawn centre stage as the main subject.

In modern times, the ox and the horse and the goat are respectable subjects for ink brush paintings. One sees pictures of squirrels, mice, rabbits, frogs and even rats, but they do not seem to be very popular. As for cats, I think that very few Koreans really like them. They are only seen in literati pictures. Literati artists paint bats, cats and kittens, dogs, deer, pumas or tigers, rabbits and bullfrogs. For the meaning of these pictures see Part II.

However, some of the symbolism used by the literati painters has trickled down to the popular level. As more and more people are being educated, more people are exploring the legacy of the literati painters. Knowing the symbolism of the literati scholars often adds an extra layer of meaning to Korean pictures, an extra source of interest.

CHINESE CLASSIFICATION OF ANIMALS

The Chinese classified all animals into five categories:

Animals with hard shells	Shelly
Animals covered with skin	Naked
Animals with scales	Scaly
Animals with feathers	Feathered
Animals covered with fur	Hairy

Man of course was not an animal, so he did not belong to any of these categories. Man was the lord of the middle space, the middle kingdom, the region between heaven and earth.

☐ SHRIMP

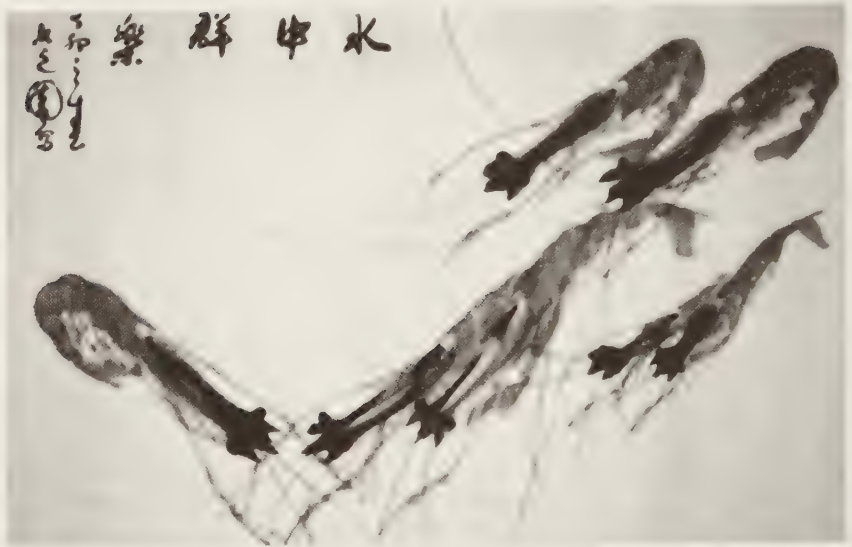
Shrimp pictures originated in China. The Chinese artists distinguished between freshwater shrimp and saltwater shrimp. Each of these pictures has different meanings.

Freshwater shrimp are very plentiful in China's rivers, so they were used as a symbol of plenty and wealth. They have bigger claws and thicker body armour than their sea relatives. Still they can move about freely, and can move all their body parts any way they desire. These pictures carry the meaning: 'May all your business adventures move as you desire,' or 'May your business prosper.'

Korean artists very rarely draw freshwater shrimp. They prefer the message carried by the saltwater variety. The saltwater shrimp have lighter claws and thinner body armour but are more bent. Because they are bent over they are regarded as being very old. Although very old, they can move around at will, not just by swimming slowly, but also by jumping around. This jumping looks like dancing. So the shrimp, even though old, is so full of energy and happiness that it is always dancing around. These pictures then are a symbol of a long life lived with vigour and happiness.

Literati painters add another layer of symbolism to pictures of saltwater shrimp. By combining a word for the sea (*bae*) with a word for shrimp, which is regarded as the old man of the sea (*noin*), and then turning the combined word (*bae* and *no*) into a verb, they get a new word (*haerohada*) which in Korean means that a man and his wife are growing old together in peace and harmony.

So, this picture is a wish that the couple may enjoy a long, healthy, happy life, and that they may grow old together, loving and caring for each other. Pictures of shrimp are also dealt with in Part II.



Shrimp

Artist's name: Pak Haenghyŏn. Pen-name: Chiwŏn

This picture seems to break the rule that underwater creatures are never a symbol of a happy marriage. However, it is only the literati meaning that refers to the married couple.

▣ CRAB

At first glance, this picture seems to be an underwater picture of crabs on their own, but a second look shows that there are reeds or millet present. These plants grow on land, so this picture despite the presence of the crabs, is not an underwater picture. Is it then a literati picture? Literati pictures have reeds or millet, which represent the graduation feast hosted by the king for successful young scholars, but they only draw one or two crabs, which respectively represent the first part or the two parts of the state examinations. There are more than two crabs drawn here, which shows that this is not a literati picture. For literati pictures with crabs see Part II.

The inscription gives the clue to the meaning of this picture. The four characters carry a very condensed message: 'Stopped going forward, a man goes sideways,' that is, he follows his conscience. This shows that it is a traditional classical picture where the artist takes two well-known characteristics of the crab and uses them to get across two messages.

The first thing that one notices about crabs is that they can only move sideways. Because of this natural characteristic they cannot live in the presence of the king. People in the presence of the king must move forwards and backwards without turning their backs on the king. The crab can neither walk forwards nor backwards so he has to live far away from the king, or

else he would be punished daily for not doing what the king expected from his subjects.

A gentleman scholar's natural place is in the court of the king, advising him and helping him to rule the country with justice, following heaven's will and his own conscience. However, in a corrupt court and with an evil king, a Confucian gentleman cannot follow his conscience. All he can do is flee from the court and hide in the country. His upright character makes him like the crab, unfit for service in the king's presence, so like the crab he has to live far away from the king.

The second thing that one observes about crabs is that they can live on land as well as in the sea. Crabs while living in the sea, where they are by definition underwater creatures, have to live in peace and harmony. They change when they come up on to the land in summer to mate. The males fight each other, even to the death. When the mating season ends, they go back to the sea where they again become peaceful creatures. Changing their habitat changes the way they live. These changes are decreed by their nature.

The Confucian gentleman scholar by nature should be peace-loving and obedient to the king, but if corruption and intrigue at the court prevent him from living according to his conscience, then he must change from being docile and subservient. He must disobey the king. He must not do the evil the corrupt king is commanding him to do. He must flee to the country and become a conscientious objector. These changes are decreed by his nature.

The upright man is different from other people. The crowd moves backwards and forwards at the whim of the leader. The true gentleman cannot follow the crowd. He must follow his conscience, which means that at times he has to move sideways. If he finds himself in his natural element, which is working for a good king in an honest court, then he is obedient and works



Crabs and Grass

Artist's name: Kim Hanyŏng. Pen-name: Hyŏndang

for peace. If he finds himself in an unnatural element, that is, working for an evil king in a corrupt court, he cannot change his nature and go along with evil people. So, he has to change his style of action, he has to become disobedient and be a dissenter.

▣ CARP

Pictures of carp are pictures of the underwater world so they carry the usual symbolism of peace, quiet and harmony. Over the centuries other meanings, taken from mythology and literati paintings, have been added.

According to mythology, on a certain night once a year a dragon comes down from the heavens and lays its eggs in the wells. The next morning, the first woman to draw water from the well gets some of the magical eggs in the water. This water with the tiny eggs, so small that they cannot be seen, gives health and prosperity for the following year to all those who drink it. However, if the dragon notices during the day that its eggs have been stolen, it wreaks havoc on the family that took them. To avoid this, the woman who takes the eggs from the well has to throw straw into the well so that the dragon cannot see whether its eggs were stolen or not. The other women of the village, coming later to the well and finding it full of straw, certainly do not call down any blessings on the thief!

The eggs hatch quickly in the first light of day and produce tiny carp. These immediately make their way from the well to the big river, where they grow big and strong. When the carp comes to maturity it moves up the river, jumping the waterfalls, until it gets to the top of the mountain where the river has its origin. On some dark night, when the rain is really pouring down, it makes one last mighty leap and ascends into the sky where it becomes a dragon.

Literati painters used this story of the carp turning into a mighty dragon. A humble student, if he uses all his abilities, can pass the state examinations and become a powerful government official. Passing the examinations was the leap that changed one into a dragon. The examinations were in two parts, so pictures of one or two carp refer to the examinations themselves. As only a son could sit the examinations, the carp in literati pictures is a symbol for a son.

None of the pictures of carp in this section is a 'merely literati' picture. To carry the hidden literati messages, other things have to be drawn in the pictures. (For these see Carp in Part II.) These pictures follow the older classical traditions. Still the knowledge that in the merely literati pictures carp represent sons who can bring wealth and security to their parents has trickled down to even the most uneducated.

The first of these pictures with two carp, besides bringing the serenity, peace and harmony of the underwater world into the home, also carries the wish for two energetic sons who will bring credit and honour.

The second picture, with more than three carp, carries the same meanings, but there is a convention here that only the educated would know.



Two Carp

Artist's name: Kwŏn Unt'aek
Pen-name: Kimp'o (also Sosan)



Several Carp

Artist's name: Chŏng Munyŏng
Pen-name: Munch'o

Three or more fish of the same species form a group of fish. A group of fish calls to mind the famous statement that Confucius made after he met Lao Zi. This ancient philosopher, (Noja in Korean, and Lao in English) was born about BC604. He is the author of the famous 5,000 character book, Dao De Jing (The Way to Tao). In this book God is referred to as Tao, literally 'The Road' that is, the One to whom all roads lead. This book also points out the road that brings one to Tao. For a long time Confucius wished to meet Lao. He finally met him, but it seems that he could not understand him. After he met him, he said:

Birds fly, fish swim, animals run. I know that animals that run on the ground are caught with a net, that fish that swim are caught with a hook, that birds that fly are caught with an arrow. A dragon rides the clouds and winds. I don't know for sure if dragons exist. Today, I met Lao. He is a dragon. As I don't know how to capture a dragon, in the same way I was not able to capture Lao.

This second picture reminds the scholar of Confucius and his humility, and also reminds him of Lao and his teachings about Tao.

▣ LEAPING CARP

This picture has all the symbolism of the underwater kingdom, the peace, tranquillity and harmony always associated with the fish world. But this picture of one carp jumping out of the water is also a magic picture with the power to grant a son.

In Confucian society, having a son was very important. Only a son could carry on the family name; only a son could offer the sacrifices for ancestors and for dead parents; only a son could procreate children and grandchildren who would continue to offer sacrifices for deceased ancestors. Without these sacrifices the souls of ancestors would lose their individuality and vitality; they would melt into an anonymous spiritual cloud drifting aimlessly through space.

In Confucian society, only a son could earn money and bring security to aging parents. Daughters were a liability as it cost a lot of money to get them married off, and when they went to their husband's house, they took away wealth in the form of a dowry. A son on the other hand brought in money when he married well, and he also brought in a daughter-in-law whose first duty was to serve her mother-in-law, not her husband!

A young married man who was not able to father children, or only able to produce daughters, lost face in front of his friends. His mother also lost face before the neighbours. She could not admit that there was anything wrong with her son, so it must be the daughter-in-law's fault. If a male heir did not come within a reasonable time, the daughter-in-law was thrown out and divorced, and a new wife was brought in for the son. In this kind of society, it is easy to see why newly married women did everything that was supposed to help produce a son. The leaping carp picture was one of these aids. Even today this picture is seen in many homes in Korea. The younger people laugh at it and treat it as a joke, but the older people still half believe in its potency.

Koreans, especially the women, are great believers in dreams. They feel that dreams foretell the future. Dreams about fish always bring good fortune. A dream about a big fish brings an unexpected lump of money. A dream about a carp jumping out of the water brings a baby boy. Having a picture of a leaping carp in the house seems to help bring about this kind of dream, and it is the dream, not the picture, that produces the desired result!

The carp is a very energetic fish; it tries and tries until it succeeds. In China it is a symbol of wealth. Koreans, being more Confucian than the Chinese, do not look on wealth as success. Doing well what one is expected to do is more in keeping with their idea of success. A man is successful if he is a good provider, a good husband and a good son to his aged parents. A woman is successful if she is a good housekeeper, a good mother to her children and a good wife. To be a good man, or a good woman, one has to

be strong, energetic, persistent and courageous. The carp is a symbol of all these qualities.

The carp is also one of the famous Korean list of Seven Animals.

THE SEVEN ANIMALS

Carp, geese, stork, tortoise, tiger, pheasant and deer comprise the seven animals. In the mid-nineteenth century the scholar Kim Sunha, employed as a teacher by the royal court to teach the children of the nobility, made pictures of these seven animals popular. He had to resign for political reasons because he foresaw the fall of the party that had supported him in his position. Before he retired to the country he gave gifts of Seven Animal screens to all his best students.

These animals represent many things but especially virtue, strength, energy, persistence, happiness, long life and immortality. Pictures of the set of seven animals were popular in the olden days, but one rarely sees modern versions.

Carp symbolize learning. Geese symbolize knowing one's place in society. Stork symbolizes the purity and probity needed in the civil service. The tortoise symbolizes the courage needed for military service. The tiger symbolizes the power needed to protect the state against evil. Pheasants are usually symbols of a happy marriage, and symbolize one's duties to the family. The pheasant also represents the phoenix which is the royal bird that symbolizes the king, and the peace and justice that his reign should bring. Deer represent a commission from the king and also heaven's blessings. A well-educated Confucian gentleman can get a good commission and if he does his work conscientiously he will bring down heaven's blessings on the kingdom.

Carp, geese and stork are dealt with in this chapter under Fish, Birds and Animals. The phoenix and tiger are dealt with in the chapter on the Four Mythical Animals.



Leaping Carp

Artist's name: Kwön Unt'aek

Pen-name: Kimp'o (also Sosan)

Tortoise, stork and deer are also dealt with under Landscapes with the Ten Long Life Symbols. See also under these headings in Part II.

▣ BIRDS AND TREES

Nearly all pictures of birds are joyful pictures. Birds live in pairs and in flocks. They eat together, chirp to one another, play and chase each other through the trees, and sing loudly when really happy. The artist cannot capture their song, but he can capture their flight and the twists and turns that they make in the air; he can capture their shapes and their colours. All of these make up the beauty of the birds and the beauty of the pictures. These pictures give joy and happiness. One can feel the vitality of the birds, the joy that they feel in living. No wonder then that people attributed magic properties to these pictures, which could transfer to the viewer these same feelings of joy, vitality and happiness. All pictures of birds, whether of small birds like sparrows, or big birds like Manchurian cranes, have this magic power to give peace, happiness, vitality and joy, and to entrance the beholder by their beauty.

Over the centuries, artists designed their pictures of birds to carry other blessings and wishes. Even the literati painters used them to carry their hidden messages. But none of these 'extras' negate the primary magic of giving happiness, vitality and beauty.

Pictures with two birds are a symbol of a happy marriage. However, they are not just a symbol, they are also credited with having the magic power to give this blessing of married bliss.

Pictures of three or more birds have the same magic and the same message, but they carry an extra message. Three or more birds constitute a



Wisteria and Birds

(A picture of wisteria is nice but it cannot be hung on any wall in a house or office.)

Artist's name: Kim Myŏngch'ae. Pen-name: Chŏngdang



Two Magpies



A Family of Magpies

(Both pictures by the same artist.)

Artist's name: Chǒng Munyǒng

Pen-name: Munch'o

flock. This flock can symbolize the family or a group of friends. Read as referring to the family, the picture is a wish for a happy family life with many children. Read as referring to friends, it is a wish for a happy marriage and a multitude of true friends.

The beauty in these pictures is a compliment to the beauty of the bride, but it is also a reminder to her to keep herself beautiful in body and in mind, and to keep her home beautiful and well ordered as a good wife and mother should. This, of course, is good advice to give to any young bride. If she follows it, she has a better chance of keeping her marriage intact. In this way these pictures continue to radiate their magic by reminding people of their duties.

WISTERIA

The wisteria trees and their blossoms are an exception to the rule. These trees with their big clusters of brilliant blue flowers are beautiful in the early

summer and attract many insects and birds. A drawing of birds among the blooms of the wisteria makes a nice picture but no Korean wants it. The wisteria is a climbing tree, which twines around itself and anything else it comes near until its branches become a convoluted web, a twisting, turning, knotted tangle. A life so involved would be impossible. Life is complicated enough without making it worse by having a picture of this tree in the house or office! A life so involved would be impossible. So it is best to keep this picture hidden in a drawer and out of sight in case it would influence one's life or business.

▣ BIRDS AND MAGNOLIAS

The magnolia is called 'The Flower that Welcomes Spring'. The tree bursts into bloom to announce the new spring. Very often the flowers are cut down by late frost and snow, but the magnolia does not fear hardship; it still performs its duty as harbinger of spring. So, the magnolia is regarded as a very brave flower and hence a symbol of courage.

There is a story about the magnolia, which is quickly told:

A heavenly maiden was engaged to a heavenly prince. They were to meet on earth and be married in the spring. The heavenly maiden wished to be with her new husband. She grew impatient and came down to earth early to wait for him. She came too early and was frozen to death by the frost and snow. The heavenly prince could not revive her when he arrived, so he changed her into a magnolia. Since then the magnolia has been a symbol of feminine beauty. It is also called 'the secretly smiling flower', meaning 'the loving smile of a modest maiden'.

The magnolia is regarded as impatient. It cannot wait for the warm weather of late spring. It is so impatient to bloom that it does not even wait till its leaves are formed. Its flowers bloom first, its leaves bud later. So it is a symbol of those who cannot wait for change, for reformers and revolutionaries. The magnolia blooms to announce the new spring even though there is danger that it will be killed by snow, rain and frost. The impatient reformers and revolutionaries do what is right even though it may cost them their freedom and even their lives.

In Korea, pictures of flowers and birds are regarded as having the magical power to grant the wishes they symbolize. A picture of magnolia flowers and birds symbolizes beauty, joy, happiness and wedding bliss. Such a picture is a very fitting wedding present.

▣ KINGFISHER AND LOTUS BLOSSOM

The kingfisher is the most beautiful of birds and the lotus blossom is the most beautiful of flowers. Together they make up the most beautiful picture East Asian artists can imagine. In Korea, the kingfisher is used as a symbol of untamed nature. A shy bird, it keeps well away from people. One has to hide down by the waterside and keep very still in order to observe this bird



Birds and Magnolias

(From a greeting card.)

Artist's name: Unidentified



Birds and Magnolias

Artist's name: Pak Pyŏngshik. Pen-name: Sŏksŏng

at close range. There are four different species in Korea; two are found in low lying areas and two are found in higher forested areas, but all live close to water. All have beautiful colours, and these colours seem to change as the sunlight hits the feathers at different angles.

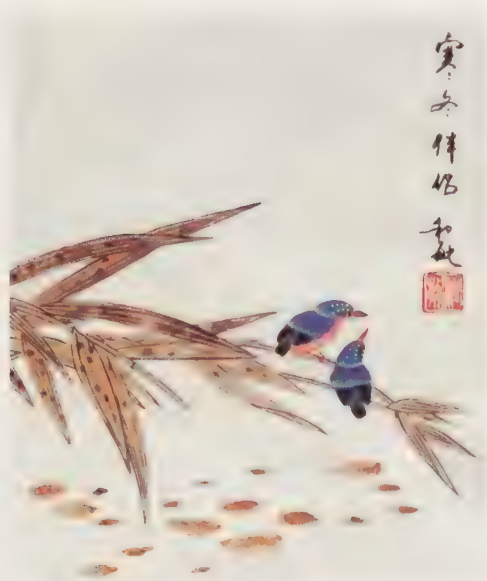
This picture of kingfisher and lotus blossom is a classical picture, drawn again and again over the centuries by the best ink brush painters. So it is natural to look for the usual classical symbolism. The lotus flower blooms in the summer and the kingfisher is a summer visitor to Korea, so both represent summer. Summer is full of the yang principle, the principle that gives light, energy, life and happiness. Both kingfisher and lotus blossom live above the water, in the air, in the sunlight, but still they are connected to water. The roots and leaves of the lotus plant are in water, the kingfisher sits on a reed that is growing out of water. The water is a symbol of the yin principle. Yin and yang are two sides of the same entity, Tao.

In Korea, the kingfisher is a symbol of the phoenix. The phoenix is the mythical bird that lives in the south, which comes north each year bringing summer, with its warmth, vitality and joy. Korean artists did not like drawing imaginary animals, so when drawing the four mythical animals, where at all possible, they drew real animals. In pictures of mountains or forests, they drew pheasants or peacocks to represent the phoenix; in scenes of fields or places occupied by people, they used the barnyard rooster; and in pictures of places close to water, they used either a mandarin duck or a kingfisher. All of these birds have the bright and varied colours that the phoenix is supposed to possess. So we can say that in Korea the kingfisher is not so much a symbol of the phoenix; rather it is the phoenix itself. The kingfisher brings the summer, the season that brings the heat and moisture to make the crops grow, that gives the increase to make life for another year possible for all.

So here we have all the classical allusions: Tao, yin and yang, the progression of the four seasons and the phoenix, one of the four mythical animals that control the four directions. Add to these beauty and harmony, and you have a veritable feast for the gentleman philosopher!

In the Korean context, a picture of kingfisher and lotus blossom is primarily a picture of beauty. It is not a magic picture with the power to produce a happy marriage. Only one bird is depicted. Still it is a suitable gift to give to a bride. This picture is a symbol of feminine beauty and summer joy. The beautiful bird and the beautiful flower will always remind a girl to stay young and beautiful, physically and mentally, and to strive daily for beauty, understanding and love.

In China, the kingfisher's feathers were used with precious metals to form decorative inlays. These inlays were used to decorate combs, head-dresses and brooches. Only the very rich could afford such work. So the kingfisher was a symbol of the very rich women of the upper classes, cruel women who did not care how many beautiful birds had to die as long as they could show off their wealth. The kingfisher is also a symbol of ill-fated vanity, because it was killed for its beautiful feathers. The blue-green colour of the feathers has



Kingfishers and Reeds

Inscription: 'Companions for life in the cold winter.'

Artist's name: Hwa Min



Kingfisher and Lotus Blossom

Artist's name: Han Chǒngsu. Pen-name: Sanchǒng

given the name of kingfisher jade to a very expensive gemstone, also known as emerald jade. With all these associations the kingfisher in China has become a symbol of great wealth and power, and even cruelty. Except for those who have studied the Chinese classics, most Koreans would not know that the kingfisher is associated in China with great wealth, power and heedless cruelty.

It is interesting to note that in Europe the kingfisher, known by its Greek name, the halcyon, was believed to build its nest on the sea. It was reputed to be able to calm the sea while its young were being hatched and reared. So we have the phrase halcyon days meaning days of peace and calm, prosperous and happy days.

Literati painters have taken this picture and made it their own. The kingfisher has to be read as a phoenix to get the message. The special meaning is: May you have many sons and descendants, down through the ages, who will be clever and study well. (See Part II under Phoenix and Lotus Blossom.)

For other meanings of the lotus blossom, see *The Three Flowers of Ambition* in the chapter on Flowers and Trees. Also for the Phoenix see the chapter on the Four Mythical Animals.

The first picture, by a North Korean artist living in China, shows two kingfisher birds so it is a symbol of a happy marriage with the power to give this blessing. The second picture is a typical product of the southern Chindo School. It uses the classical subjects of the beautiful kingfisher and lotus blossom. It takes two styles and combines them in the same picture. The reeds, stems and leaves of the lotus are done in black ink; the bird and the flower are done in colour. This is not a magic picture but it still makes a very suitable wedding present.

▣ SPARROWS AND PLUM TREES

Pictures of two sparrows, a plum tree and plum blossoms are magical pictures that give married bliss and a beautiful home. If there are three or more birds, the picture expresses the extra wish for a harmonious family and the company of many true friends.

These pictures of an old plum tree with young branches and plum blossoms are really literati pictures. The birds do not have to be sparrows; any small birds can be regarded as sparrows. The artists were not great ornithologists. They were more interested in getting the essence (*ki*) of the birds right than in producing accurate copies of them. The essence consisted in their vitality, their ever-changing activities and their joy in living. In these pictures the Sino-Korean word for sparrows (*chak*) is used. This word when used by the literati painters is always read as joy or happiness (*hŭi*). Making the sparrows into yellow birds provides a better reading, namely, great pleasure and happiness. (See *Yellow Sparrows*, Part II.)

The plum tree is a symbol of great old age, but the young branches show that it is still very much alive and vigorous.



Sparrows, Plum Tree, Plum blossoms and Moon

Artist's name: Anonymous

Pen-name: Tana



Yellow Sparrows, Plum Tree and Plum Blossoms

Artist's name: Lee Chongch'un

Pen-name: Sochǒng

The moon is the great yin principle. In Sino-Korean the word for yin (*ŭm*) is pronounced the same as the word for music (*ŭmak*) which also implies dancing to music and having a good time. (See Moon over Plum Tree with Sparrows, Part II.)

Both of these pictures carry more or less the same message. The one with the yellow sparrows reads: 'May you live a long life with great pleasure and happiness.' The picture with the sparrows and moon reads: 'May you live a long and happy life.' Neither of these messages negates the magic power of the picture to bring about a happy marriage with all the blessings outlined above.

▣ SPARROWS AND PLUM BLOSSOM

These pictures are classical pictures that originated in China. There they were called the Four Friends and the Three Friends Pictures. Both types of picture refer to the fifth of the five relationships, friend and friend.

Friends were bound by friendship to help each other, to be true and loyal until parted by death. The Four Friends pictures became almost standardized over the centuries. The white plum blossoms, the pink plum blossoms (either apricot or peach blossoms), the flowers of the camellia and the bamboo were used most frequently by artists in China to depict the four friends. Older Korean artists, working in the nineteenth century, used a different set of symbols, namely, plum blossoms, pine tree, bamboo and rock. Modern Korean artists do not draw these Four Friends pictures. They do not like the Sino-Korean word for four (*sa*) as it also means death. These artists prefer to draw the Three Friends pictures.

In China, the Three Friends Pictures were done in three different ways. Firstly, as three very old pine trees standing in a group. Secondly, as three bamboos growing close together. Thirdly, as a pine tree, a plum tree and a bamboo drawn together to form one picture. The Three Pine Trees and the Three Bamboos have already been explained under Flowers and Trees.

These Three Friends pictures show three old friends who have lived a long time together, who have suffered many hardships together, and who are surviving into old age supporting and helping each other. Naturally, these three old friends, enjoying each other's company, demonstrate the validity of the fifth relationship.

The old Korean artists followed the Chinese conventions and drew pictures of the three pine trees, or the three bamboos, or pictures of a pine tree, a plum tree and a bamboo to symbolize these three old friends, but modern Korean artists do not follow all these old ways. Modern artists still draw three pine trees and three bamboos. But they make their own rules when it comes to drawing the third type of Three Friends pictures (or the older Four Friends pictures). They have changed the name of these pictures to the Three Friends of the Cold. They have changed the symbols. They have changed the number of symbols. They have even changed the interpretation. They have added new meanings to the symbols they use.



Sparrows and Plum Blossom

Inscription: 'Three friends together on a cold spring day.'

Artist's name: Kim Kyŏngghyŏn. Pen-name: Sŏlchuk (also Wŏlgok)

THREE FRIENDS OF THE COLD PICTURES

The symbols used in Three Friends of the Cold pictures have not yet been standardized. Two or three sparrows, or other small birds, and plum blossom are included in nearly all of them. Where only three different types of symbol are used, the third is either camellia blossom or a rock.

More often than not, besides the birds, three other symbols are used, bringing the total to four. These four can be birds, white plum blossom, pink plum blossom and camellias, or they can be birds, white plum blossoms, camellias and a rock. Although four symbols are used, they are still referred to by Korea artists as the Three Friends of the Cold.

Sometimes, five symbols are used: birds, white plum blossom, pink plum blossom, camellias and bamboo. These are the old Chinese symbols found

in the Four Friends pictures. Or this five can be: birds, white plum blossom, pink plum blossom, bamboo and rock. These are the symbols of the Four Friends as used by the old Korean artists. Although there are five symbols in these pictures they are still called the Three Friends of the Cold. Often to emphasize this, three birds are drawn in among the flowers. Sometimes modern artists put in all these symbols in their Three Friends of the Cold pictures to show off their knowledge of the classical background.

Just as the symbols and their number have changed, so too the meanings of the symbols have changed. These pictures now have a wider interpretation. A Three Friends of the Cold picture still symbolizes the relationship that exists between friends. It symbolizes three old friends that pal together and help each other survive. But these newly-named Three Friends of the Cold pictures also call to mind the words of Confucius when he talks of his three good friends and his three bad friends. He loved to see his three bad friends coming because he always had a great time with them, drinking, telling funny stories, eating and singing. But after a few days of this he was glad to see them go. After they had gone, he always felt horrible, both in his body and in his mind. He also loved to see his three good friends coming. From these he learned a lot, carried on interesting conversations, had friendly arguments, listened with them to good music and ate sensible food. He was always sad to see them go, but after they had gone, he felt refreshed in mind and in body, and this good feeling lasted for many days. The word used for three friends in these pictures is the same word (*samu* in Sino-Korean) that Confucius used when talking about his three good friends.

The Three Friends of the Cold pictures, although they carry all this classical symbolism, still remain magic pictures that wish joy and happiness, peace and beauty to a young bride on her wedding day, and continue to give these blessings to her and her husband all the days of their lives.

□ BIRDS AND FRUIT

These pictures, like the birds and flowers pictures, are regarded as having magic powers to grant the things that are symbolized. Birds are a symbol of happiness and joy, and two birds symbolize a happy marriage. Three birds are a symbol of a flock in which all the birds find plenty to eat, and where they live happily together. The flock symbolizes a happy family.

Fruit, of course, is a symbol of food, the food the birds eat. At the human level it is a symbol of all those things that make life possible, not just food, but money to buy daily necessities. In this sense, fruit is a symbol of wealth, not great wealth, but a generous sufficiency that gives security. Possessing this amount of wealth, so that one does not have to worry too much about where the next meal is coming from, is the life of plenty that fruit symbolizes, the sort of blessing that is wished to the recipient of the picture.

The fruit used in these pictures always has many seeds. A tree that produces many seeds is prolific; it produces many offspring. In a farming community, having many children to help in the work on the farm, and to assure



Birds and Grapes

Artist's name: Lee P'yŏnggil. Pen-name: Hwadang



Birds and Persimmons

Artist's name: Lee Chŏngdŭk. Pen-name: Kukche

security in old age, was regarded as a great blessing. Among the upper classes, having many sons ensured that the family name would survive and that the sacrifices would be offered for deceased ancestors through the ages. These pictures conveyed the wish for, and by their magic helped to produce, the blessing of many children.

Literati painters used pictures of fruit to carry their special messages. They use persimmons and pomegranates, grapes and other fruits that grow on trailing plants.

Persimmons (*citrus medica* or Buddha's hand orange) and pomegranates are used by literati painters to denote blessings. These two, because of

similarities in the shape of the fruit, or similarities in the words used, are interchangeable. Usually, the blessings that they signify are the blessings that Buddha can give. This means every blessing. This meaning has trickled down from literati paintings to the popular level so that many educated people know that a picture with persimmons also is a wish that you receive every blessing. (See Buddha's Hand Orange, Fish and Persimmons, Magic Mushrooms and Persimmons, and Pomegranates, Part II.)

Grapes and vines, bottle gourds, pomegranates, pumpkins and water-melons are used by literati painters to carry the message: 'May you have many sons, who in turn will produce many descendants, who will exist until the end of time, and who will continue to offer sacrifices for you and your ancestors down through the ages.' So these pictures of grapes and vines express a wish that you may have many sons and grandsons. Nowadays many educated Koreans would also know the literati meaning of this picture. (See Vines, Part II.)

The literati interpretations superimposed on these pictures of birds and fruit in no way detract from the original good wishes expressed or the magic power of the symbols. The messages that you receive every blessing, and that you have many sons and grandsons, are just extras to the central message, namely, that you have a happy marriage, and enjoy peace and plenty in your new family.

□ BIRDS AND LOQUATS

Pictures of loquats are popular in Korea. The loquat trees that grow along the warm south coast produce a sweet and juicy yellow fruit that ripens in the early summer and is much appreciated by people who have to work in the fields under the hot summer sun.

The loquat tree is unique in that the buds form in the autumn, the flowers bloom in the winter, the fruit forms in the spring and ripens in the summer. Other trees follow the cycle dictated by the progression of the four seasons, they bloom in the spring and give ripe fruit in the autumn, but the loquat is able to ignore this law of nature. This caused East Asian philosophers quite a problem.

According to the cosmology worked out by the philosophers, Tao first created the two mighty forces of yin and yang. In order to regulate these two powerful forces, Tao created the four seasons. The progression of the four seasons from winter to summer and back again keeps a proper balance between yin and yang.

Yin and yang and the force in the progression of the four seasons, working in mutual harmony, produced heaven, earth and man. They also produced the five elements and everything in the world.

It is this primeval force of the progression of the four seasons that the loquat flaunts. According to the philosophers, it could only do that if it had a force greater than that of the four seasons. This of course is impossible. The only other answer is that it contains within itself the same force that is

found in the four seasons; it contains within itself the same creative powers, the same vitality, as is held by the four seasons. Because it has this force within itself, it can establish its own cycle.

Pictures of loquats are classical pictures as they take as their subject matter Tao, creation, the yin and yang forces, and the progression of the four seasons. They present a philosophical problem that takes a sermon on East Asian philosophy to explain.

Although this picture deals with all these lofty problems, it can still be given as a wedding present. Two birds and fruit still wish wedded joy, fidelity, happiness, peace and harmony to the newly-weds.

The loquat fruit also contains many seeds so this picture also expresses the wish that the bride and groom will become the parents of many children. But besides all these blessings this picture of loquats also wishes them the vitality and virility that is contained in the progression of the four seasons, the same forces by which the four seasons create all living things in heaven, earth and even man who dwells in the middle kingdom between heaven and earth. (See Loquats, Part II.)



Birds and Loquats

Inscription: 'How could someone who is thirsty resist such fruit?'

Artist's name: Lee Manshik. Pen-name: Yǒngbo

▣ MAGPIES

The magpie is the national bird of Korea. Magpies symbolize a good family and especially a good father and mother. According to popular belief, magpies mate for life and always remain faithful. Magpies build a big nest high up in the trees. They make it from twigs so laced together that storms cannot blow it down. The nest is roofed over so that no rain comes in. Even in winter, whenever there is a fine day, the magpies collect more sticks to improve their house, to make it better and warmer for their offspring. When the young are born, the parents work hard to feed and rear them. When the young birds are mature they do not run off and leave their parents, but stay around as a flock to comfort and protect their parents and to help find new sources of food. The small magpies are seen feeding the big magpies, the young are seen looking after their parents.

Ordinary people thought this was how the magpies lived, not realizing that the small birds were the parents and the big birds were the offspring with all their feathers puffed up. These folk beliefs about the bird's lifestyle were used as a model for the family, and when it came to picking a national bird, all agreed that the magpie should be given the honour.

Pictures of a pair of magpies usually carry the message: 'Live like the magpie, be faithful, have many children, invest your time and energy in your home and in your children, and later on they will look after you in your old age.' These pictures make suitable gifts for newly married couples as they also convey the wishes for, and have the magic power to give, a happy marriage.

The Sino-Korean word for magpie sounds the same as the word for sparrow (*chak*, although the characters are written differently). In literati pictures these words (through a long and involved process) are always read as joy and happiness. So pictures with magpies, such as the picture of two magpies in a pine tree, can always be read as a wish that you have every joy and happiness.

The picture of two magpies sitting together with a harvest moon in the background is more suitable as a gift to an older couple. They have lived through life's hardships but they have always helped each other and kept each other warm, and now they can enjoy each other's company in ease and plenty. The moon in these pictures can be read as enjoyment or happiness because the word for the moon (*ŭm* in Sino-Korean) can also be read as music (*ŭmak*) or a happy time enjoyed with music and dancing. This, of course, is again part of the symbolism developed by the literati painters.

The moon can also be read as a reference to the Buddhist belief that every person is a reflection of the universal spirit. As they say: 'All rivers reflect the same moon. Waves differ on each river so the moon's reflection is different. Each person is a river. Each person reflects the universal spirit differently.' The recognition of this individuality is essential for true happiness within marriage.

Magpies are mentioned in the famous love story about the weaver maiden and the ox herder.



Two Magpies in Spring-time

Artist's name: Lee Ujin

Pen-name: Hyesan



Two Magpies Under a Cold Autumn Moon

Artist's name: Kim T'aejǒng

Pen-name: Hyangp'o

The maiden lived in heaven and spent all her time weaving beautiful cloth on her loom for the people who lived up there. Her father was so pleased with her work that he allowed her to take a short holiday on earth where she could go and bathe in the clear mountain streams. While there she met an ox herder. They fell in love. The maiden went back to heaven alone, but as she was very unhappy she could not do her weaving properly. Her father eventually gave in and allowed her to marry the ox herder. Being with her husband every day made her so happy and so busy that she had no time for weaving. Her father got angry and soon put an end to this idle life. He separated the lovers, placing them on either side of the Milky Way. The magpies took pity on them so every year they all fly up to heaven to form a bridge with their bodies so that the lovers could meet and be together again. This they do every July.

You can always tell which magpies formed the bridge over the Milky Way because the feathers are worn off their heads and backs by the shoes of the lovers. Scientists, of course, say that magpies moult in July, but no true romantic would pay any heed to those fellows!

Magpies are often found in literati pictures. They are usually read as bearers of good news. They are often found on New Year greeting cards where they express the wish that you may hear only good news during the New Year. (See Magpies in Part II.)

In folk legends the magpies were often used to represent ordinary people. In folk pictures of tigers, which were symbols of the nobility, magpies are found sitting in the trees nearby, at a safe distance, taunting the tiger. They represent the common people, who were more often than not oppressed by the nobility. (See the folk picture of a tiger with rabbits or hares at the end of this chapter.)

▣ GEESE, REEDS AND MOON

This is really a literati picture and should only be considered in Part II, but as this type of picture is very popular and is often given as a present, I have included it here. Some of the literati were quite good artists. They drew pictures and gave them to their friends as gifts and greeting cards. Many of the pictures had a hidden meaning.

At first glance, this is just a nice nature picture of geese standing near, or flying down to a patch of reeds with water close by. The time is early night because the moon is just rising. But the Sino-Korean word for goose and the word for peace (*an*) sound the same. Also the word for a reed (*no*) sounds the same as the word for old age. The word for the moon (*im*) sounds like the word for music, or a party with music, hence a joyful time. So the message can be read: 'May you have peace and joy in your old age,' or 'May you live joyfully and peacefully even into your old age.'

Whether there are one, two, three or more geese drawn does not change the literati meaning of this picture, but it does change the popular meaning. One goose is naturally lonely, so drawing two geese, a goose and a gander, changes the feeling of the picture and brings it into the realm of popular art.



Two Geese with Reeds and Moon

Artist's name: Chǒng Nanyǒng

Pen-name: Suho



Two Geese with Reeds and Moon

Pen-name: Tana

In the not too distant past, a bridegroom coming to the bride's house on the day of his wedding brought a big fat goose to the bride's mother as a present. This was given as a sign that he intended to enter a lasting marriage and that he would look after the bride properly. Geese always fly in formation. To do this each goose has to know its proper place and stay in it. By presenting the goose, the new son-in-law signifies that he knows his place in the new family, he knows his duty to his new wife and to his in-laws, and will always conform to the rules of right conduct. The big goose was also useful in feeding the marriage guests. Later, the live goose was replaced by a rather crudely made wooden goose and the presentation of this became part of the wedding ceremony. Nowadays, the goose has been replaced by a duck nicely carved from wood and gaily painted in the five colours. This duck is presented to the mother of the bride together with bolts of silk and hanks of thread of the five colours as part of the rites of the ceremony. A duck and drake, well carved and coloured to make a matching pair, are the modern symbol of a happy marriage, but the old people insist that it should really be a goose and gander. This tradition that links geese to true love and to a happy marriage goes back a long way in history. In the *Book of Odes*, written well over two thousand years ago, the goose is the bird that carries messages between two lovers who have been separated by distance but not by their thoughts.

Ordinary people believed the goose only mated once in its life. So a picture of a pair of geese is a symbol of a good marriage that lasts forever, and is also a symbol of marital fidelity.

Having the rising moon in the picture shows that it is early night and both geese are going to spend the night together. A good husband should come home early and spend the night with his wife.

Also ordinary people believed that a picture of two birds acted as a magic charm to bring joy and fertility to newly-weds. So this picture was often presented as a wedding gift.

Three or more geese in this picture show that it is a literati picture. Such a picture should not be used as a wedding present, but is always very suitable as a birthday present, as it wishes the receiver a long life, happiness and peace. However, the third goose, or the extra geese, can be regarded as representing a flock. This flock can be read as referring to the family or to friends, and so expresses the wish that you enjoy a long life, have a happy and peaceful family life and always have many friends.

Sometimes, the moon is missing. If it is missing, the picture should only be given to very old people as nobody wants very old people to have riotous musical parties. They might drop dead before their time! (See Geese, Reeds and Moon in Part II.)

▣ COCK AND HEN

In Korea, the cock is a complex symbol; different people have used it, at different times, to represent different things. Ancient astronomers made it

the tenth of the twelve signs of the zodiac. The animals of the zodiac are listed in Part II under Zodiac. In Chinese and Korean classical literature, the cock is a symbol of punctuality, courage, fortitude, and devotion to duty. It announces the dawn every day. It represents the five marks of nobility: education, military authority, courage, friendliness and trustworthiness. (For a fuller explanation, see Part II, under Cock.)

For Confucian scholars, cock and hen symbolized a well-run family. The cock is always ready to fight for family and territory. He always has full authority in his own bailiwick; he controls his hens and chicks. He is a strict master, but he looks after his charges and shares his food with them. A man should also control his own home; he should be strict, but he should see to the welfare of his household. The cock maintains order and peace in his brood. A man too should preserve due order in his house so that all may live in peace.

In Korea, the cock is often used instead of the phoenix. In China the phoenix was the bird that lived in the sun, or perhaps with the sun in its homeland somewhere in the south. At the end of spring, the phoenix came north, bringing summer, heat, fertility, increase, happiness and peace. In Korea there is an older tradition that says the red bird lived in the sun. The red bird was responsible for bringing the summer and all its blessings. Korean scholars identified the red bird with the phoenix, but Korean artists never felt at ease with the imaginary phoenix. They preferred to draw the red cock or any other multicoloured bird as the symbol of the sun, the yang principle, the south and the summer.

In Korea, the cock was one of the animals used in the sacrificial rituals offered every year by the king for the people. The king was a shaman-king; it was his duty to pray and offer sacrifices for all his people. The kings are gone now, but the shamans still sacrifice a cock in some of their ceremonies. The blood of the cock is used to purify the place where the rites are performed.

Ordinary people, many of whom still believe in Shamanism, credit the cock with supernatural powers. By crowing he sends all the evil spirits back to the underworld. Evil spirits are so afraid of the cock that even his picture is enough to prevent them from entering a house. Until recent times, nearly every house had a picture of a red cock stuck to the door or wall. This picture was regarded as a charm to repel evil and to stop malicious spirits from entering the house.

Korean folklore has an amusing story that stresses the heavenly origin of the cock.

Long, long ago, a spirit came down from heaven to visit his relatives on earth. He was warned by the other spirits not to eat pumpkin pie or he would be turned into a bird. Although he enjoyed the company of his relatives, he could not eat the food they prepared for him because it was absolutely tasteless. The relatives were embarrassed so they prepared every kind of food they could get, and tried every recipe they knew in order to please their illustrious visitor. At last they found a dish he liked. He found it so nice and sweet that he finished off the whole dish. He was going to ask



Cock and Hen with Chrysanthemums

Artist's name: Cho Ch'angsŏn. Pen-name: Pyŏkpong

for more, but being a bit embarrassed at having eaten it all by himself, he started instead to ask what the dish was, but all he could say was: 'Awk, awk, awk'. Too late he realized he had changed into a bird.

At first his relatives let him stay in the house. His children in heaven would shout down every morning: 'Father, when are you coming home?' All he could answer was: 'I've eaten pumpkin pie and I've turned into a bird.' His answer, however, sounded like 'cock-a-doodle-do'. After a while these 'awk, awk, awk' and 'cock-a-doodle-do' noises began to annoy the relatives, so they built a small house out in the yard for him.

This house is now called a henhouse.

In modern times, cock and hen are pastoral symbols. Such pictures remind city dwellers of the country homes where many of them were reared. They look back with nostalgia to the happy days of their youth when they had freedom, many friends and no worries. Many of them look forward to returning to the peace and quiet of the country after their retirement. The chrysanthemum drawn in this picture reinforces the idea of nostalgia for a quiet, refined life in the country. This picture looks forward to a long and peaceful retirement. (See Chrysanthemum, Part II.)

A picture of a cock and a hen can be regarded as a magic picture that wishes a couple a peaceful and happy married life and also has the power to grant this blessing. But this picture is also a reminder of the marriage ceremony itself and of the commitments that were made at that time.

In the traditional Korean marriage ceremony, the bride and groom stand opposite each other on either side of a small table on which are placed food, drink, a red cock and a hen. The marriage vows are made by bride and groom making deep bows to each other across the table, and by giving each other drinks of rice wine. The cock and hen are not part of the rites, but they sit there looking at the bride and bridegroom during the ceremony. They are a symbol of marriage and ensure that no evil will attend it. They are the red birds of the south that bring the joys, plenty and fertility of summer to the new husband and wife.

Literati painters added many more meanings to pictures of the cock. Many of these meanings are not generally known. (See Cock, Part II.)

▣ STORK

Pictures of storks are probably the most popular of all pictures in Korea. They are full of beauty, clean air, open spaces and nature in its pristine state. Korean artists were not good ornithologists so they drew herons, egrets, storks and cranes and called them all storks. All are big and beautiful, all fly effortlessly, land and take off with ease and grace. Nearly all are white with patches of red, black or brown.

All birds are heavenly creatures because they have wings. They are free to fly through the air, to go wherever they wish. Storks with their great big wings are freer still as they can soar great heights and travel great distances.

White is the colour of heaven, the colour of spiritual things. White deer, white horses, and white tigers are all spiritual creatures; all really belong to the heavenly kingdom. If they appear in this world, it is because they have been sent from heaven as messengers. As the stork too is a white animal, this proves that it is really a heavenly creature, a spiritual messenger. Whereas the white horse and the white tiger could bring death and destruction, the white deer and the white stork brought only blessings, good news and happiness.

Storks are regarded as being summer visitors, so they are a sign of summer and the joys that summer brings. They nest in the tree tops on hills near water and spend the day fishing in the shallow edges of the lakes and in the rice paddies. They are pastoral symbols, symbols of the quiet, peaceful life of the country. So the stork is not just a heavenly creature that is beautiful, spiritual and good, but it is also a symbol of summer, joy, peace and harmony with nature.

Storks were believed to live for a very long time. At first they were white but after one thousand years they turned to a blue-green (azure) colour. After another thousand years they turned black. At this stage, when they were over two-thousand-years old and had turned black, they became spiritual or immaterial and also became immortal. Storks then were symbols of great old age, and pictures of storks had the magic to enable one to live a very long life.

Storks seemed to have the secret of eternal youth, for although they lived to a great age, they were always beautiful and clean.

Confucian scholars picked the stork as the emblem of the civil service and the tiger as the emblem of the military service. The cleanness of the stork is the quality that they wished all civil authorities to possess. Even though the stork spends all day in the mud of the rice paddy, it never gets dirty. In the same way the civil servant had to keep himself clean even though he administered to rough and uneducated people every day, was surrounded by corrupt officials and was continuously being tempted by bribes.

The stork was the greatest and most venerable of birds. Because of its great age it knew everything that could be known. It was called the older student or the older graduate (*sŏnbak*). It was the most noble, the most senior and most powerful of the birds. It was a role model for the Confucian scholar. A young scholar had to defer to the greater age and learning of his superiors, but if he continued his studies all through life, he too could become the most venerable and noble officeholder in the land.

Taoists, too, loved the stork. They said that the Queen of the Taoist heaven rode around the world on the back of a stork. Sometimes she was accompanied by other Immortals who each had his own stork, his own private airplane.

Taoists also believed that the stork was friendly with the Water Spirit whom it met at night down at the water's edge. From this Water Spirit it learned the secrets of fertility and virility. The stork, being a creature of the air and of the sky, is a symbol of the yang principle. The Water Spirit lives in the water so it is a symbol of the yin principle. These two principles must



Storks and Pines

Inscription: 'Green pines that have lived for many years are shaken in the spring by black storks that have lived for more than a thousand years.'

Artist's name: Ch'a Pongsun. Pen-name: Wölsan



Two Storks and Pine

Artist's name:

Kim Söngsöök

Pen-name: Soch'ön



Stork Alighting

Artist's name: Pak Sugil

Pen-name: Songhyön

work together to produce a new life. The stork knows the secret of combining these two principles harmoniously, so he knows how to give the blessing of having children.

A picture with two storks together is a magic picture that wishes a happy marriage and has the power to give married bliss, fidelity, children, beauty and a long life. If there are more than two storks, the picture wishes peace and happiness in your new family and wishes that you always have many good friends.

In Buddhism, the bodhisattvas (*posal* in Korean) change themselves into storks so that they can fly all over the world visiting and helping people who call on them for help. *Posal* were people who had attained enlightenment while they were in this world and so could have gone to nirvana when they died, but they had such compassion and love for the poor and the suffering that they opted to stay in this world so that they might help these people here and now, and prepare them so that they could go to nirvana when they died.

Literati painters, of course, used storks to write their own messages. The simplest of these is a stork and a pine tree. A pine tree was supposed to live for a long time, over a hundred years. The stork too was able to live for a very long time. These two combined gave the message: 'Wishing that you live to a great old age.'

The modern looking picture on page 143 with one stork is probably a literati picture. People to whom I have shown it think there is a hidden meaning, but nobody knows how to interpret it. At face value this stork is a symbol of nobility, summer and a long life. Modern artists, working in the Zen tradition, try to capture the essence of the stork by drawing a few strokes. (See the picture of a turtle in the next chapter (page 173), which was painted by a better known artist.)

Storks are also found in the Ten Long Life Symbols pictures. These are dealt with in the chapter on Landscapes with Ten Long Life Symbols. Storks are also found in the Seven Animals pictures under Leaping Carp. Both are in Part I. See also Storks, Part II, where the literati symbolism is explained.

□ EAGLE

The eagle should be bold, fierce and full of courage. It should have a cruel beak, strong legs and a cold calculating eye. Its body should be full of energy and built for speed. If it looks stupid, friendly or cuddly, it is not a Korean eagle!

The eagle is the messenger of the most powerful god, the God of heaven. Only the eagle is powerful enough to fly up to heaven, which is above the sky. He flies between heaven and earth carrying the commands and orders of God, and bringing God's blessings to man. In Korea the picture of an eagle is the most powerful of all magic pictures. It repels evil, brings blessings and gives good fortune.

The eagle is very much a shamanistic symbol. Probably because of this, neither the Chinese nor the Korean Confucian scholars used it in their classical paintings. Literati painters also avoided it and never used it in any of their pictures. Confucian scholars only used the eagle when they were drawing a dragon. The dragon was made up of the parts of nine animals. Its claws were taken from the eagle. Confucian scholars rejected Shamanism as being primitive. They seemed to think that it might be all right for the uneducated classes and for women, but it was certainly beneath them.

In order to understand the eagle's position in Shamanism, let us first take a quick look at Shamanism in Korean history, and then at world Shamanism.

Shamanism has been in Korea for well over two thousand years. Buddhism came into Korea in the fourth century (AD372 is the official date). Buddhism was the state religion in United Shilla (AD668–935). It remained so during the Koryŏ dynasty (AD918–1392). The Chosŏn dynasty (also called the Yi Dynasty), which was established in 1392, adopted Confucianism, or rather Neo-Confucianism, as the official state religion. Shamanism survived in Korea to the present day through all these changes, but it has lost some of its traditions, doctrines and practices because it was cut off from the wider world of Shamanism that stretches from Manchuria up to Siberia in Russia, and down through Mongolia to Nepal and Tibet. In order to understand many of the myths and practices of Korean Shamanism, one has to go outside Korea and look at world Shamanism.

In other countries, shamanists believe that the souls of men originated in heaven and were brought down to earth by birds. It might happen that before a child's birth, a bird was seen about the house. This bird was the messenger that brought the soul of the newborn child. When a person dies, his or her soul becomes a bird, and flies back up to heaven. However it doesn't have to do this journey alone. Other birds come to the house or the grave to accompany the new bird-soul to heaven. So birds bring a new soul to the world; they are guardians of the souls that they have already brought; they are messengers come to bring a soul back to heaven; or they are the souls of persons who have just died. In Shamanism, birds are always good.

The eagle is the king of the birds, the special guardian sent to protect the shaman, especially to protect the shaman's soul. The shaman is the teacher of this cosmology and often is the priest who does all the ceremonies. The shaman is the one who controls the spirits, casts out demons and cures sicknesses. Only the greatest of the birds could protect the shaman when he is engaged in these dangerous operations. The eagle is the bird that has been given this heavy responsibility, the duty to protect the shaman's soul, both in life and after death. When a shaman dies his soul is turned into an eagle and is accompanied by his eagle guardian up to heaven.

In countries where Shamanism has survived in a purer form, there are many myths about the eagle. One myth says that the God of heaven came down to earth on the back of an eagle. There he met a maiden asleep under a tree. He married her and they had a child who became the first shaman. All shamans are descended from this first shaman. In Korea, there are many foundation stories like this one. One of these stories says that the son of the

king of heaven came down to earth, met a woman (or maybe it was a bear that he changed into a woman) and they had a child named Tan'gun. Tan'gun is the progenitor of all Koreans.

Another Siberian myth says that the eagle flew up to the highest heaven and stole a golden egg, which it brought back to earth. From this egg was hatched the first shaman, the common ancestor of all shamans. In Korea, the foundation myth of the Shilla dynasty says that the first king, who in Shilla times was also a priest-king or shaman-king, was born from a golden egg.

These myths are very alike except that the Korean version has lost the eagle. The scholars who originally wrote down these stories left the Shamanistic eagle out in order to make them more acceptable to other Confucian scholars.

In some Shamanistic traditions the belief that man originally came from heaven through the instrumentality of birds and that he needs the help of birds to get back up there after death is so strong that they do not bury their dead but leave them on a platform of some sort so that birds can carry the flesh back to heaven.

This close connection between man and birds is seen in Confucian tales and myths and maybe in their beliefs. Birds bring blessings, happiness and children to newly-married spouses. The stork is a messenger from heaven giving joy and fertility to a young married couple. The cock, or the red bird, keeps evil spirits away. The phoenix brings summer and its joys. The eagle, the king of the birds, was left out. The Confucian scholars could not accept him without accepting shamanism and the shamans who were its priests.

Ordinary people in Korea have not rejected the eagle. He is still the messenger of the lord of heaven. He protects against evil and brings blessings and good fortune. He lives to a great age, or, more likely, he is immortal. He can give this gift of a long life to those whom he protects. He not only protects the living but also protects the souls of the dead and brings them to heaven.

We find the eagle in Greek and Roman mythology. 'Jupiter was king of the gods and men. The thunder was his weapon, and he bore a shield called Aegis, made for him by Vulcan. The eagle was his favourite bird, and bore his thunderbolts.' (*Myths of Greece and Rome*, by Thomas Bulfinch)

Celtic folklore also has the story about the wren and the eagle:

The eagle was the king of the birds, but each year his kingship had to be ratified by all the other birds. The wren, the smallest of the birds, was ambitious and wanted to become king. Kingship was decided in favour of the bird that could fly highest. In the contest the eagle took off and flew as high as he could. The little wren was hiding in the feathers of the eagle's back. As soon as the eagle tired and could go no higher the wren took off and flew above him. The wren was declared the winner and crowned king. However the king of the birds had to fly up to the heavens at the beginning of the New Year to invite the sun back to heat the world in the spring and make the crops grow in the summer. The wren king was unable to do this; he hid in the bushes instead of going up to heaven. That year there was no spring or summer. When the other birds realized that the wren wasn't able to perform his duties, they deposed him. But it was already too late to prevent disaster.



Eagle in Flight

Artist's name: Kim Söngsök

Pen-name: Soch'ön



Eagle and Pine

Inscription: 'Pine tree with a life of a thousand years.'

(The 'life of a thousand years' refers to the eagle.)

Artist's name: Lee Kwang'ok. Pen-name: Ch'öngam

In Ireland, the children hunt the wren on St Stephen's Day to prevent him from becoming king again.

It is interesting to remember that Catholics have used the eagle symbol to represent St John the Evangelist, the messenger of God who brings God's word to man.

▣ HORSE

Korean artists like to draw horses, but because these pictures do not seem to have any attractive symbolism attached to them, they don't sell many of them to Koreans. Because they are well drawn, foreign tourists seem to buy most of them.

The native horses are small. They are called Cheju ponies because that is the island where most of them are bred. Some say the Cheju ponies are descended from the horses that Genghis Khan's soldiers brought with them during the Mongol invasions about AD1000. Up to a few years ago, these horses were used for transport and for pulling loads, but as they were not as strong as the ox, farmers did not use them for ploughing or for hauling their grains and vegetables to market.

Horses were used in Shilla (57BC-AD935). The Shilla kings used cavalry in their armies. At that time horses were highly prized and it seems that fetishes grew up around them in which the horse was almost worshipped, or at least credited with supernatural powers. Kings of the other Korean dynasties relied more on foot soldiers and the horse went out of fashion.

The Korean dislike of horses may have its roots in the fact that the horse was a sacrificial animal and that it was closely associated with death. Sacrifices were offered every year by the king to the heavenly spirits and to the earth spirits. These were offered in reparation for sin, in worship of the spirits, in honour of ancestors, and in supplication for future blessings. The five sacrificial animals offered on these occasions were horses, oxen, sheep, pigs and cocks. These were slain and their blood was offered on the altars.

In Chinese mythology the horse is closely associated with death. During the Han dynasty (206BC-AD220) the King of Thailand sent a great white horse as a gift to the first emperor of Han. When the emperor died, the horse took his soul on its back and rode up to heaven. As each succeeding Han emperor died, this beautiful white horse reappeared and took the soul away to heaven too. After the last of the Han kings died, the horse was seen no more. The Chinese called this horse the Tian Ma or the Celestial Horse.

In Korean mythology, the horse is also associated with death. According to Shamanism, when a person comes to the time of death, the White Horse General comes to take away his or her soul to the underworld. It is brought before the king of the underworld, who passes judgement and appoints the soul to a place either in the heavenly kingdom or in the underworld kingdom. In either place the soul can rest at ease. However, if the soul has done evil in this world, it is sent back into the world to roam as a hungry spirit, an unhappy ghost, or even as a demon, until such time as it is forgiven



Galloping Horses

Inscription: 'Horses galloping with such strength that they look as if they could travel a thousand *li*.'

Artist's name: Chǒng T'aeyǒng

Pen-name: Chǒngam

or put at ease by the people it hurt. Nobody likes to see the White Horse General arrive, because one has to die, go with him and stand judgement.

The horse is one of the Twelve Animals of the Zodiac, the seventh in the cycle. 2014 is the next year of the horse. The year of the horse is regarded as a lucky year, except for women. A woman born in the year of the horse finds it very difficult to get married. A man doesn't want to take as a wife someone so hard to control!

In Korea, the white horse is the same as the heavenly horse or the Celestial Horse. It is a magical horse that can appear or disappear at will. It can travel over a thousand *li* (300 miles) in a day without tiring. A supernatural

horse, it can gallop across the skies and even go right up to heaven. It is a lot safer to stay a good distance away from it.

The horses in the picture on page 149 seem to have been dashed off Picasso-style. Full of life and energy, they seem to be almost flying. As the inscription says, they look as if they could gallop a thousand *li*. Only a magic horse could travel that far.

▣ PIG WITH PIGLETS

Pictures of pigs are not popular in Korea. A drawing of a pig might be used to symbolize the year of the pig, but it is never used to decorate a wall. Pigs are often drawn as a small detail in a rural scene, or in a genre picture, but they just show the different kinds of work that farmers do.

A picture of a pig with many piglets is a magic picture that acts as a charm to give wealth. It is seen in shops and business places. It is not a literati picture, but in the style of the literati it uses a pun to give another message. The Sino-Korean word for a pig and the word for money (*ton*) are pronounced the same. So the picture of a pig with many piglets can be read as many pigs, or as a lot of money. In the farming community a pig that produces many piglets is one that makes money for the farmer. A picture of such a pig with piglets acts as a charm to bring luck and profit to businessmen.

This is one of the very few charms used in Korea to bring wealth. The Chinese and Japanese use many charms to help them become wealthy. Koreans do not believe that these charms work. They have a saying that ordinary wealth can be got by hard work; extraordinary wealth is a gift from Heaven. A charm, especially a picture of a pig with piglets, is never going to change heaven's will!

▣ TIGER

Tigers were native to Korea. Up until the middle of the twentieth century, they were still being hunted in the mountains. There are none left in South Korea, and the Demilitarized Zone, which divides North Korea from South Korea, prevents any from coming down from the north and from Siberia.

The tiger is the national animal of Korea. Because it is big and strong, courageous and fierce, full of vitality and quick to react, it represents the Korean people who have all these qualities. These qualities are needed to be successful in the modern world and to maintain hard-won freedoms.

The tiger was the king of the animal world. Captive African lions were brought to China and Korea, but nobody would ever even think of taking the crown from the wild tiger and giving it to these pitiful captives. As the tiger was the king of the animals, his picture became the symbol of the kings of Korea and their families. Because the soldiers were the 'king's men' who enforced his will, the tiger became the official symbol of the military, just as the stork became the official symbol of the civil authorities.

In Korea, the tiger is regarded as being full of the yang principle. Because it is brave, fierce and full of vitality, it must have the male or yang principle in abundance. Its pelt, hair, or even its whiskers, gave virility to whoever possessed them. Drinking its blood, or eating its bones ground down to powder, could turn old men into young studs. Because men believed this they hunted the tiger to extinction.

The tiger is such a strong symbol of the yang principle that even its picture should not be kept anywhere near a woman's sleeping quarters. Even a fan with a tiger should be kept away from a woman. These pictures can only be hung on the outside walls of her house where they can act as a charm to frighten away evil spirits. Because the tiger is a symbol of the yang principle, it belongs in the man's rooms where it has the magic to give him courage and virility.

The inscription on this fan (page 152) says: 'The tiger is king of the mountains.' The six-character couplet drops the last character in the second line. Instead of the king character, the artist has drawn a tiger. The purists say it is a defect, but I think a modern artist must be given at least this amount of freedom. Actually, according to Chinese scholars, every tiger has the character for a king (王) on its forehead. So there is no need to write it again!

The tiger features a lot in Korean mythology and folklore. The foundation myth about Tan'gun has many different forms, but they nearly all imply that he descended from a bear and a tiger. Perhaps these were totems of two different tribes or families. The usual story is this:

Hwanung, the son of the lord of heaven who created the world, came down to earth. The bear and the tiger both wished to have a human form like him. He told them their wish would be granted if they only ate garlic and a mixture of bitter herbs and withdrew from the sunlight for one hundred days. They withdrew into a cave but the tiger became restless and couldn't resist his craving for meat and had to come out into the sunlight. The bear remained for a hundred days and emerged as a woman. The woman became pregnant and had a son who was named Tan'gun.

Some stories say that Hwanung was the father, another version says that the tiger was the father. Tan'gun became the father of all Koreans.

Folklore has many tales about the tiger. Some of these are intended for adults. In these tales, the tiger represents the nobles who oppressed the ordinary people. It is always represented as being stupid and vain. It is always outwitted by the hares, rabbits or the magpies that represent the common people.

Sometimes, the tiger in folk paintings is shown as a cross between a tiger and a puma. In literati pictures the tiger should always be read as a puma, but as there were no pumas in Korea, the artists didn't know how to draw them. Word of mouth described them as small tigers with spots instead of stripes, and with faces like a cat. The folk painters stressed this ambiguity in order to cast doubt on the legitimacy of the nobles. The nobles were very careful about keeping their bloodlines pure and their genealogical books accurate. But from watching the bad behaviour of some of these self-styled,



Tiger

Inscription: 'The tiger is king of the mountains.'

Artist's name: Ryu Samgyu

Pen-name: Sojae



Tiger Smoking a Pipe, Assisted by Hares

Artist's name: Anonymous

noble gentlemen, the ordinary people had doubts about the truthfulness of the claims to noble blood. So they drew the tiger as being half a puma with spots and half a tiger with stripes, and with an awful stupid grin on its face.

In stories for children, the tiger is always bad. He tries to deceive the children so that he can get them alone where he can catch and eat them. If children are obedient and good, their parents will always be able to come and save them. Many of these stories begin with the words: 'Long, long ago, when tigers smoked pipes . . .' This folk picture of a tiger recalls all the funny and frightening stories that people used to hear when they were children.

The tiger is one of the Seven Animals. (They are listed under Leaping Carp earlier in this chapter.)

The tiger is one of the Four Mythical Animals. (These are dealt with in the next chapter.)

The tiger is one of the Twelve Animals of the Zodiac. (They are listed in the next chapter and also in Part II under Celestial Stems.)

Tigers were drawn by literati painters. (See Tigers and Pumas in Part II.)

Chapter 6

The Four Mythical Animals



There is a lot of confusion among English writers about what to call these animals. They have been called the Mythical Animals, the Mystical Animals, the Spiritually Endowed Creatures, the Supernatural Creatures, the Four Animals that Preside over the Four Quadrants of the Uranosphere, the Animals of the Four Directions and the Animals of the Four Seasons.

Chinese sources cause even more confusion because they give different lists. In the *Book of Rites* the 'four spiritually endowed creatures' are listed as the dragon, the unicorn, the phoenix and the tortoise. An examination of bronze mirrors and other artefacts from the Han Dynasty (206BC–AD220), produces a slightly different list: dragon, tiger (instead of unicorn), phoenix and tortoise. Tang (AD618–906) sources list five animals, each associated with the five colours, with the five elements, and with the five directions. Four of the animals are associated with the four seasons, and one with heaven or Tao. In other words, four are assigned to the four cardinal points, and one to the centre, that is, to the emperor who rules China from the centre of the country, and as China is at the centre of the world, the emperor rules the whole world from its centre.

Name and Colour	Cardinal Point (or Direction)	Season	Element	
			in China	in Korea
Blue Dragon	East	Spring	Wood	Metal
White Tiger	West ☽	Autumn	Metal	Wood
Vermilion Bird or Red Phoenix	South	Summer	Fire	Fire
Black Tortoise or Black Warrior	North	Winter	Water	Water
Yellow Dragon	Centre	All Seasons	Earth	Earth

Confucian scholars brought this system into Korea probably before United Shilla (668). However, they seem to have had difficulty grafting these

symbols and the cosmology they represented onto Korean cosmology and mythology. There is strong evidence that Korean philosophers accepted only four elements as the building blocks of the world. Korean artists also had problems with the new system as the Chinese used different symbols to denote the same elemental forces of nature.

The foundation myth of Koguryŏ (37–668) says that at first the earth was covered with clouds and dust. The earth spirit transformed herself into a tortoise and hid in the depths of the lake in the great volcanic cone at the top of Paekdusan (white-head-mountain), which lies on the present border between Korea and China. The sun god eventually parted the clouds, saw the beautiful snow-capped mountain and looked down into the clear lake. When the sun shone, the earth spirit swam to the surface and resumed her proper shape. The sun god fell in love with her and married her. Their children were the first kings of the Koguryŏ kingdom. The artists of Koguryŏ and those of the following dynasties, United Shilla (668–918) and Koryŏ (918–1392), depicted the earth spirit (yin) as a tortoise and the sun spirit (yang) as the red bird with three legs. This bird was drawn to look like a crow or a magpie. Confucian scholars equated this red bird with the phoenix, the bird that represented the yang principle (sun, fire, south and summer). In the same way, the tortoise, which represented the earth spirit in Korea, became the black tortoise, the yin principle (moon, water, north and winter). So there was really no big problem with these two symbols.

The problem arose with the dragon and the unicorn. As the tortoise was the water spirit, where did the dragon fit in? Myths and folk tales dating back to early Shilla (57BC–AD668) speak of the sea god as being a giant tortoise. Confucian artists at first depicted this as a unicorn, an animal with a face like a dragon, a head like a stag, legs like a horse and a body like a tortoise. As time went by, this animal became more and more like a dragon but retained the name of unicorn, qilin in Chinese and *kirin* in Korean. (This word *kirin* in modern Korean means a giraffe!) Over the years, at least in Korea, the name lost its original meaning of unicorn; it came to mean land dragon, to distinguish it from the sky or rain dragon. In Korea the unicorn and the dragon became one, the blue dragon, symbol of the productive forces of nature, metal, east and spring. The blue dragon was the messenger of the God of heaven and was the dispenser of all the gifts and wealth that heaven bestowed on men. It was also the guardian of the treasures of the gods, especially their gold and precious metals. Because of this the blue dragon became the symbol of the element of metal.

With the amalgamation of dragon and unicorn into blue dragon, none of the 'four spiritually endowed creatures' mentioned by Confucius in the *Book of Rites* was left to represent the west. So, Korean scholars had to take the white tiger of the later Han and Tang dynasties and assign it to the west. They associated the white tiger with the element of wood because it lived in the forest and they used it to represent destructive forces such as cooling and death and the season of autumn, which heralded the approach of hard times.

The yellow dragon was the fifth creature on the Tang (AD618–906) list. It represented the emperor, the up and down directions, and the element of

clay or earth. Korean scholars for the most part ignored this symbol as they had their own king. Although they admired Chinese culture and learning, they valued highly their own independence and autonomy.

Koreans were not fond of imaginary animals. They neither believed in them nor taught their children to believe in them. Their artists prefer to draw a real bird such as the farmyard cock, the peacock, the kingfisher and the mandarin duck and call it a phoenix. Korean artists find it hard to improve on the beauty of the birds as found in nature. Drawing the imaginary phoenix bird described by Chinese writers or as drawn by Chinese artists does not produce a picture that is pleasing or beautiful to Korean artists.

Drawing the tiger comes a lot more naturally to them. They like to capture its colours, its strength, its self-confident independence and even its ferocity. As the tiger is a yang symbol, its picture is full of vitality, power and the life-giving forces. These are the qualities that make these pictures popular.

Pictures of tortoises are easily drawn but nobody wants them. The tortoise is a yin symbol. It is very difficult to make the tortoise look beautiful or vital looking. As these pictures neither show beauty nor radiate life-giving energies, there is no popular demand for them and one never sees them in Korean homes or offices.

Pictures of dragons are seen in public places such as restaurants, offices, temples and chemist shops. These pictures carry an aura of antiquity and oriental learning. They hint at supernatural powers and magic. Although they are yang symbols, which should inspire vitality and life-giving forces, the pictures are drawn as terrifying monsters. Ordinary Koreans do not decorate their homes or working places with dragons. Life has enough monstrosities and terrors without adding another one to the bedroom or living room in the form of a dragon painting.

To sum up, the Four Mythical Animals found in Korea are the blue dragon, the white tiger, the red bird, or red phoenix, and the black tortoise. Pictures of birds representing the phoenix and pictures of tigers are found in Korean homes; pictures of dragons are found in public places; and pictures of tortoises are found in museums, or as a small detail in Ten Long Life Pictures.

The only other paintings of mythical animals that are found in Korea are those depicting the twelve animals of the zodiac. These are just drawn as academic symbols and are never given much artistic treatment except on postage stamps and New Year greeting cards.

In Korea, one sees sculptures of the lion, often called the 'Korean dog' in English books, but it is really the mythical lion (*baet'ae*). One also sees monster masks which are probably derived from the nine different types of dragon described in Chinese literature. These sculptures were only found around the palaces of the kings and were only understood by the Confucian intelligentsia. Pictures of these animals are never seen in the homes, offices or work-places of the ordinary people.

The monster masks mentioned above are called *tokkaebi* by the ordinary people. *Tokkaebi* are not animals; they are the souls of evil people who at death were not allowed to enter either the heavenly kingdom or the underworld kingdom, but were sent back to earth to live as hungry ghosts or



Land Dragon



Water Dragon

Both pictures by the same early nineteenth century artist.
Artist's name: Anonymous

goblins. They carry animal features showing their depravities. These masks were used on doors to scare away thieves and burglars.

Some young modern Korean artists seem to take great delight in drawing scary *tokkaebi* pictures. Perhaps they like to demonstrate that they do not believe in ghosts, but it is more likely they realize that these *tokkaebi* are part of their ancient traditions and wish to preserve anything that reflects their own unique culture.

☐ BLUE DRAGON

The blue dragon by right should be called the azure dragon. Azure is a colour between blue and green; it is regarded as one of the five primary colours, the others being white, black, red and yellow. Azure is the green

of the kingfisher, of green jade and of Korean celadon. It is also the colour of the sea and the blue of the sky. Azure covers all the colours in the green and blue part of the spectrum. So all green dragons and all blue dragons are really azure dragons. Most English writers call these dragons, which are spirits of the sky and symbolize the forces of heaven and the growing forces in nature, blue dragons.

The East Asian dragon is very different from the Western dragon. It is a symbol of the yang principle, of heaven, the powers of heaven, and especially the justice of heaven. It is a symbol of fertility and of life itself, the messenger of the God of heaven. It guards and protects all the wealth and gifts of heaven and distributes them to man. It gives good crops to farmers, good catches to fishermen and increased wealth to businessmen, provided they live in accordance with the will of heaven. If men are evil or unjust, the dragon sends swift and terrible punishments through fire, wind and water. Koreans say the dragon is a sort of spiritual being, always friendly and good, like an angel, a go-between for God and man, which tries to keep men away from evil and on the way that leads to Tao. So, the Oriental dragon is vastly different from the Western dragon, which is an evil monster, the embodiment of wickedness and in some contexts a symbol of the devil.

It is unfortunate that the Oriental and Western dragons look so much alike. They both look like giant winged lizards. This led Westerners to translate the word *yong* in Korean and long in Chinese as dragon in English even though *yong* and long symbolized a completely different entity. This mistake became even worse when the Christian scriptures were translated into Korean and Chinese, and the Western dragon, the symbol of evil, was translated as *yong* and long. Later Korean translations of the bible used different words and left the Oriental dragon's good reputation intact.

The earliest records of the dragon come from decorations on Chinese bronzes dating back to the Shan dynasty (1766–1122BC). Written records go back to the time of Confucius (551–479BC) who, for example, compares Lao Zi to a dragon. Korean records go back to the tomb paintings of Koguryŏ (AD37–668) and to the decorated bronze bells of Shilla (AD57–668).

In prehistoric China, it seems probable that the dragon was originally a river god. Like lizards and alligators, it was supposed to crawl into the mud in the autumn, to hibernate during the winter, and to re-emerge in the spring when melting snows brought new waters to the rivers. It was most active during the summer when it brought the monsoons and the wet season, which flooded the rice paddies and made the growing of rice possible. From the earliest times, the dragon was associated with water and rain, with irrigation and agriculture, with fertility and the renewal of life, with summer and the yang principle.

The dragon was first introduced into Korea when Buddhism arrived from China in the fourth century (AD372). By then the dragon had become a well-accepted Buddhist symbol of conversion from a materialistic life to a spiritual life, from a life of ignorance of the law of Buddha to a new life of enlightenment. The Buddhist texts originally came from India. When they were brought to China, they had to be translated. In the process of translation, the

great serpents, snakes and cobras of India were transformed into the dragons of China. Myths, stories and ideas associated with these serpents became the properties of the dragon. One of these myths still lives on in Korea. The classical account says that the carp jumps the waterfalls, follows the streams to the top of the mountains, then leaps up to heaven where it becomes a dragon if it can grasp the pearl of all desires (*yŏŭiju*). In another Korean myth, it is the snake that turns into a dragon. On a dark rainy night, it has to fight its way unseen into the clouds. If anyone sees it, it falls back down to earth to remain always a snake, not just an ordinary snake but an evil monster (*imugi* in Korean), which feeds on innocent people. This story emphasizes that enlightenment takes place in the heart. A person who pretends to be enlightened to impress other people or to deceive them becomes in reality a monstrous criminal.

Buddhist temples have many images of dragons. They are found on doors, walls, pillars, ceilings and rooftops. Dragons ornament bells, drums, gongs and vessels. Buddhists believe that the dragon is the personal servant and messenger of the Buddha and is always under his full control. The dragon is full of goodness, always faithful, a bearer of justice and an avenger of injustice. It rewards good people with success and gives them sufficient wealth to live on. It is the symbol of the merciful angel, the helper of all mankind.

Taoists, too, used the dragon as a symbol of good. They ascribed to it many metaphysical qualities. In spring it brought the heat and rain, which made the earth produce crops in abundance. Obviously it was the yang principle, and, of course, male. It was different from the earth, which was female or yin. Because it was a yang principle, it was heavenly and spiritual. Because its dominion was over the whole sky and earth, and its power over nature was so great, it was able to change the earth in the springtime and make it productive during the summer season. Each year it gave crops to the farmer and fish to the fisherman. This showed its great power, for without the dragon's help man could not live on this earth. These great powers were normally used to help man and improve his living conditions, but if man was evil, strayed from the road to Tao, or refused to obey the will of heaven, the dragon sent swift retribution in the form of floods, droughts, hailstorms and wind, which flattened and destroyed the crops, or in the form of thunder and lightning, which wreaked vengeance on evil men. But the dragon was just, and if the king and people offered the proper prayers and sacrifices, and if the necessary reforms were made, its anger did not last too long.

Taoists realized that the dragon had great power. It could destroy everything on land and on sea. Yet it restrained itself from doing evil and only used its power to do good or to bring about justice. So Taoists used the dragon as a symbol of the power of restraint.

The dragon was in constant motion, through seas, rivers, clouds and sky, always changing its size, sometimes big, sometimes small, and also changing its appearance, sometimes visible, but more often invisible.

To Taoists, the dragon was a symbol of all these metaphysical things: the yang principle, fertility, life, the heavens, the power of heaven, the justice

of heaven because it meted out punishment for evil, and the beneficence of heaven because it gave good crops to farmers and good catches to fishermen. It was also a symbol of the spiritual world.

Confucian philosophers also accepted the dragon, but for the most part they used it as a symbol of political order and good government. They maintained that heaven was too big to be administered by one dragon, that it was divided into five parts, each part ruled by one of the five dragons, four of which corresponded with the four directions and the fifth with the centre. The dragon in charge of the central region was the overall king. He was also in charge of all the other dragons. This king dragon was called the Yellow Dragon. Each of the other four dragons had an assistant dragon to do all the heavy work, bringing the total number of dragons to nine. The other eight dragons were given the following names: Celestial Dragon, Spiritual Dragon, Dragon of Hidden Treasures, Winged Dragon, Horned Dragon, Coiled Dragon, Azure Dragon and Sea Dragon. Each of these dragons had different powers but the nine collectively had the totality of all powers.

The vast earth that lay under the heavens had to be administered by these nine dragons. Three kinds of dragons helped them. Dragons that lived in the sky were called long (or *yong* in Korean), those that lived in the lakes, marshes and mountains were called chao, and those that lived in the seas and oceans were called li. These were the Three Terrestrial Dragons. Some Korean scholars said that the dragons that lived in the sky (*yong*) were not land dragons. They concluded that the mountain dragon (*ki*), the lake and river dragon (*rin*) and the sea dragon (*yong wang*) were the three terrestrial dragons. Korean scholars had great difficulty making sense of the Chinese literature on dragons.

The seas, too, were subdivided into four oceans, which were supposed to surround the land. A dragon prince ruled each of these oceans. The four dragon princes were subject to the dragon king who ruled the underwater kingdom from his coral palace under the sea. Thus the seas too were ruled by five water dragons.

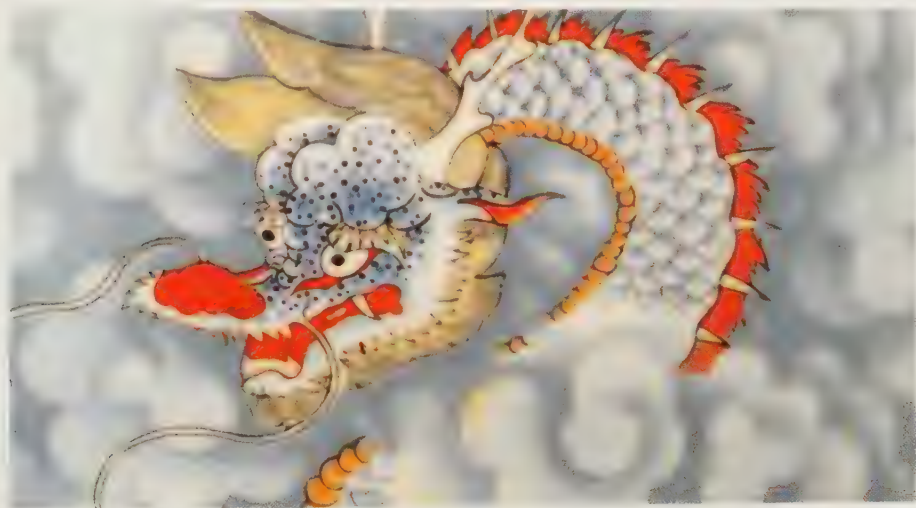
This system was really a reflection of the Chinese system of government. The emperor and his mandarins, of course, maintained that their system merely followed the system set up by heaven from the creation of the world. The emperor was at the centre of the world and from there ruled the four quarters of the earth. The world was his by divine right. He took the yellow dragon as his personal patron. This became the imperial dragon, the dragon that later became the symbol of the king and the royal family. Just as the yellow dragon had all power in heaven, the emperor had all power on earth. All of this fitted in nicely with Confucian theories about political order and good government.

The Neo-Confucians took everything good that they could find in Taoism, in the old Confucianism, in Buddhism and especially in Zen Buddhism, and united it all into their new system. In the old Confucian system, the emperor was answerable to no one. In the Neo-Confucian system, the king was answerable to heaven and had to rule according to heaven's will. If he didn't

follow heaven's will, he lost heaven's mandate. Without this mandate, floods, droughts, diseases and rebellions destroyed the kingdom.

It was this Neo-Confucianism that the Chosŏn dynasty (1392–1910) brought into Korea. In their zeal to introduce the system, the Chosŏn kings tried to stamp out Buddhism, Taoism, Shamanism and, later on, Christianity. Over the five-hundred years of the dynasty, they very nearly succeeded. They certainly succeeded in making Korea a completely Confucian nation with its own writing, art, music, system of government, ancestor worship and even mythology.

The scholars might have been able to get 'things Chinese' right, but the ordinary people got confused. They mixed their old beliefs up with the new; they preferred to keep their old stories and myths and only accepted those symbols that fitted in with what they already knew and could understand. The Chinese hierarchy of dragons was never accepted. Instead they retained the old Buddhist dragon, which was a servant of the Buddha and a messenger of heaven. They believed that this dragon was the same as the blue dragon of the east, which brought rain for the crops and fertility to the earth, and which produced wealth and gifts for all. Possibly this azure dragon was the same as the messenger the Buddha sent from heaven each year with the happy season of spring, the dragon that tried to get men to live justly and to practise virtue. Perhaps all dragons are one and the same kindly angel that tries to help man and wishes to give him every blessing. Angel is probably the most accurate way to describe the Korean dragon. This might sound strange seeing that dragons have horns, whiskers, claws, scales and a long tail. But do not be misled by appearances. It is the reality that lies beneath the symbolism that really matters.



Blue Dragon

Artist's name: Anonymous

The blue dragon and the white tiger are often used together to signify the totality of things. They represent spring and autumn, which can mean the whole year; they represent the beginning and the end; and they represent life and death.

In Korean literature, the blue dragon symbolizes east, spring and the element of metal. As the dragon is the protector of the treasures of heaven, it is responsible for guarding and distributing its precious metals. Chinese sources say that it represents the element of wood because the growth caused by the spring rains that the dragon sends are what produce wood. Korean scholars made the white tiger the symbol of the element wood because the forest was the natural habitat of the tiger.

Some philosophers believed that all men wished to be like the dragon. Their ambitions made them want to change themselves into something better, to become powerful, wealthy and famous. But the best philosophers taught that men should rather try to be good, to become spiritual, so that they could defeat death and become immortal. Only in this way could they really become like the dragon.

▣ YELLOW DRAGON

Korean artists often draw two dragons together, or as a matching pair. One is of the blue or green variety, and the other is yellow, orange or even orange-red. The blue represents the sky, spring and good weather; the yellow represents water, summer and rain clouds. Both together represent the most joyful time of the year, spring and summer. In some pictures each dragon has the pearl of all desires (*yŏŭiju*) in its claws or mouth. This is to show that both have become immortal. Sometimes there is only one pearl and the dragons seem to be fighting for it. Only the dragon that grasps the pearl becomes immortal; the vanquished dragon falls back to earth to become a monstrous snake. This fighting in the sky between two newly-formed dragons causes storms, thunder and lightning. This is a very dangerous time for the people.

There is a nicer explanation of the two dragons with one pearl. There were two carp that were great friends. They always helped each other. Together they found the easiest and safest ways to jump the waterfalls, and one never went without the other. Both made the final leap up to heaven and both became dragons, but there was only one pearl. They grasped the pearl of all desires but neither of them would eat it. The lord of heaven saw their quandary, which was caused by their great friendship, so he took pity on them and solved their problem by giving them another pearl. They became immortal together.

In Chinese cosmology, the yellow dragon resides in the centre of the sky and rules over all the other dragons. It also rules over the fifth direction, which is the up and down axis. It is the most powerful of the dragons and has always been used to represent the emperor and the royal family. (See previous section on the blue dragon.)



Yellow Dragon

Artist's name: Kim Sŏnghyŏn

Pen-name: Yul Ch'ŏn

The yellow dragon symbolizes the fifth of the five elements, which is earth or clay. It is also the king of all the scaly creatures, which include fish, snakes, lizards and reptiles.

Korean scholars knew all about the fifth dragon, the yellow dragon or the imperial dragon, but as they did not believe the stories, they only offered it lip service. The people completely ignored the yellow dragon; only artists used it, as a subject for a dramatic picture, or to tell a good story.

☐ WHITE TIGER

The white tiger is the second of the Four Mythical Animals and represents the west. In East Asia, the four points of the compass are listed in a different order to that usually used in the occident. The oriental order is east, west, south, north.

White is the colour of heaven and holiness, the colour of light and spiritual things. The white tiger is a heavenly messenger, a heavenly spirit and a creature of good omen. Whereas the ordinary tiger is fierce, easily angered

and always ready to kill people, the white tiger is a supernatural being that is always ready to serve and help man. To put it another way, the white tiger is the king of all furry animals such as ox, horse and dog, animals that are beneficial and helpful to man. As their king, it is even better disposed and more ready to help man than all the other animals.

Although the white tiger sometimes kills evil people, this is rare. It is better known for helping and rewarding virtuous people, especially those who practice filial piety and look after their old and feeble parents. It also collects herbs from the mountains and makes medicines, which it gives to poor people to cure their diseases. All illnesses, which are caused by evil spirits, can be prevented by his presence, because evil spirits fear the white tiger and won't touch anyone under its protection. Even its picture posted on the western wall of a house keeps evil spirits away. In some country areas in Korea, a picture of the white tiger was placed over a dead person's face to protect the body from evil spirits, and to protect the soul, which was making its way into the other world, from all assaults by demons.

One of the most powerful, and certainly the most popular spirit in Korean Shamanism is the Mountain Spirit called *sanshin*. This spirit lives on the mountain with a tiger, which is his companion and pet and which acts as his messenger. When the people living down in the valleys pray to the mountain spirit, he sends them his gifts and blessings by his tiger messenger service. This mountain spirit and his tiger are to be found in nearly all Korean Buddhist temples. Buddhists believe that the supernatural tiger is also the servant of the Buddha and that his particular duty is to protect all fervent Buddhist believers.

So the white tiger, the supernatural and spiritually endowed animal of the western quadrant of the uranosphere (the vault of the heavens), is a kind and beneficent spirit. It is the mythical animal in charge of the autumn season. Autumn brings full harvests of grains, fruits and vegetables, the end of the growing season and the dry cold winds that herald the approach of winter. Just as the blue dragon is associated with spring, rain, heat, life and the beginning of things, so the white tiger is associated with autumn, wind, cooling, death and the ending of things.

In China, the blue dragon is associated with the element of wood and the white tiger is associated with the element of metal. Koreans reverse this. They associate the white tiger with forests and the graves of ancestors on the mountains. 'Death and the ending of things' means a pine coffin and a grave among the pines, so they insist that the white tiger must be associated with timber and the element of wood. Chinese scholars said it was the spring rains that made trees grow, and since it was the blue dragon that sent the rains, this dragon produced the element of wood, the elemental spirit that produced all living vegetation.

It is easy to confuse the symbolism of the white tiger with the symbolism of the ordinary tiger. As the ordinary tiger has great strength, courage and power, he has become the symbol of the king, the royal family, the king's army and even the nobility who claimed to be related to the king. The tiger strikes fear into the hearts of men, is easily angered and is vindictive. If it



White Tiger

Artist's name: Kang Söngyöl. Pen-name: Yönje

kills a person, it is not satisfied until it changes that person into a tiger and sends it back again to the village to kill another person. Its ability to strike fear into hearts and to take revenge on those who would oppose it are the qualities that the ruling classes most admired, and this is one of the reasons they took the tiger as their symbol.

The white tiger is different from the ordinary tiger. It is a spiritual being. The ordinary tiger can live five hundred or maybe a thousand years providing that some hunter doesn't get it first. But the white tiger is immortal. As an immortal, spiritual being, it is a yang symbol and hence always ready to protect human life.

Even though the white tiger is associated with 'death and the ending of things', it is never an evil spirit. It protects people from evil emanating from the west; it even protects the souls of the dead until the appointed time comes for them to get their rewards in the various paradises in the next world.

Even pictures of the white tiger have magic powers. They give protection from evil spirits and diseases, and have the power to give long life. (For other meanings of the tiger symbol, see under Tiger in the previous chapter, and also under the Twelve Animals of the Zodiac dealt with below in this chapter. For literati meanings of tiger pictures see Part II.)

▣ UNICORN

The unicorn is never seen in Korea. Pictures that look a bit like a unicorn are found on old temple walls. In these pictures the unicorn seems to have a tortoise's shell on its back. Korean scholars say that this is really a dragon, a land dragon, to distinguish it from a sky dragon. Maybe it was originally the giant sea turtle, which Shilla people worshipped as the sea god that protected them from the evil forces that lived under the sea and from seafaring invaders and pirates along the eastern seaboard. This animal, which looks like a cross between a deer, a horse and a tortoise, is called *kirin* in Korean. This is very like the Chinese word *qilin*, which means a unicorn. But the Korean scholars insist that it is a dragon, one of the three terrestrial dragons, what the Chinese call a *chao*, definitely a land dragon.

In *Outlines of Chinese Symbolism and Art Motives*, page 414, C.A.S. Williams says that the unicorn is '... sometimes called the dragon horse. It is one of the Four Great Mythical Animals of China, the others being the dragon, phoenix, and tortoises.' These four are associated with the four directions, the four cardinal points. In this list the unicorn takes the place of the white tiger as guardian of the west.

Although nobody has seen a unicorn in the last two thousand years or more, Chinese writers give very detailed descriptions of what it looks like. They say it looks like a small deer with hooves like a horse; it has one horn (or maybe two) in the centre of its forehead. This horn is soft tipped and fleshy. This animal is so peace-loving that it avoids all combat. It is most virtuous, never eats flesh or even live grass, drinks only pure water, and always



Unicorn

This picture is from *Outlines of Chinese Symbolism and Art Motives* by C.A.S. Williams

walks carefully so as not to step on any living thing. Writers run out of words when they try to describe the unicorn. It is the most beautiful, most virtuous, most docile, most peaceful creature in the universe. It only appears when there is perfect peace in the land, a peace that has been brought about by good government. It was often seen in the time of the sage kings nearly five thousand years ago. Confucius's mother is said to have seen one about the time that Confucius was born.

The unicorn is a symbol of peace and just government. It is also a symbol of longevity as it lives for more than a thousand years, most writers say it is immortal. It also foretells the birth of a sage.

There is another story about the unicorn. If men insult it, they become evil, hate peace, love war and act against the will of heaven. Then the unicorn grows a horn stronger than the finest tempered steel and sets out to destroy all its enemies. It turns evil men against each other until all are destroyed, spreads death and destruction all over the country until men beg for peace, go back to keeping heaven's will and reinstate just government. Only then does the unicorn shed its destructive horn and return to being a harmless, peace-loving animal again.

☐ RED PHOENIX

The red phoenix is the third of the Mythical Animals. It represents the south and the summer. Chinese writers describe it as a bird with the beak of a farmyard cock, the cheeks of a swallow, the neck of a snake, the rounded back of a tortoise, the elongated figure of a dragon, a tail like a fish, tail feathers in all the five colours, and a white and red body. Its song covers all

five notes of the scale. This description gives nine characteristics because in China nine was one of the perfect numbers. Another of the perfect numbers was five, so the phoenix has five colours and uses the oriental perfect musical scale, which has five notes. The Western scale has eight notes. Writers said the phoenix was the most beautiful bird imaginable, but it would be difficult to draw a bird fitting their description and make it beautiful!

Each of the five body parts of the phoenix symbolized a special virtue. The head symbolized high moral virtue. The wings symbolized justice, righteousness and loyalty especially to the king. The back symbolized propriety and civility. The breast symbolized selflessness, benevolence, wisdom and sincerity. The stomach symbolized reliance and faithfulness. These five symbols represent the five qualities of the sage kings and the five virtues that produced the good king, the perfect gentleman and the ideal Confucian state.

The phoenix was the king of all birds so it was called the royal bird (to distinguish it from the cock which was the noble bird). It represented the king. Scholars could not tell the king what to do and what not to do but they could write about the phoenix and all its good points. In this roundabout way they were able to tell the king what he should be doing!

In winter, the phoenix lived in the south, probably in the sun. It is the sun bird. This beautiful bird came to China in May, bringing with it the summer season. It lived in the ornamental gardens of the emperor's palace, where peony roses and magnolias grew, and where the wives and concubines of the Emperor strolled in all their finery. Some accounts say that these birds roosted in the paulownia trees, built their nests in the magnolia trees, only ate the fruit of the bamboo and played among the peony roses. They must not have eaten much as the bamboo only blooms once every sixty years! Other accounts say that the phoenix built its nest, set it afire and arose again from the ashes as a young bird. This account sounds like the Egyptian description of the phoenix. Did this version of the story come from Egypt, or go to Egypt, along the Silk Road caravan routes? Yet all accounts say that the phoenix is immortal because it is a spiritually endowed, supernatural creature! Why does it build a nest, why has it to be reborn? Chinese writers ignored these little problems!

The classical writers put a lot of meanings into each of the five colours. For example, white was the colour of spirituality. Because the phoenix was a supernatural and spiritual entity, it had to have white somewhere on its body. According to the experts, its dominant colour was red. Red is the colour of the sun, of fire and the heat of summer. It is the colour of the dawn, of creation and of blood. It is the colour of life and youth, the colour of starting. It is the colour of enthusiasm, passion and wisdom. A red glow or halo denotes glory and honour. Buddhist monks who attain enlightenment are allowed to wear red robes. Red repels evil spirits, even red paint on the timbers of temples prevents decay.

Nearly all the lists of fives that oriental scholars have made are cross-connected by the five colours. Of the five viscera, red signifies the heart; of the five feelings, red signifies joy; of the five norms of morality, red indicates

propriety; of the five tastes, red covers foods with bitter tastes. Because all these things were related by colour, it was believed that there was a causal connection between them.

Red, being a good colour, always giving energy and joy, was the appropriate colour for the red phoenix, the bird that was the embodiment of the yang principle, the bird that brought life, prosperity and plenty, the bird that brought the summer with its joy, happiness and peace. The red phoenix was able to bring all these good things because it was the messenger of the God of heaven and a special messenger of the sun.

Koreans were using other symbols to denote the sun before the Chinese symbol of the phoenix was brought into Korea. The most commonly used symbols were the egg and the three-legged crow. These symbols had their origin in Shamanism, which taught that all spirits had bird shapes and that every human being started life in heaven as an egg, which birds brought down to earth where it was born and lived its allotted term as a man. When the person died, his soul again took on the form of a bird and flew back up to heaven. The sun was the place where these life-giving eggs originated; the three-legged crow was the spirit in charge of the sun. Why this bird had three legs is unknown; its symbolism has been lost.

Korea has many foundation myths. Some of these foundation myths say that the first man, the first shaman or the first king, was hatched from a mysterious heavenly egg. The kings, the shamans and families descended from these progenitors enjoyed special rights, powers and privileges.

In Koguryō (AD37–668), the crow was so important that it became the symbol of the dynasty. There is a story told of King Taemushin receiving a crow with two bodies but only one head from a king in the northern part of the country with whom he had waged a long war. With this gift came the message: The normal crow is black, which is the colour of the north, but this crow is red, which is the colour of the south. The red crow is a lucky omen. King Taemushin united the Koguryō kingdom on the basis of this submission.

Later, the red crow seems to have become a magpie, a multicoloured magpie, maybe a variation of the colourful jay (*Garrulus Glandarius*, to give it its Latin name) that is native to Korea. Proof that the multicoloured magpie is associated with the sun is seen in the folk custom of dressing children in the 'magpie coat' on the eve of Lunar New Year's Day. The full sleeves of this coat have bands of the five colours. These coats mark the boys and girls as being children of the sun god and as such deserving his blessings during the new year. It was only a short step from the crow, the red crow, the three-legged crow, the multicoloured magpie, the red phoenix, to the god of the sun. Later, in the section on iconography, we find that very often the child Jesus is drawn wearing a magpie coat. This shows that He, too, is the Son of God.

The Korean association with birds is always a happy one. Birds are able to travel freely in the space between heaven and earth. They are symbols of freedom. They are the most spiritual of all the animals because they live closest to heaven. They have great powers, which they use to help people.

As we saw in the previous chapter, even pictures of birds have the magic to give many blessings and valuable gifts. The red phoenix, as the king of all the birds, is the most powerful, the most spiritual of them all and so is able to give the greatest gifts to man.

The special gifts that the red phoenix give are a happy marriage, fertility, prosperity and peace. It brings the summer, warm weather, increases in crops and stock. All these good things naturally bring joy and happiness.

In Sino-Korean *samjogo* is a word also used for the phoenix. This can be translated as the crow with three legs, the bird that lives in the sun. This word sounds like the word for the three sets of relatives *samjok*. These three sets of relatives are one's parents and children, one's wife's relations, and one's brothers and sisters. With this reading the phoenix is the bird that gives peace to the whole family.

The picture of the red phoenix is a magic picture with the power to give all the blessings and gifts that the supernatural phoenix can give. As the phoenix is a symbol of beauty, the picture of a phoenix also has the power to give beauty. This picture acts as a charm to prevent evil entering the house especially from a southerly direction.

Modern Koreans appreciate all these blessings and gifts, but they do not now use the imaginary red phoenix picture. Instead, they prefer to use pictures of natural beautiful birds such as the kingfisher, the colourful farmyard rooster, the peacock, the mandarin duck, the Manchurian crane and, in some areas, the pheasant. Pictures of these birds, drawn with or without flowers, trees or other vegetation, are all looked upon as phoenix pictures, as magic pictures.

Pictures of the red phoenix carry a special blessing that the other bird pictures do not carry and that is the power to give a long life. Only the red phoenix is immortal, only it can give length of days.

Literati painters often used the phoenix to convey their hidden messages. In their pictures it usually means a clever son who is good at his studies and who will have a successful career. For these meanings see Part II.

Here it might be interesting to read a Western account of the phoenix as given by Sir John Mandeville who wrote about 1366:

In Egypt also is a city called Heliopolis . . . In this city is a temple (and) the priest of this temple has a book in which is written the birth date of a bird that is called the phoenix, and there is only one in all the world. And this bird lives for five hundred years, and at the end of the five hundredth year it comes to the temple and burns himself to powder on the altar. And the priest of the temple, who from his book knew the time of the bird's coming, makes the altar ready and lays on it divers spices and virgin sulfur and twigs of the juniper tree, and other things that burn quickly. And then the bird comes and alights on the altar, and fans with his wings until the things mentioned be alight, and there he burns himself to ashes. On the morrow they find in the ashes as it were a worm, on the second day that worm has turned into a perfectly formed bird, and on the third day it flies away from that place to where it normally lives. And so there is never more than one. This bird is often seen soaring about when the weather is fair and clear, and men there say, when they see the bird

soaring in the air, that they will afterwards have good, happy years, for it is a bird of heaven. This bird is no greater than an eagle in body, he has on his head a crest like a peacock, but it is much greater than a peacock's. His neck is yellow, his back indigo, his wings are red and his tail is barred across with green and yellow and red. And in the sunlight he seems marvellously beautiful, for these are the colours that shine most fairly. (*The Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, translated by Dr Moseley, Penguin Classics, Chapter 7, page 64.)



Red Phoenix

A folk painting. Anonymous



Magpie Coat



Red Phoenix

Photo from a Buddhist temple.

▣ BLACK TURTLE

The Black Turtle is a mythical tortoise, which lives in the cold, dark arctic oceans that lie far to the north of China. It is a symbol of winter and the element of water. It is a spiritually-endowed creature and immortal. It is also known as the black warrior. It presides over the northern quadrant of the uranosphere (the sphere of the heavens that encircles the earth) and is a symbol of the north.

Tortoises were noted for their strength, endurance and longevity. They had strong body armour that protected them from injury and death. In fact most of them were supposed to live for well over a thousand years. They also seemed to be immune to all diseases. 'It is said that the wooden columns of the Temple of Heaven at Peking were originally set on live tortoises, under the belief that these animals were supposed to live for more than three thousand years without food and air, they were gifted with miraculous power to preserve the wood from decay.' (*Outlines of Chinese Symbolism and Art Motives*, C.A.S. Williams, page 405.)

The black turtle was the king of all tortoises and all hard-shelled animals. So his powers were vastly greater than those of the ordinary tortoise. His powers not only protected himself, but could also protect man from danger, from evil spirits coming from the north, from invasion and piracy coming from the sea, and from every kind of disease. The black turtle or the black warrior was a guardian of the entire country and even his picture or image could keep away evil and bring good luck.

The black turtle is not a well-liked symbol in modern Korea. In the past it was used as a symbol of the moon. The red three-legged bird and the black turtle are found in ancient tomb paintings of the Koguryō kings (37–668). These two symbols represent the sun and the moon, the yang and the yin principles and therefore the totality of the universe, and the powers that rule the universe. In olden days people had no trouble accepting these symbols, but modern Koreans see too many contradictions in the black turtle symbol, they are not comfortable with it. As it is a symbol of the moon, water, winter and the dark of the north, it is obviously a yin symbol. Even its colour shows that it is yin. Red, yellow and white are yang colours; blue or green can be either yin or yang; but black is a completely yin colour. Yet as a supernatural being, a messenger of the lord of heaven, courageous, powerful and immortal, it has to be full of the yang principle. As the black warrior, it is a symbol of nationalism, military might, and the courage and endurance needed to defend the country, the qualities needed in a good soldier; surely this has to be a yang symbol. There are definitely contradictions here!

Korean artists have a different reason for not liking the black turtle. How does one draw a black turtle to make it appear beautiful, joyful and happy? Pictures that lack these qualities are rather difficult to sell. Some Korean artists draw a turtle ship instead of the black warrior. The turtle ship was an ironclad battleship invented by Admiral Lee and used with success to prevent a Japanese invasion. This turtle ship has almost taken the place of



Turtle

From a newspaper clipping.

Artist's name:
Ro Sangdong

the black turtle as a symbol of nationalism and the virtues and qualities of a soldier.

Another reason the turtle is not liked is that the Chinese call it the creature that forgets the rules of right and wrong. The female is said to be unchaste, or to conceive by thought alone. Either way, the children never know their father.

As mentioned above, the red phoenix and the black turtle represent the whole universe, the whole world from the South Pole to the North Pole. But the black turtle by itself also represents the world. 'Its dome shaped back represents the vault of the sky, its belly the earth which moves on its waters.' (*Lamaism*, by Austine R. Waddell, page 395, Meffer and Son, Cambridge, 1958.)

This, of course, echoes the Indian concept of the cosmos where the giant turtle swims in the primordial sea, holding an elephant on its shell, which in turn carries the world upon its back. Buddhists brought this idea into Korea. We still find huge memorial stones standing on massive stone tortoises and capped with a roof stone decorated with dragons. These symbolize heaven and earth, and man's deeds recorded on the middle stone.

▣ TWELVE ANIMALS OF THE ZODIAC

The twelve animals of the East Asian zodiac have very little in common with the twelve signs of the zodiac in the West. Both sets are used in astrology, for making horoscopes and for trying to predict the future.

John Gribbin describes the Western zodiac in *Companion to the Cosmos*, Phoenix, Orion Books Ltd:

The zodiac is an imaginary band around the sky, extending out to about 9 degrees of arc on either side of the ecliptic. This band includes the visible paths of the sun, moon, and all the planets except Pluto across the sky . . . The Greeks divided the zodiac into twelve equal parts, each being a segment of sky 30 arc degrees wide, and gave them the names corresponding to prominent constellations that they saw in each of the subdivisions. These names are the 'signs of the zodiac'.

Compare this to the East Asian explanation:

Chinese astronomers divided the dome of the heavens into twenty-eight constellations. All of these constellations were given a special name but were also associated with an animal or a bird. The sun and moon travelled through twelve of these. These became known as the twelve constellations of the zodiac. Astrologers largely forgot the original names of these constellations but the names of the animals that these constellations were associated with became their new names. These twelve constellations were important to

astronomers in calculating the lunar calendar. The lunar year has twelve lunar months. This falls short of the solar year, so after every few years an extra month has to be added to keep the lunar calendar synchronized with the sun. The astrologers used the twelve animal signs of the zodiac for different purposes. They developed an astrological system that was based on an ancient twelve-year cyclical dating system of lunar years. This system has been used for centuries for divination and for foretelling the success or failure of all official undertakings, business and romantic activities.

According to legend, the Buddha established the zodiac when he started to restore order to the affairs of the world. At first he summoned all the animals to a conference, but only twelve turned up. The order in which they arrived determined their place in the cycle. The rat was the first to come, the ox next and so on till the pig arrived last of all. The Buddha appointed each of the animals to preside over an entire year in the order that he decreed. All the events that happen during that year are coloured by the special characteristics of the animal that is in charge. Each animal imprints some of its own characteristics on its year, and on persons who are born during that year.

Each day is also divided into twelve periods. (The old Chinese hour was twice as long as the modern hour.) Each of the animals has been assigned its own two-hour watch each day. Every child born is also influenced by the animal on watch at the time of birth. Knowing the year and the time of one's birth are very important for getting a proper horoscope and for getting an accurate prediction of the future from an astrologer.

Some writers say that the names of the twelve animals were given to this twelve year cycle system before the second century AD. Historians say that the first traces are only found in the Tang period (618–906), when the notion probably came in from Persia, but that it didn't come into general usage until Later Tang (923–36) when the Mongol tribe of the Khitan Tartars took control.

It is probably more accurate to call these twelve animals by their oriental name, which is the twelve earth branches or the twelve terrestrial branches. These are combined with the ten calendar signs, also called more accurately the ten celestial stems, to give the full name of each year in the sixty-year cycle. (See Celestial Stems in Part II.) These names, like the names of the Western signs of the zodiac, are important to astrologers in foretelling the future.

The following is a list of the twelve animals, given in order, with the equivalent Western sign. Although there is no logical connection between the two systems, astrologers have grafted them together, but then logic was never one of their strong points. Also given is a very condensed list of the characteristics that these twelve animals impart to the people who were born during the year, or time, when these animals were in control.

- *Rat (Aries, Ram)*. Acquisitive, suspicious, power hungry. People born under this sign take good care of their families.
- *Ox or Buffalo (Taurus, Bull)*. Overbearing, always wish to be leader, stubborn. Very reliable.

- *Tiger (Gemini, the Twins Castor and Pollux)*. Unpredictable, impulsive, expose themselves to great risk. Always charming and attractive to the opposite sex.
- *Rabbit, Hare or Cat (Cancer, Crab)*. Avoid conflict, do not take risks, always choose stability and security. Good partners in business and in marriage.
- *Dragon (Leo, Lion)*. Bossy, loud and often unfaithful. Usually popular, have many friends, and are successful in their undertakings.
- *Snake or Serpent (Virgo, Maiden)*. Introverted, secretive. Good at abstract thought, women are uncommonly attractive.
- *Horse (Libra, Balance or Weighing Scales)*. Consider themselves superior, think highly of their good looks, often dandies, difficult to live with. Very hard-working, good at earning money.
- *Sheep, Goat or Deer (Scorpio, Scorpion)*. Shy, disorganized, nonconformists, artists. Warm-hearted, intelligent and make good friends.
- *Monkey (Sagittarius, Archer)*. Full of contradictions, have a flare for deception, cannot be trusted implicitly. Extremely clever, good tacticians, often amusing, make many friends.
- *Cock or Farmyard Rooster (Capricorn, Horned Goat)*. Enthusiastic about details, worry about small things, refuse to be bossed, like to work alone. Dreamers, adventurous, do good work when the reasons are given, make good friends.
- *Dog (Aquarius, Water-bearer)*. Very introverted, cynical, mistrust others. Honest, dedicated to duty and loyal to friends.
- *Pig or Boar (Pisces, Fishes or Southern Fish)*. Slow to make decisions, slow to make friends, slow but careful at work. Reliable, honest and brave, and although slow to make friends, friends become friends for life.

These characteristics only apply to the twelve animals. Character profiles made from the Western signs of the zodiac and from their constellations would probably be different. Matching the two systems of astrology is probably impossible, but that has not stopped astrologers from trying. But then astrology is not an exact science!

In Korea, many old sayings are attached to the twelve animals. For example: A phoenix does not play in a thorn bush, a dragon does not swim in the shallows. Parents use this to teach children born in the year of the cock or the dragon to set high goals for themselves and to study well so that they do not disgrace themselves. Also parents tell children not to become like one of the senseless animals. These senseless animals are the deer or the sheep, the monkey and the tiger. The deer is always in love, so it goes around moping and cannot think straight. The monkey is so curious about other people's business that it is always falling out of the tree. The tiger is always angry and roaring so loud that it can't hear anyone else. People born under these animals have to be careful to suppress the bad characteristics imprinted on them from the time of their birth.



The Twelve Animals of the Zodiac

A Japanese artist painted these twelve pictures. Read from the top left they are the twelve animals of the zodiac: rat, ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, sheep, monkey, cock, dog, pig.

Artist's name: Anonymous

Chapter 7

Genre Paintings



Korea is famous for its genre pictures, that is, pictures of ordinary people. These pictures were drawn and painted from the time of King Sejong (first half of the fifteenth century) right up to the present day.

It is strange to find this type of painting in the very Confucian culture of Korea. Confucian theory said that painting should only be used to appeal to the higher instincts; it should inspire great and lofty thoughts about philosophy, cosmology and morality. It should show the power of Tao and the forces that rule the world. It should show the order in the natural world and teach men to seek order in their lives and impose order on society. It should depict the greatest virtues such as loyalty and filial piety. Only the noblest subjects should be painted.

The Korean kings established an Office of Painting (*Tobwaso*). This office gathered distinguished artists into the court. Their duties included training young artists in Confucian traditions and doing portraits of the king, the royal family, high officials and noblemen attached to the court. They also recorded important historical events, royal ceremonies, and parties given by the king to honour his obedient and loyal subjects. They drew pictures of approved motifs, in the best styles, to decorate the palace, the royal household, government offices and the homes of the ruling classes.

Only such art, portraying the noblest ideas or the noblest persons, could be called high art. Drawing pictures of ordinary people could not be high art. Drawing pictures of young noblemen mixing with ordinary people, or worse still, enjoying themselves with professional female entertainers (*kisaeng*), could only be the lowest of low art!

Two of the best painters that Korea ever produced, Shin Yunbok and Kim Hongdo, drew these kinds of genre pictures. They really annoyed the authorities. Shin Yunbok was expelled from the Office of Painting and died in poverty. Kim Hongdo never got a government commission and seems to have had to emigrate to Japan to earn a living. These were

not the only painters that got into trouble for doing genre paintings. One wonders why artists drew pictures that brought them nothing but grief.

There are two stories as to why Korean artists drew genre pictures. The first is the popular one that a Korean artist gave me years ago.

One of the early kings thought that court painters were doing very little for the amount of money they were getting, so he suggested that they draw pictures showing the various skills that the people used in their daily lives, pictures showing farmers, carpenters, potters, fishermen and weavers using various tools. These pictures should show a clever people, a skilled work-force, a people worth ruling, a people worth protecting. Some artists, under pressure, drew these pictures, but as there was no demand for them, the pictures went into storage. When the pressure came off, the artists went back to drawing the high art approved by Confucian scholars. The king's effort to widen the range of subject matter failed, but later artists who wished to draw the common people could always say they were following the wishes of this early king, that they had a licence to do these paintings.

I often wondered whether this story was true or not, so I was pleasantly surprised a few years ago to find something like it in the *Annals of the Choson Dynasty*. This is the official historical record of the dynasty. The following is another account of why Korean artists drew genre pictures. (*Korea Times*, 8 October 1998):

In 1424, King Sejong said: 'Since we have a different lifestyle from the Chinese, I am planning to detail the difficulties of farming in a painting on a monthly basis for future generations.'

Sejong was really talking about binbung and muyil paintings, which were of Chinese origin. In the *Book of Odes*, a section entitled Binbung describes the hardships that the people face in farming. Also in the *Book of Odes* in a section called Muyil, later commented on in *The Chronicles of Lu*, is a poem which shows that the evil perpetrated by a tyrant king leads to the withdrawal of the heavenly mandate to rule and to his eventual downfall. Chinese painters drew pictures based on these passages and gave them to princes and newly installed kings to educate them in their duties to heaven and to the people. Sejong commissioned Koreanized versions of these binbung and muyil pictures and hung them on the walls of the palace.

About the year 1485, an official named O Ingnyöm presented a picture to Yönsan'gun with the words: 'In the past officials presented binbung and muyil paintings in order to caution kings against indulgence. Since nothing is more important than self-discipline in politics, I present to your majesty a painting that will help you to lead a virtuous life.' Yönsan'gun was notorious for his sexual escapades and his misuse of power. When he got the picture he said, 'I don't know what your painting is about, or why paintings called binbung are found all over the palace.' O Ingnyöm reminded the king that he had given him a similar picture when he ascended the throne and had explained then what these pictures meant. The king replied angrily: 'The pictures are unnecessary because all that stuff is in books and I don't have to look at pictures to understand what is in the books.' Luckily for O Ingnyöm the King was in good

humour that day, so this courageous attempt to reform the king didn't bring about his own execution!

In 1502, an official named Lee Nanson gave the king another binbung picture, but he entitled it 'A Painting about People Leading a Comfortable Life' (*anmindō*). Artists can become politicians too!

In 1749, King Yǒngjo gave a painting to his Crown Prince to encourage him to do his studies properly. He said to the prince: 'Which do you think is more difficult, the farming shown in the painting or your study?' And then he went on: 'If the rulers do not think of the people with compassion, the people will complain. Even if they don't complain, the heavens will not tolerate the lack of understanding.'

These pictures of the people, whether showing off skills, enduring harsh lives, or being abused by unjust rulers, gradually changed into the modern genre pictures. For almost the last hundred years, there have been no kings or crown princes to educate or reform. These pictures have turned into pastoral scenes (as defined by Lee Nanson) showing the people enjoying a frugal but peaceful life in the country away from the hustle and bustle of the dirty city. All of these pictures, whether the older types showing the lower classes coping with their hard lives, or the newer types showing the idealized life of farmers, have grown into the vast body of art that is now called Korean genre painting.

These genre pictures are different from folk paintings. Folk paintings were done by people who had a bit of talent but no formal training. Answering the needs of the people, they were used in religious rites, as magical pictures to ward off evil and bring good luck, and to decorate the walls of the house. Often these folk artists used the same subjects as the professional painters, but their use of very vivid colours and their lack of drawing skills marked them as being different from the scholar painters. Sometimes they added details not found in the trained artist's works and these 'extras' make them very interesting.

Genre paintings are always done by professionals or by scholar artists who have been trained in Confucian schools. The use of colour, line, perspective and composition conform to Confucian norms. Because these pictures have their roots deep in Korean history, they have developed certain traditional characteristics. Some of these are:

1. *People*

Classical pictures are silent, conducive to contemplation. Maybe there is an odd bird chirping or a distant waterfall sending out a quiet murmur. Genre pictures are full of noise. People talking and laughing, people in motion, people using their strength and energy in work or play. People are centre stage, all else is background.

2. *Detail*

Normally genre pictures are in photo-realistic style with great attention given to detail. They show the ways things were made and done. They show tools and artefacts, clothes and styles, all in great detail.

3. *Time*

Historical time can be pinpointed from the style of the clothes. Hairstyles and ornaments used by the women can also show the period. Also historical time can be known from the shape, dimensions and sizes of the tools, and the forms of the artefacts used by the people. The time of year is indicated by the season. The different activities of farmers were linked to the four seasons. The progression of the four seasons was a very important element in Confucian philosophy. So scholar artists would naturally indicate the season.

4. *Place*

The place where the activity takes place is shown. Farmyard, rice paddy, upland field, forest, riverside, roadside and so on, is drawn in detail. Placing the people and what they are doing against the proper background shows the harmony that the artists instinctively sought. Often in these pictures the background looks very like a Mountains and Water landscape with its balance of yin and yang, four directions and four seasons, the Three of heaven, earth and man, and a hint at the totality of nature, all in harmony as it came from the hand of the creator Tao. Yet it is the people and what they are doing that take precedence over the background.

5. *Feeling*

Genre paintings are made to evoke a feeling. Classical East Asian paintings are made to provoke thought about deep philosophical ideas; they try to avoid subjectivity and the manipulation of the emotions. But genre pictures are different. They originated from the binbung pictures, which were meant to evoke pity for poor lower class people, and from muyil pictures, which were meant to shock and to cause feelings of revulsion towards rulers who were leading scandalous lives. Modern genre paintings are about the good life of the common people (*anmindō*); they are meant to evoke feelings of joy and nostalgia. Nostalgia is probably the most popular emotion that present-day genre paintings inspire.

6. *Humour*

Korean genre pictures all have a touch of humour. There is always something there that provokes a smile or a quiet chuckle. It can be just a keen observation, such as a child doing something it should not be doing while its mother is abstracted by her work, or an adult so engaged in his activity that he does not realize that his clothes have become disarranged and his bellybutton is showing. Sometimes the humour is hidden among the details and takes a while to find.

There is a group of pictures that by right should be called illustrations. These show things being done, or how they ought to be done. They are drawn in detail and show ordinary people at work. These lack background; they show neither time, season, nor place, and are devoid of humour. Yet Koreans classify these pictures as genre pictures. Maybe the line between genre pictures and these illustrations is too vague and too hard to define.

But there is a definite line drawn between genre pictures and cartoons and caricatures. Where the detail is lost and the humour becomes bawdy, the genre picture degenerates into cartoon. Where the artist loses sympathy with the common people and starts poking fun at them, the genre picture sinks into caricature. The cut-off line between these pictures and genuine genre pictures is thin enough, but it is still very definite. Artists who wish to draw genre paintings have to know where it is and be careful not to cross it.

In the last two decades or so, a group of artists called dissident artists have been re-using the *binbung* and *muyil* type of picture depicting the hard life of the common people under military dictatorships, especially the economical oppression, injustice, and lack of freedom suffered by farmers and industrial workers. Used to promote reform, these pictures had a vast impact on the people, especially the young. They have now joined the body of works that make up Korea's famous genre paintings category.

▣ GENRE PAINTINGS

Genre pictures have been made in Korea since the beginning of the fifteenth century. As mentioned earlier, they were of Chinese origin, of the *binbung* and *muyil* variety, meant to remind the king of his duties to heaven and to the people. King Sejong got his artists to make them showing the common people of Korea. At the end of the fifteenth century, during the reign of Yōnsan'gun, these pictures were to be seen all over the palace.

Gradually, genre pictures changed from showing the hard lot of farmers and common people to showing the happy lives of the farming community. In modern times they have become popular, mainly for nostalgic reasons. Many of the people who live and work in cities were born and reared in the country. They remember their early days in the country as carefree, happy and peaceful. They forget how hard their parents had to toil in order to give them such a happy childhood.

Professionals well versed in East Asian traditions do most genre paintings. Backgrounds are often done like mountains and water landscapes, full of references to oriental philosophy. The appeal is to the mind. This is counterbalanced by a pervasive sense of humour. The combination of classical appeal, historical roots, tradition and humour, makes these modern genre paintings very nostalgic and very popular. They give a pastoral feeling of joy and happiness.



Spring
Preparing the ground.



Early Summer
Transplanting the rice.



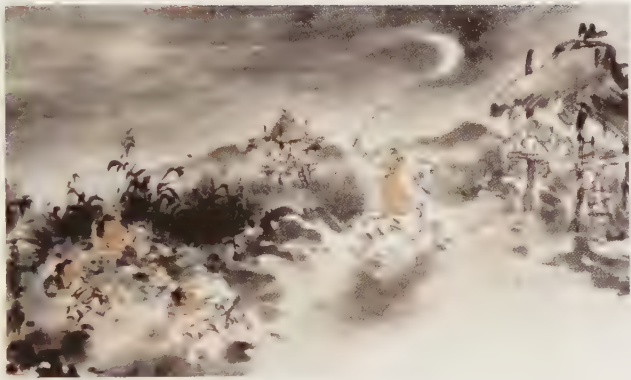
Midsummer
Relaxing after the rice has been planted.
All three pictures by the same artist.
Artist's name: Lee Unsuk. Pen-name: Yegyǒng



Tano

The midsummer festival when everybody relaxes.

Artist's name: Lee Ŭnsuk. Pen-name: Yegyŏng



Late Summer

Boys stealing melons.

Artist's name: Yŏn Sehŭi. Pen-name: Uwŏn

**Autumn**

Boys bringing firewood home from the mountains pass the fearful Guardian Posts just as night is falling.

Artist's name: Shin Chubong. Pen-name: Sökcchöng

**Autumn**

Fisherman in trouble.

Inscription: "The serene peace and silence are broken!"

Artist's name: Ko Manshik. Pen-name: Kisan



Autumn

Threshing the rice.

Artist's name: Kim Sŏngju. Pen-name: Mukp'a



Autumn

Collecting persimmons.

Artist's name: Kim Yongjun. Pen-name: Kūmdang



Autumn
Drying rice in the sun.



Autumn
Preparing rice cakes for the autumn festival.
(Both pictures by the same artist.) Artist's name: Yang Taesök. Pen-name: Un'gye



Autumn

Women and children too are busy in the autumn.

Artist's name: Lee Ŭnsuk. Pen-name: Yegyŏng



Late Autumn

Adults are busy but the children want to play.

Artist's name: Yang Taesŏk. Pen-name: Un'gye



Winter

Both pictures depict Lunar New Year's Day.

(Both pictures are by the same artist.) Artist's name: Lee Ŭnsuk. Pen-name: Yegyŏng



Winter

This picture could be given two different titles.

It could be called the 'Charcoal Seller' because it shows a poor charcoal man trying to sell his wares to a rich man who is well stocked with everything needed to survive the winter. The charcoal man is out wheeling his barrow in the snow and is desperate to earn some money. He is cold and dirty; he is even leaving black footprints in the snow. Read in this sense, the picture shows the hard life of the poor.

This picture could also be titled 'Giving Charcoal in Snow.' The phrase 'giving charcoal in snow' is really stating the traditional Confucian code of loyalty. It is not just an act of helping somebody in distress but is a token of one's loyalty through thick and thin.

Korean artists do not put titles on their pictures. Many meanings can be read from the same picture.

Pen-name: Chaun



Winter

Boy with cold hands

Artist's name: Lee Inhaeng. Pen-name: Ch'unnim



Winter

Family at home.

Pen-name: Kwihyŏn

▣ SIMPLIFIED GENRE PAINTINGS

This type of genre picture is also very popular in Korea. In these pictures the background is only hinted at; just enough is drawn to show that the people are outdoors, or in the house. The time of year is only known because the activity in the picture is defined by the weather or by festivities associated with a particular season. For example, kite flying takes place in spring; playing chess under a tree takes place in summer; threshing the rice takes place in autumn; and skating only takes place in winter. The humour is usually low-key and often comes from the keen observations of the artist. When we look at the picture, we remember seeing somebody once who acted just like that, or maybe we think, yes, we did that when we were young; that must have been what we looked like when we were kids. These genre pictures, although simplified, are able to show a slice of life in the country. Although much is omitted, what is drawn is done in fine detail. The people in the picture seem to be enjoying themselves as they work or play together. Feelings of nostalgia are evoked: one longs to join the happy people in the picture.



Spring

Sweet seller.

Artist's name: Kim Nakkyun. Pen-name: Haeam



Grandfather Swatting Flies

Artist's name: Shin Chubong. Pen-name: Sökcchöng



Autumn

Fisherman returning home late.

Inscription: 'An old man dances as he returns home under a bright moon after a happy day out fishing.'

Artist's name: Sö Kyöngdök. Pen-name: Hanam

Incidents that are part and parcel of growing up in the country become subject matter for this style of painting. As an example, there's a picture based on the folk story about the child sent for salt. The young boy is still wetting the bed at night. His mother and her sister who lives nearby devise a plan to cure him. The next time he wets the bed, he will be sent to his aunt's house to borrow salt. When he comes, his aunt will pour water on him. So as not to ruin his clothes, he carries a winnowing tray over his head. The embarrassment of other people knowing that he wet the bed, and the shock of the cold water and the noise it makes on the winnowing fan all act as deterrents in the future.

The almost formal picture of the Lunar New Year ceremonies has its own humour (see page 195).

▣ THE STORY OF CH'UNHYANG

Ch'unhyang is the most famous heroine in Korean literature. It is not known whether she was a true historical character. However, the story of her life and suffering and final vindication is so well known and loved that nobody is worried by a lack of physical evidence that she was born in Namwŏn, North Chŏlla Province.

The story of Ch'unhyang is a simple romantic tale. Mongnyŏng, the son of an aristocrat, falls in love with Ch'unhyang, the daughter of a *kisaeng*. *Kisaeng* were professional entertainers who were highly skilled in dancing, singing, story telling and playing musical instruments. They were invariably from lower, if not from the lowest classes. So it is understood that Ch'unhyang was also of a class lower than Mongnyŏng's class. Marriages between upper classes and lower classes were frowned on to say the least. (Although her father was a noble *yangban* her status *sŏyŏl* was lower.) But as true love is blind to such man-made barriers and divisions, Ch'unhyang and Mongnyŏng not only fell in love but also got married secretly.

A short time after their marriage, Mongnyŏng goes to Seoul to study for the state examinations. He is so successful that he not only passes all his examinations but is appointed to a high government post in the capital. As a result, the lovers are separated for some years.

In the meantime, a lecherous governor is appointed in Namwŏn where Ch'unhyang is still living in her mother's house. This evil official is determined to add Ch'unhyang to his list of victories and add her name to his roster of lovers. Ch'unhyang, faithful to Mongnyŏng, refuses to comply with the governor's wishes. This rejection strikes such a blow to the governor's pride that he has Ch'unhyang arrested and thrown into prison. There he tortures and torments her in an attempt to break her will so that she will accept his advances, but she bravely resists all his efforts.

While all this is happening in Namwŏn, Mongnyŏng is advancing in the king's favour in Seoul. He is appointed Royal Inspector of Chŏlla Province. Disguising himself as an ordinary person he mixes with the people of Chŏlla



Late Autumn

Grinding the rice with an ox drawn stone mill.

Pen-name: Namsong



Winter

Children playing on the ice.

Artist's name: Kim Nakkyun. Pen-name: Haem



Child Sent for Salt

Artist's name: So Kyöngdök

Pen-name: Ha'nam



Lunar New Year's Day

Bowing to grandparents on New Year's Day.

(From the Korea Times, 2 Feb. 1992)

Artist's name: Kim Yonghwan



The Story of Ch'unhyang

These pictures were done as embroideries.

Artist's name: Anonymous

Province and soon finds out that the governor of Namwŏn is a totally corrupt official who has abused his power. He also finds out that Ch'unhyang is imprisoned and has been tortured by him.

Mongnyŏng dresses himself in his official robes and identifies himself to the governor. He calls a great assembly and denounces the governor and sends him to prison. He rescues Ch'unhyang and makes public that she is his wife. The lovers are again united; they go to Seoul where they live happily ever after.

Ch'unhyang is Korea's most popular story. It has come down in the form of a classical romance, but there are also *p'ansori* versions, several versions in modern novel form, not to mention plays and musicals. Korean artists have painted many scenes from this romantic story, and women love to do embroideries showing the happiness of the two lovers.

☐ DANCES AND DANCERS

Koreans are very fond of music and dancing. Just as they have a wide variety of music ranging from Confucian orchestral concertos, arias composed for classical poetry, Buddhist chants, popular songs and pieces played with percussion instruments, so too they have a wide variety of dances, which are performed to these different types of music.

Very early in their history, Koreans developed a notation system for music, which enabled them to preserve their music accurately. Another system was developed for recording the dances. These 'dancing instructions' were a great help to a dancer trying to recall a dance learned years ago, but they were not detailed enough to allow an accurate reconstruction of the dance if the traditional mode of performing the dance was lost. Korean history records that certain ancient dances, which were lost, were 'reinvented' by famous dance masters using the dancing instructions handed down through the generations.

Korean music and dance has a long tradition going back well over a thousand years. In music, many different styles, sounds and chords have been developed. Foreigners may find the music strange and hard to listen to at first, but with a little time and effort it becomes comprehensible and enjoyable. Korean dance appeals to everybody. It is graceful, full of energy and swirling colours.

The Korean dances that one sees in Korea at the present time can be grouped into seven different classes:

CONFUCIAN DANCES

These are dances performed at solemn Confucian ceremonies. They are very formal, rather slow, show no emotion, but use many symbols to suggest the great virtues propounded by the master. These dances can be seen at the Memorial Hall at Sŏnggyun'gwan, the Confucian college in Seoul. The main occasion when these dances are performed is at the ceremonies commemorating Confucius's birthday.

COURT DANCES

These dances were performed in the royal court to entertain the king and his guests. They could be performed by an individual to express the emotions of a song or poem; by a small group telling a story through their dance; or by a big group putting on a spectacular show. Some of the court dances date back to Shilla (57BC-AD935). These court dances were copied and performed in the houses of rich noblemen by professional entertainers.

BUDDHIST DANCES

These dances were originally performed in temples during Buddhist ceremonies. Some told a story in mime and dance; others are more like meditations about such things as temptations, resistance to them and triumphing over them. These dances tell the story by evoking the different feelings that accompany different thoughts.

SHAMAN DANCES

These dances were originally performed by shamans during exorcist ceremonies. They were used to induce trances and to show that the shaman was under the influence of his or her 'familiar' or helping spirit. As the shaman came under the influence of many different spirits during the ceremony (*kut*) many different dances were performed showing the characters and emotions of the different familiars.

COUNTRY DANCES

These dances can be performed by individuals or groups who are just having fun. More formal fertility dances are performed in the spring by groups who dance around the fields to ensure the blessing of plentiful crops. These country dances are also performed in the yards in front of farmhouses, in the village square and on the roads that connect the villages together.

MASKED DANCES

These are part play, part dance, done by artists that farm during the summer and practise their acting and dancing skills during the winter. The story is told in dialogue, the emotions and feelings are expressed by the dances. The dialogue is very witty and humorous. The ruling class, the scholars and the monks were often held up to ridicule. The anger of the ordinary people was vented against their oppressors from behind the safety of the masks. Modern dissidents used these masked plays and dances to criticize the injustices inflicted by the military dictatorships.

MODERN DANCES

In the last fifty years or so, Western dances have come into Korea. Every kind of dance, whether ballet, waltz or disco has been welcomed. Folk dances, where everybody can join in and enjoy themselves, are especially

popular. These Western dances should not be called Korean dances, but all of these dances are rapidly being Koreanized.

The six types of Korean dances mentioned above (leaving out modern Western) were formerly restricted to certain places and to certain classes of people. Now all of these dances are regarded as part of the Korean heritage. Young people learn them, partly for patriotic reasons, but mainly because they enjoy them. They love to perform them at any time, in any place, at every opportunity. Artists, too, like these dances and try to catch the spirit, vitality, motion and colour of the dances.



Masked Dancer

This masked dance character is called Malttugi and is a symbol of youth and spring.

Artist's name: Hong Söngdam



Buddhist Dancer

Artist's name: Pak Yŏnok. Pen-name: Poŭn



Country Dancers

From a greeting card.

Artist's name: Anonymous



Country Dancers

Farmers' band.

Artist's name: Kang Hansu. Pen-name: Soam



Dancer with Drum

Country dance. (Painted in oils.)

Artist's name: Kim Yŏngja

▣ THE BOY AND THE BULL

The picture on page 205 can be read as a genre picture, as a symbolic picture or as a Zen Buddhist picture. Pictures of the boy and the bull abound in Korea. They are very popular because they can be read in all of these contexts, and because they carry so many meanings.

The boy and the bull is first and foremost a genre picture. The inscription has two characters, which mean grass and boy. A grass boy is one who is too young to do heavy work and so is sent out in summer to collect grass and twigs which can be used during the winter as fodder for the cows or as fuel for the fire. 'Young country boy' would be a free English translation. As a genre picture, it has these elements:

The place is in the country. The time is late evening with some light still from the setting sun and the moon just rising. It is summer or early autumn as the boy is only wearing the minimum of clothes. Nostalgia for the good life in the country is implied. Here is the happy country boy, not worried about modern fashions, completely at ease with this huge animal. No rules, no rush, all the time in the world to practise his music. This is life in the country in harmony with nature. The picture also has that touch of humour. A typical country boy red in the face from trying to blow a tune on his bamboo flute. He is so engrossed in what he is doing that he is not conscious of the fact that his belly button is showing. This is real bad form as it shows that he has had no training in the niceties of Confucianism. The bull could be walking around in circles for all the boy knows. Maybe the bull has a different agenda. He is ambling home after another day's work, where he will get a meal and a night's rest. The boy too will get a good meal when he gets home. Neither boy nor bull has a worry in the world.

This type of picture also carries a wide range of symbolism. In China, it is a symbol of spring and of farming. In that country it is often the water buffalo that is drawn. The water buffalo is a very strong sluggish animal that has a natural aversion to strangers. Although it can be dangerous to strangers, it is very docile in the hands of its master and is very friendly with the people who work with it every day. In China at the beginning of spring an image of an ox or water buffalo is made from clay. All the farmers assemble and beat it. This symbolizes the rousing of the buffalo after his long winter rest and gives him warning of what is in store for him if he doesn't help in the spring ploughing. Until recently, this festival was observed in Korea, but in modern times it is regarded as being too Chinese; it does not fit the republic's new independent self-image.

The bull is a yang symbol. The boy riding on its back with no trace of fear reinforces this male active yang principle, which is contrasted with the female yin principle of the moon. These two combined show the harmony of the whole world, the harmony of yin and yang.

Koreans do not have water buffalos but use oxen, which are very friendly and docile. From birth they are treated gently and with very great care, almost as one of the family. They are very strong and are used for ploughing and

pulling heavy loads on ox carts. The bull is a symbol of strength and virility. It is also a symbol of wealth. The prize that is given to the champion in a Korean wrestling match is always a yellow ox (*hwangso*). During the times of the Korean kings, it was used as an animal of sacrifice. Because the king in the annual sacrifices offered it, it was always associated with the supernatural. Being one of the twelve animals that make up the zodiac also showed its sacredness.

In Korea, the ox is regarded as a heavenly messenger. A folk tale says that after God made the earth and put people there to live, the men and women had a great time eating and playing all day. If the people kept this up, they would eat all the food in the world in a very short time. Then they would die, and all the animals would die too. To correct this, God called the ox and sent it down to earth with the message that people were only to eat once a day. The ox came down to the nearest mountain and started on his journey to the people, but on the way it found beautiful grass all along its path. It stopped to nibble the sweet grasses and other plants, and never felt time passing. It took so long to get to where the people were that by the time it got there it had forgotten the message. The ox told the people that they were only to eat three times a day. The God of heaven was angry when he heard about the mistake, so he told the ox to go back down to earth and stop people eating three times a day. The ox knew that people were very happy eating three meals a day, and it didn't want to make them unhappy by telling them to cut down to one meal a day. So instead of delivering such an unpopular message, it volunteered to come down to earth and work for men so that they could grow enough food for themselves, continue to enjoy their three square meals a day, and still have enough left over to feed all their domestic animals. So Koreans are grateful to their oxen and look after them well.

This picture of the boy and the bull is used by Zen Buddhists in their series of ten pictures that illustrate the ten steps on the way to enlightenment. It is the sixth in this series. The ten pictures show man's progression from a purely animalistic earthly existence to a fully enlightened existence where the spirit is in full control.

The ten stages on the road to enlightenment are as follows:

1. *Searching for the bull.* The youth is shown in a wild mountainous place. There is no sign of the bull. The young man as yet neither knows his own nature nor can he discern any order in the world.
2. *Finding the bull's hoof prints.* The youth is willing to look for an answer to the problems that he finds in himself. He examines his actions and finds traces of his animal nature.
3. *Perceiving the bull.* The bull is hidden in the trees, but it is possible to see only its hindquarters. The young man starts to realize that he has two natures, one animal and one spiritual. The bull is the typical Korean light brown or yellow bull (*hwangso*).
4. *Catching the bull.* The youth uses a rope to catch the bull. Here the rope is a symbol of control. Control is achieved by observing the rules and regulations of the Buddha. This discipline gives self-control.



Boy and Bull

Inscription: 'A grass boy.' (A young country boy, too young to work, who is sent out to collect grass for fodder.)

Artist's name: Shin Tongchöl. Pen-name: Pong'am

5. *Taming the bull.* As the bull is tamed, its colour changes. Half of the bull is now white, the colour of spirituality, the other half is still brown, showing that the task of taming the bull is not yet complete.
6. *Riding on the bull's back.* The bull has been fully tamed. The bull's colour has now changed to all white. There is no longer any need for the rope. The rope disappears.
7. *Transcending the bull.* The bull disappears. Only the youth is left. He is shown praying and meditating in the temple.
8. *Transcending both the bull and self.* Here not only the rope and the bull disappear, but the young man also disappears. Only a circle is drawn in this picture. This symbolizes enlightenment. Body and soul become united in total harmony, and this new entity becomes united with the universal spirit, the Buddha spirit.
9. *Reaching the source.* Enlightenment makes a man realize that all nature is one. Everything in the world, even happiness and pain, are part of an overall plan, and all are put there to lead us to nirvana, where all are again united in happiness and peace with the universal spirit. This picture is usually a landscape with beautiful flowers and trees. Sometimes only a picture of a plum tree with plum blossoms in full bloom is drawn.
10. *Emerging into the world.* The newly enlightened youth takes the teachings of the Buddha and the other things that he has learned and returns to the world, to the society of men, and teaches others so that they, too, can find their own nature and the meaning of existence.

The ambiguity of the details in this picture leaves it up to the viewer to interpret it. This is a modern and Western approach to painting. The traditional Oriental artist crystallized what he wanted to say and then said it in the most concise and simplest manner. The artist did the work, the viewer enjoyed the result. In this picture, the artist suggests a boy and a bull and leaves all the work of interpreting the picture to the viewer.

Knowing how a Korean would interpret this picture makes the viewer's work easier, more interesting and more rewarding.

▣ GENRE PICTURES AS ILLUSTRATIONS

The main reason for drawing these pictures was to record for future generations (as King Sejong ordered in 1424) how the common people lived, how they dressed and how they worked. These pictures show such things as how to bend and string a bow, how to make sandals from rice straw, and how to turn a lathe to make wooden bowls. Only those things are drawn that are used in doing the work. The details are always accurate, but there is no appeal to the emotions, there is no humour; the place and time are not shown and background scenery is seldom indicated.



Archers

Illustrating the things that an archer should know.

Artist's name: Yun Ch'ongjae. Pen-name: Usŏk



Making Straw Sandals

Artist's name: Yun Tusŏ. Pen-name: Kongje. (1668–1715)



Turning Wooden Bowls on a Lathe

▣ GENRE PICTURES BY DISSIDENT ARTISTS

The dissident artists were a group of young artists who opposed the military dictatorships in Korea during the 1980s and the 1990s. They went back to the old *binbung* and *muyil* style of painting and showed the hardships of farmers and factory workers under an abusive military government, in a divided country, always kept on red alert, ready for war at any moment. Ambitious leaders who were unwilling to give up power caused the division of the country. The people did not want their country divided. This division was kept in place because the leaders on both sides would not come together to solve their differences, or make any concessions to bring back unity. Families were broken up, relatives could not meet, phone, or even write to each other on opposite sides of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). The people were suffering emotionally and economically but those in authority did not seem to care. The dissident artists grew up in these troubled times.

Dissident artists drew pictures showing the poverty of the people and the injustices they were suffering; they showed how good everything could be if the DMZ was removed and the country run for the benefit of its citizens.

The authorities claimed these pictures, critical of the government, were giving comfort to the enemy. The artists were accused of violating the

National Security Laws, branded as traitors, thrown in jail and given long prison sentences. The most famous of these artists were Hong Sŏngdam, Ch'a Ilhwan, Chŏng Hasu and Paek Wŏnil. All spent long periods in jail. But there were more than thirty other well-known artists who opposed the government. They avoided being sent to prison, but the police knew what they were at, kept them under surveillance and harassed them continuously. They, too, earned the title of dissident artist.

Many of the dissident artists made woodblock prints. The making of woodblock prints is a skill that has been practised in Korea for over a thousand years. 'The Pure Light Dharani Sutra', printed from woodblocks during the Shilla dynasty, sometime before 751, is believed to be the oldest woodblock printing in the world. This traditional way of presenting their art appealed to the young patriotic artists. It enabled them to reach a greater audience at prices that ordinary people could afford. Their aim was to get the message out to as many people as possible. Many of these pictures were unsigned as a signature would lead the authorities right back to the artist.

The efforts and sacrifices of all those people who worked for democracy eventually paid off. Korea now has a civil democratic government that seems to be actively working to bring about peace with the north.

Some of the pictures of the dissident artists are really beautiful; others are just raw propaganda. Nevertheless, all have now become a part of Korean history and all have become part of the genre picture legacy.



Farmers Digging and Planting in the Fields

Artist's name: Hong Sŏngdam



Anti-military Government Pictures

Soldier beating a student for demonstrating against the military government.



Dead Student Rebel and Lotus Blossom

The Lotus Blossom is a symbol of a new and better life
The names of the artists were not written on these protest pictures.



Citizens Feeding the Students and Other Rebels Who Revolted Against the Unjust Military Government

The artist's name is not shown.



Two Boys and Two Girls in the Country

Inscription: 'Green fields in front
 Green fields behind
 Nearby the beautiful river flows all around them.
 On the hills
 In the rice fields
 According to the progression of the Four Seasons
 Everything
 According to its own form and life
 Buds
 Grows
 And laughs.'

(The name of the poet and artist is not shown.)

Chapter 8

Immortals Old and New



The figures in these pictures can all be called Immortals because their memory will never die. They are part of the history, mythology, philosophy, poetry and folklore that make up the cultural background to the civilizations of East Asia.

All the oriental religions postulated some kind of life after death. A good and virtuous life here in this world ensures that the afterlife will be a happy one, where personality and individuality, for the most part, are maintained.

The old Confucianists did not write much about God or life after death but they practised ancestor worship. They believed that at least one of the three vivifying principles (or souls) that a person possessed lived on, at least for a few years, as an ancestor spirit after death.

The Buddhists say that if one follows the teaching of the Buddha and becomes enlightened, then one can become a bodhisattva after death or go to the fullness of happiness in Nirvana.

Neo-Confucians say that if one practises the virtues as taught by Confucius one can become a perfect gentleman. Such a perfected person becomes an immortal sage after death and retains his personality and individuality. A man who is not entirely perfect retains his personality as long as the ancestral sacrifices are offered for him; otherwise he may lose his individuality and get lost in the 'cloud of ancestors'.

The Taoists maintained that if a man lived in perfect harmony with nature, all knowledge became available to him. Through this knowledge, it was possible to become an Immortal. Only the person who became an Immortal knew what exactly brought about this change. Maybe it was a special medicine, an elixir of life or a magic formula that changed him from being an ordinary mortal to being an Immortal who could roam at will through heaven and earth. Once the change took place, the Immortal was forbidden to tell his secret to other people in this world. Some did manage to get around this problem and gave hints to their disciples that enabled them to become Immortals.

All Taoist Immortals do not live in the same place. Some become human Immortals who are free from all the troubles of the spirit and the infirmities of the body. These are usually visible to ordinary people, but they are always moving from place to place learning everything that is to be known about this world. They are fairly proficient in magic. Next are the earthly Immortals. These are normally invisible, but, when they are a bit careless, they can be seen by ordinary people. They live in remote but beautiful places and on sacred but inaccessible mountains. They have heavenly servants who look after all their needs. The next category is the deified Immortals. These have gone to live in the Eastern Islands. These are the Three Islands of the Blessed, which exist far out in the sea off the eastern coast of China. They are kept eternally young by drinking the dew that condenses on pine trees and drips from pine needles. The final group is the celestial Immortals. Only a very small number of people become perfect enough to join this select group. These live in the Heavenly Paradise with Tao, the Supreme Spirit, with the Jade Emperor, with Lao Zi, the first philosopher of Taoism, and with the Heavenly Queen Mother.

Korean artists like to draw the human Immortals and the deified Immortals. The celestial Immortals are too close to the Taoist religion for their liking. Chinese artists often draw the Heavenly Paradise as a fantastic land up in the sky where all the Immortals enjoy themselves with music, food, wine and games. Korean artists rarely draw these pictures. Although Korean scholars admired the philosophy of Taoism, they rejected the Taoist religion as a fabrication.

Shamanism also has its afterlife. Shamanists say that the souls of the dead can get peace if they get safely to the upper world or to the underworld. It is only when they get stuck in this middle world here on earth that they are in trouble. Heaven and the underworld are the two places where a good person goes after death. Individuality and personality are retained, and perfect happiness is enjoyed forever. Nobody knows very much about heaven except that it is somewhere up in the sky. It is strange that although the shamans describe hell and what goes on down there in great detail, they never describe heaven. All they say is that it is a place where everybody is eternally happy. Korean artists never draw this heaven. Maybe they think it is the same as the Taoist Heavenly Paradise.

Korean artists draw pictures of Immortals for five reasons. Naturally, none of these reasons is a religious one. Firstly, pride: the artist always wanted to show that he was educated. Drawing about things that were only to be found in difficult Chinese books showed that he had a good education. People who had these paintings also demonstrated their erudition by showing that they knew what the pictures were all about. They, too, were familiar with all things Chinese and with all that was going on in the cultural capital of the world. Secondly, symbolism: pictures of Immortals are symbols of peace, contentment and harmony with nature. They are pictures of a healthy, active and happy life. There is no lavish luxury, just the bare essentials. In the background there are some Chinese symbols of a long life, such as peach trees, pear trees or pine trees, or

maybe some of the ten long life symbols that Koreans prefer. (See under Landscapes.) All of these are symbols of a long and happy life. They express the wish that these blessings go to the owner or viewer of the picture. The pictures also have the magic power to give these blessings. It is not necessary to know the name or history of the Immortal depicted. The symbolism, the message and the magic are the important and essential parts of the picture. Thirdly, nature: these pictures stress beauty and harmony in nature. The beauty and order in nature inspire awe; they are conducive to contemplation, to thinking about the mysteries of life and existence. There is silence in these pictures even though there are people around. The people do little talking and certainly never shout. This is the silence needed for thinking, the silence that the scholars love. Fourthly, feeling: these pictures evoke feelings. Besides the feelings of joy, they inspire otherworldly feelings. Here are people who live in the spiritual world, in another time, who are versed in magic, who appear and disappear at will. Even the beauty of the background is slightly fantastic to enforce these feelings of being in a fairyland. The other feelings that these pictures awaken are ones of nostalgia. People are enjoying themselves in the countryside, in ideal pastoral settings. Fifthly, story line: these pictures tell a story. Usually, a classical education is needed to know who the Immortal is, to know what he is doing, to know why he is famous. To discover the story, one has to read history, mythology, poetry and even folklore. The search is always interesting even though often unsuccessful. Luckily Korean artists tend to use the same stories again and again. It is possible to make a list of the Immortals that one usually finds in Korean art.

The following list is abbreviated from the more detailed list given in Part II under Immortals and Eight Episode Pictures.

1. An old Taoist philosopher contemplating nature. Possibly he is a man who is seeking immortality, or he has become one of the Immortals. This picture shows one of the ways of attaining immortality, namely, harmony with nature by contemplation.
2. One of the Chinese sage kings. The lives and deeds of these kings are recorded in early Chinese history.
3. Two Sages or Immortals playing Go (*weiqi* or *paduk* a board game). The Confucian scholars prefer to use the word sage rather than immortal, which is used by the Taoists. In practice both mean the same. The game of Go is so stimulating that even the Immortals play it in the next world.
4. The Eight Old Immortals. They are described later in this Chapter.
5. The Eight New Immortals. In Korea, the most famous of these is Yi T'aebaek, or as he is known in China, Li Bai (Li Po). Pictures of him are shown in this Chapter. The names of the other New Immortals are given in Part II under Eight New Immortals.
6. The South Pole Star. The Taoists regard him as a god, but the Korean artists look upon him as an Immortal. They like the challenge of drawing

- him. He is usually depicted as an old man (*namgungnoin*), literally the south-country-old-man.
7. Dong Fangshuo, known in Korea as Tong Pangsak. This is the young fisherman who stole and ate the heavenly peach and became immortal.
 8. A woodcutter watching the Immortals playing Go (*paduk*). This is one of the many Taoist tales found in Chinese literature.
 9. Lin Hejing (Im Hwajŏng). This Immortal was so in harmony with nature that he looked on the plum blossom as his wife and the storks as his sons.
 10. Jiang Taigong (Kang T'aegong). The old fisherman who meditated while fishing and worked out an almost perfect set of laws of government.
 11. Famous Philosophers and Teachers such as Confucius, Lao and Mencius.
 12. Other famous scholars and poets of China and Korea. The Chinese poets called the Eight New Immortals are often drawn, especially Li Bai (Yi T'aebaek) and Zeng Qi (Chŏng Kye). Among Korean poets and scholars Paek Taibong the poet and Ch'oui sŏnsa the Buddhist scholar are most often seen.
 13. Three quotations from Chinese classics. Korean artists often draw these pictures:
 - a) Sage washing his feet
 - b) Young boy pointing at a mountain
 - c) Peach blossoms falling on water
 14. Scenes from Confucian moral stories.
 15. Eight Episode Pictures. (See Eight Episode Pictures, Part II)

As mentioned above, it is not always easy to put names on the Immortals in these Korean pictures. But this is not important, as these are really 'Pictures that Give Life'. This is one of the names that Korean artists have given to this class of picture. In Chinese pictures, it is usually easier to identify the people drawn. Some symbol associated with that person is drawn clearly to help identification. The Korean painters deliberately blur the identity, even confuse it, by drawing several 'identifying symbols' that point to different Immortals. They do this to show that they do not believe in Immortals. They almost say, 'These Immortals are not really *the* Immortals; they are magic pictures that are symbols of a long and happy life, with the power to give these blessings. If they look like Immortals, then figure out yourself which of them is represented.' This ambiguity makes one recall several stories, and then try to fit them to the picture. But as time goes by, the details of the stories get blurred, memory fails and a definite answer is impossible. One's curiosity is aroused, so one checks the sources to find out for sure which Immortal is represented. After one has wasted a lot of time in a futile search for clues, one realizes again that these pictures are really 'Life Giving Pictures' that carry a message and a blessing.

▣ THE EIGHT OLD IMMORTALS

Six men and two women comprise the eight old Immortals. Called the Ba Xian in China, they are legendary Taoist beings, who lived at various times and places, and attained immortality in various ways. They are drawn singly or in groups, and can always be identified by what they carry, which acts as their particular symbol. They represent eight different conditions of life: wealth, poverty, aristocracy, plebeianism, youth, old age, masculinity and femininity.

1. ZHONGLI QUAN

Zhongli Quan (Chong I'gwŏn) is the chief of the eight. Said to have lived during the Zhou dynasty (1122–249BC), he discovered how to mix the elixir of life and the powder of transmutation. By taking this concoction he became immortal. He is depicted as an old fat man with a bare belly holding a fan in his hand. This fan is his special emblem because by using it he had the power to revive the dead. Also by standing on the fan, he could travel anywhere he wanted.



Sometimes he is shown carrying a magic peach. This peach only grows in the garden of the palace of Xi Wŏngmu, the queen mother of the Western Paradise. It grows on a magic peach tree that only blooms and produces fruit once every 3,000 years. This fruit has the power to give immortality to whoever eats it. The Korean scholars say it only gives life until the next crop ripens.

2. ZANG GOALAO

Said to have lived during the Tang dynasty (618–906), Zang Goalao (Chang Kwaro) gained immortality by eating a ginseng root nearly two feet long. Depicted as a nobleman scholar, he is often shown riding around the countryside on a white mule or horse. He used to ride this animal backwards because he maintained that a scholar can only contemplate things that happened in the past; he cannot know the future. The animal he rode was a magical one. When the journey was over, he folded it up and put it in his purse for the night. Next day, he took it out, flattened it, squirted water on it



and it filled out to its three-dimensional shape again.

The Emperor Ming Huang wished to attach Zang Goalao to his court as an advisor, but he could not give up his wandering life. On the second summons from the emperor he made himself invisible. For many years he lived as a fugitive, visible when there were no imperial troops around, and making himself invisible whenever danger lurked.

His emblem is the fish drum, called the yougu, which is a long hollow tube, usually made of hollowed out bamboo and beaten with two sticks. These two sticks are often carried in the open end of the drum. Some accounts say that he also had a magic toad. As this toad could make itself huge by puffing itself up, and could float in the air and stride across the skies, Zang Goalao was able to travel great distances by standing on its back. When not using the toad for

transport, the toad reduced itself to its normal size and was free to wander off. It usually crawled into the nearest hole. Zang Goalao had a gold coin tied to a piece of twine, which he dropped down the hole. As all toads love gold, Zang Goalao never had any trouble fishing out the toad when he wanted to go on another long journey.

When he had eventually seen everything in this world, he transformed himself into an Immortal and went to live in the Celestial Heaven of the Immortals. These pictures are often drawn by Korean artists. They like the philosophical messages these pictures teach, namely that a man cannot know the future, can only learn from the past, and if a man becomes too fond of gold, he becomes a slave to the wealthy.

3. LÜ DONGBIN

Lü Dongbin (Yō Tongbin) also lived during the Tang period, somewhere around 750. A scholar and a recluse, he learned his magic from Zhongli Quan, the chief of the Eight Immortals. Exposed to a series of temptations, he overcame ten of them and was awarded a magic sword. He could not refuse this award, so in reality he failed the eleventh temptation. He travelled all around the world with his magic sword conquering all sorts of evil spirits and diseases. Although he attained immortality when he was fifty years old, he had to live in this world for four hundred years because he could not resist the sword.

His emblem, naturally, is the sword, which he often carries on his back. Sometimes he is depicted as carrying a flywhisk in his hand. This is a sign of authority and leadership. It is used by a teacher not only to frighten away flies and clear away dust, but also symbolically to drive away ignorance, evil and diseases. Lǚ Dongbin is the patron of barbers and surgeons and a helper of all those who are sick.

4. CAO GUOJIU

Cao Guojiu (Cho Kukch'wi) lived about AD1000. He was the brother of an empress who ruled during the Song dynasty (960–1279). Always dressed in the robes of a nobleman and the court head-dress of an official, he loved the arts, music,



dancing and especially the theatre. He is always drawn with his special symbol, a pair of castanets. These are round or oblong brass plates, which are struck against each other. They are used on the stage to punctuate important words or actions, and also to keep time with music or dancing. Some say that they were originally court tablets that authorized him to go anywhere in the palace or in the country. That may be so, but now these symbols are always drawn as old fashioned or ancient castanets. Cao Guojiu carries these on his person to be always prepared for any emergency, such as going to a party or to the theatre! Being able to enter these places was more important to him than going into any administrative building. He is venerated by those in the theatrical profession.

5. LI TIEGUAI

Besides the picture of Zang Goalao riding backwards on his white horse, Korean artists also love to draw Li Tieguai (Yi Ch'ŏlgwa), but they give the interpretation of the picture a twist that the Chinese artists never intended. Li Tieguai became so proficient in magic that he discovered how to leave his body and travel around the world at will. Also, because he was so expert in magic, he was frequently summoned to the presence of Lao Zi in the heavens where the Celestial Immortals lived. Lao Zi was the founder of Taoism.

When Li Tieguai's spirit went away on such a journey; his apparently dead body was left in the care of his servant. Once when he was absent for a lot longer time than usual, his servant came to the conclusion that this time he was really dead, so he performed the funeral rites and gave the body an honourable cremation and buried the ashes. When Li Tieguai eventually returned, he found his body gone. He looked around for another, but the only one he could find at the time was that of a beggar who had just died, so he had to accept this body instead of his own. The beggar was lame and used a crutch, so Li Tieguai had to use this T-shaped crutch as well. The Koreans maintain that the beggar had been an alcoholic, so Li Tieguai had to keep his new body well fortified with wines and spirits. That is why he is always depicted as carrying a bottle or gourd, drinking from this bottle-gourd, or looking for a drink. The Chinese say the bottle contains the elixir of immortality, but the Koreans know what it really contains! The Korean artists draw humorous pictures of this Immortal. In the coloured picture on page 225 he is wondering if there is a last drop left in the bottle!

In China, Li Tieguai is identified by his iron crutch or staff, and by his pilgrim's gourd from which fumes are escaping. These fumes swirling up out of the bottle-gourd symbolize his power to free his spirit from his body. In some pictures he is shown standing on a crab. This is a symbol of one who lives by, or follows, his own nature or conscience. In other pictures he is accompanied by a deer. A deer is a symbol of great old age or immortality. It is also the messenger of the mountain spirit. It travels from the mountaintop, where the spirits live, to the valleys where the people live, so it is a symbol of one who can travel between heaven and earth.

6. HAN XIANGZI

Han Xiangzi of Tang (Han Sangja) was the nephew of a famous scholar, Han Yu, who lived about AD820. He was a favourite pupil of Lü Dongbin who brought him to the Paradise of the Immortals to get a magic peach. Han Xiangzi climbed up the magic peach tree to pull one of the peaches. Just as he grabbed one of the peaches, he fell. He would have died from the fall, but on the way down he bit into the magic peach and so became immortal before he hit the ground. His symbol is the flute. He wandered around the country playing this flute. The sweet notes he played made flowers bloom. All kinds of birds and beasts assembled around him to listen to this magic



Li Tieguai with his T-shaped crutch and bottle-gourd

music. He did not know the value of money, and any he got he scattered on the road.

7. LAN CAIHE

The woman Immortal, Lan Caihe (Nam Ch'aehwa), wore a beautiful blue gown and lived as a sort of beggar. She is often represented as having one shoe on and one shoe off. Her emblem is a basket of flowers, which she carries in her hand. Sometimes she is drawn carrying a wand or a lute in one hand and flowers in the other. As she wandered around the countryside, she chanted verses denouncing this fleeting life and its passing pleasures. She is the patron of florists and everybody who loves flowers.



8. HE XIANGU

He Xiangnu was also a woman (Ha Sŏn'go). The daughter of a shopkeeper, she too lived during the Tang dynasty, about the year 700. She used to wander alone in the hills living on moonbeams and powdered mother-of-pearl. Once when she was lost in the wooded mountains, she met a demon. She would have been killed had not Lü Dongbin come to her rescue with his magic sword. Her strange diet of moonbeams and mother-of-pearl gave her immortality. Shortly after this, she was brought to the gardens of the Paradise of the Immortals where she ate a magic peach. This turned her into a beautiful fairy.

The Empress Wu (625-705) heard about this lovely maiden wandering around the empire and summoned

her to the court. He Xiangmu did not wish to go, so she left this world and joined the other Immortals in the Celestial Paradise. Her emblem is the lotus flower. Sometimes she is represented as standing on a lotus blossom. In other pictures she is shown poised on a floating petal of a lotus flower with a flywhisk in her hand or playing the sheng which is a reed organ. She is the patron of mothers and all those who have to manage a home.

Korean artists usually draw the Eight Old Immortals together. Sometimes they add the South Pole Star to this group. (See under Southern Star in Part II.) When there is only one Immortal drawn, it is either Zhongli Quan with his fan and three-legged pot in which he is concocting the elixir of life, Zang Gualao who is riding his horse backwards or Li Tieguai with his iron crutch and his gourd wine bottle.



▣ THE EIGHT NEW IMMORTALS

The Eight New Immortals are famous poets who lived in China during the Tang Dynasty (618–906). At that time the Taoist religion with all its gods was very popular. The Taoists, claiming Lao Zi as their founder and teacher, were saying that immortality could be achieved in this life through the use of magic, by using medicines made from various chemicals, or by drinking the elixir of life made from special herbs and roots. Lao Zi never said this. He taught in his philosophy that immortality could be got by contemplation and by living in harmony with nature, but this immortality was different from an eternal life in this world.

The Eight New Immortals reintroduced the original Taoism to the scholars of Tang. Their poems tell of the beauty of nature and of the reality of human living. They looked for truth, beauty and realism in the world around them and expressed these in their poetry.

These poets were also famous for their hard drinking and Bohemian style of life. All Koreans like their poems. Many students can recite one or two from memory. Many artists in Korea admire the eight for their lifestyle, and although they may not be able to produce artworks of the same standard, they probably manage to put away as many pints! These eight were made famous



An Old Immortal

Zhongli Quan, the first of the Old Immortals, with his fan and elixir of life. (This of course could be the sage king Fu Xi who lived about 2852BC, the inventor of the first Chinese characters, or indeed any of the old Immortals.)

Artist's name: Chŏn Sŏnchŏl. Pen-name: Mog'yon



An Old Immortal

Li Tiegua (Yi Ch'olgw), the fifth of the Old Immortals, with his iron crutch and wine bottle.

Artist's name: Kim Nakkyun

Pen-name: Haeam

by the Tang dynasty poet Du Fu (712–70) (Tu Po), who wrote about them in his poem 'The Eight New Immortals of the Wine Cup'.

Korean artists love to draw pictures of these Eight New Immortals, especially Li Bai, better known in English as Li Po (Yi Taebaek), and his contemporary Zheng Qi (Chǒng Kye in Korean) the poet who stops on the bridge to compose a poem. The poems of these two poets are illustrated in the seventh and eight-pictures in the series called the Eight Episode pictures. (See Eight Episode Pictures, Part II.)

Below, are three pictures of Li Bai (Li T'aebaek) in different poses (pages 227, 228 and 229). The pictures have the usual hint of ambiguity. The picture of Li Bai lying over a big pot of drink is very like a picture done by the last of the court painters Kim Ūho (pen name Idan) showing the Korean poet Paek Taebong, who was sent to Japan by King Sōnjo as part of a civil delegation



The South Pole Star

Inscription: 'The Immortal who lives in the south pole star.'

In Korea this immortal is usually grouped with the Eight Old Immortals.

Artist's name: Hwa Min

and got so frustrated by the negotiations that he wanted to get drunk and cool his white head in a well of pure spring water. His poem expressing these sentiments has become one of the classical poems of Korea. So although the picture is of the Chinese poet Li Bai, it also reminds us of the old Korean poet, Paek Taebong. This picture recalls two sets of memories, two pictures for the price of one! The first coloured picture could be any Immortal contemplating the beauty of the world around him. Possibly he is collecting dew that is dripping from the pine needles. This would imply that he is one of the Deified Immortals that live in the Eastern Islands. But in Korea an Immortal with a wine cup in his hand is always Li Bai. The ambiguity is there also to remind us that these are really 'Pictures that Give Life', pictures with a wish to live to be as old as the Immortals, magic pictures that have the power to give the blessing they portray.

▣ MYTHICAL HISTORICAL PERSONALITIES

China has many famous people in its literature but often it is nearly impossible to know whether these are real or mythological persons. Each of them



The great Chinese poet, Li Bai, (Yi T'aeback) is one of the Eight New Immortals

Inscription: The first part of the poem describes the joys of the Emperor's gardens and pools, which are so beautiful that heavenly nymphs come there to bathe. The second part is translated by Raymant van Over in *Taoist Tales* in a poem called 'A Mountain Revelry'

To wash and rinse our souls of their age old sorrows
 We drained a hundred jugs of wine
 A splendid night it was
 In the clear moonlight we were loath to go to bed
 But at last drunkenness overtook us
 And we laid ourselves down on the empty mountains
 The earth for a pillow
 And the great heaven as a coverlet.

These verses were written originally by Li Bai.
 Artist's name: Kim Yǒngni. Pen-name: Ch'ǒngdo

has come down from the past with an interesting story and a full history. Often the historical details seem to be pure fabrications concocted to give an aura of reality to the mythological character in the story. The history can be discounted, but the story is good and always carries a philosophical or moral message.

For example, the stories about Dong Fangshuo (Tong Pangsak), and about the woodcutter watching the Immortals playing Go bring up the question of immortality and the concept of time. The stories of Lin Hejing (Im Hwachǒng) and Jiang Taigong (Kang T'aegong), focus on questions about spending one's whole life in the pursuit of personal perfection. (These stories are given in Part II under Immortals.)

The picture here is probably of Jiang Taigong. The Confucian history, or maybe just the story, is that he was a scholar who spent his life in seclusion, studying and meditating in order to become a perfect gentleman. He relaxed by fishing, yet even while fishing he thought of ways to produce harmony in society. The new king of Zhou called him to his court. Although Kang



Li Bai

Li Bai (Yi T'aebaek) is one of the Eight New Immortals.

This could be a picture of any Immortal, possibly one of the Deified Immortals who live in the Eastern Islands, the Isles of the Blessed, where the immortals drink the dew that drips from the pine trees. This drink keeps them youthful, happy and immortal.

In Korea an Immortal with a wine cup is always regarded as being Li Bai.

Artist's name: Chŏn Sŏnch'ŏl. Pen-name: Mog'yŏn

was seventy years old, he left his home and took up the difficult job of setting up the basic laws for the Zhou dynasty. These laws were so just that the Zhou dynasty lasted for over 800 years (BC1122–BC249).

When Korean artists draw Jiang Taigong (Kang T'aegong) they follow the Confucian tradition. He is always drawn as an old scholar.

I said above that this picture (page 229) is probably Jiang Taigong. Yet looking at the two storks flying by, one immediately recalls the story of Lin Hejing (Im Hwachŏng) the Immortal who was so in harmony with nature that he looked on the plum blossoms as his wife and upon the storks as his sons. Korean artists like to do this. They take bits from different classical pictures and recombine them to awaken different layers of memory, to give the picture more depth. The result can be a bit confusing and ambiguous until all the elements of the picture have been unravelled.

Of course, the principle element in the picture is a wish for a long and happy life, and as this prayer is embedded in the picture, the picture has the power to grant this blessing.



Li Bai (Yi T'aebaek)
 Artist's name: Kim Ŭnho
 (1892–1979)
 Pen-name: Idan



The Fisherman Jiang Taigong (Kang T'aegong)

One of the mythical historical personalities.

These are embroideries done from cartoons or stencils made by the artist and carry his seals.

Artist's name: Kim Ŭnho (1892–1979)

Pen-name: Idan

▣ FAMOUS PHILOSOPHERS

The three most famous philosophers of early China were Lao Zi, Confucius and Mencius. Every student sitting the state examinations, whether in China or in Korea, had to study the books listed below. Note that Lao Zi's *The Way to Tao* was not on the list. Maybe this very important book was regarded as being too difficult for students to understand, or, more likely, it was omitted because it was too spiritual and did not fit in with the pragmatic teachings of Confucius.

The Five Classics are:

- *The Book of History*
- *The Book of Rites*
- *The Book of Changes*
- *The Annals*
- *The Book of Odes.*

The Five Classics were supposed to have been composed, or at least compiled, by Confucius who lived from 551 to bc479. Confucius's name gave these works a seal of infallibility. Actually the writings of many different scholars are found in these books.

The Four Books are:

- *The Sayings of Confucius*
- *The Great Learning*
- *The Doctrine of the Mean*
- *The Book of Mencius.*

The Four Books reviewed the classics and drew out of them rules of conduct for public life and rules of morality for private life. (See under Classics in Part II.)

Two Practical Works are:

- *The Official Dynastic Histories*
- *The Ancient Book of Arithmetic.*

The Official Dynastic Histories were a series of books giving the histories of the twenty-five dynasties of China. These two works are not found in the Korean lists.

Among the practical works that Korean students had to study were elementary books on mathematics, astronomy, art, music, calligraphy and, of course, the Chinese language.

The Four Books always used Confucius to back up arguments; and even when expressing views different to those of the master, they still found quotations to show that Confucius thought along the same lines, that what they were teaching was consistent with traditional Confucian thought. Mencius was an exception. He even contradicts the master. For example, he said that

love of king, parents, spouse, children and friends was a higher virtue than fulfilling one's duty to these persons, and pursuing truth and justice was more important than blind obedience to an evil despotic king. Confucian scholars were quick to point out that Mencius was wrong, firstly, because he had no authority to say these things, and secondly, because what he said was contrary to Confucian teaching, and the teaching of the master could not be wrong! But Mencius's arguments were cogent and logical, they could not be refuted, they could not be ignored. Although the *Book of Mencius* was studied by every scholar, very few scholars were willing to follow his teachings.

Many Confucian scholars have depicted Mencius as a fool, as an impractical dreamer. Many school children in Korea seem to have learned that Mencius was some sort of Taoist Immortal who knew everything but could do nothing. He always found as many reasons for not doing a thing as he found reasons for doing it. He was presented to them as a comic figure, as an intelligent but ineffectual person, a person who lived in the clouds. The children learned this in school because this is what their teachers had themselves been taught in their traditional Confucian colleges.

Mencius lived from 371 to 289BC. He was born of noble family, held an official office for a time, but retired from it a disillusioned man. He spent most of his life as an itinerant teacher during which he wrote his unpopular but famous commentary. Modern scholars have great respect for Mencius. But this respect is not shown in the picture on page 232.

The inscription on this picture reads: 'This is a drawing of Master Maeng (the Korean name for Mencius) who pauses in the snow to admire the scenery while going to visit his friend.' It is the unflattering concept of Mencius, as taught by the Confucian school. Master Maeng is admiring the scenery instead of getting on with his journey. Is the boy standing in the cold bored with the delay, or is he trying to push the horse and urge his master on? Are the books that the boy is carrying more important than the wine bottle? Even the horse is indecisive. Is it stopped or is it walking, is it enjoying the rest and just looking ahead, or is it looking down at the water and being terrified? All of these questions with no clear answers are put there to poke fun at Master Maeng.

Most Korean scholars came from noble and wealthy families. They did not like Mencius because he taught that the people had the right to revolt against oppression and injustice. In effect this said that the people could kill an evil king and other unjust rulers. As very few of the nobles and wealthy showed any mercy or justice to the common people, they didn't dare teach Mencius's philosophy to the children of the lower classes. Instead they discredited him and made him an object of fun.

During the Korean War (1950–52) many of the noble landowners were killed, not by the communist North Koreans, but by the ordinary people of South Korea, who took advantage of the war to take revenge on the ruling classes for five hundred years of oppression. When the South Korean army, with the help of UN troops, retook the South, many ordinary people were branded communists and executed in reprisals. Even under the military



The Philosopher Mencius

Inscription: 'Master Maeng (Mencius) pauses in the snow to admire the scenery while on a journey to visit a friend.'

Artist's name: Kang Sökt'ae

Pen-name: Sugang

dictatorships, which lasted up to the end of the nineteen nineties, anyone who questioned the government or tried to oppose its injustices was declared a communist, a spy or a traitor. These 'crimes' carried the death penalty, or at least long prison sentences. Mencius may have been right, but no despot, whether king or military dictator, is going to admit it. They prefer the Confucian teaching that those in authority should be obeyed because they have the mandate of heaven. The dissident students and artists preferred to follow Mencius's teaching, which says that people should oppose unjust rulers. Of course in a democracy the mandate comes from the electorate.

The Master Maeng picture is very like the eighth of the classical pictures in the series called the Eight Episode Pictures. (See Part II.) That classical picture depicts Zheng Qi, (Chöng Kye in Korean), one of the famous Tang dynasty poets. Zheng Qi was once asked to write a poem. He said he could not write a poem while he was living amidst the confusions and distractions of the town, that he would have to get over the bridge spanning the River Ba (P'ae) and get among the beauties of the countryside before he could write a poem. The next day he rode out on his donkey, stopped on the bridge, and wrote a poem.

This picture of Master Maeng on his horse, recalls not only Mencius but also the poet Zheng Qi (Chöng Kye). So you get two sets of memories evoked by the same picture. Modern Korean artists like to use this scatter-gun effect in their pictures of Immortals. The resulting ambiguity reminds us that these are not photographs of historical people but magic pictures with a message. They wish long life and happiness, and have the magic power to give these blessings.

▣ FAMOUS SCHOLARS OF CHINA AND KOREA

Confucian scholars and artists did not draw pictures of the Buddha, bodhisattvas, or famous monks or Buddhist teachers. In Korea, Buddhists had their own art, which is completely different from Confucian art. It had different aims and rules and used different sets of symbols. It used different paints, painted on different surfaces and used all the colours in the paint box, giving very colourful pictures with saturated colours.

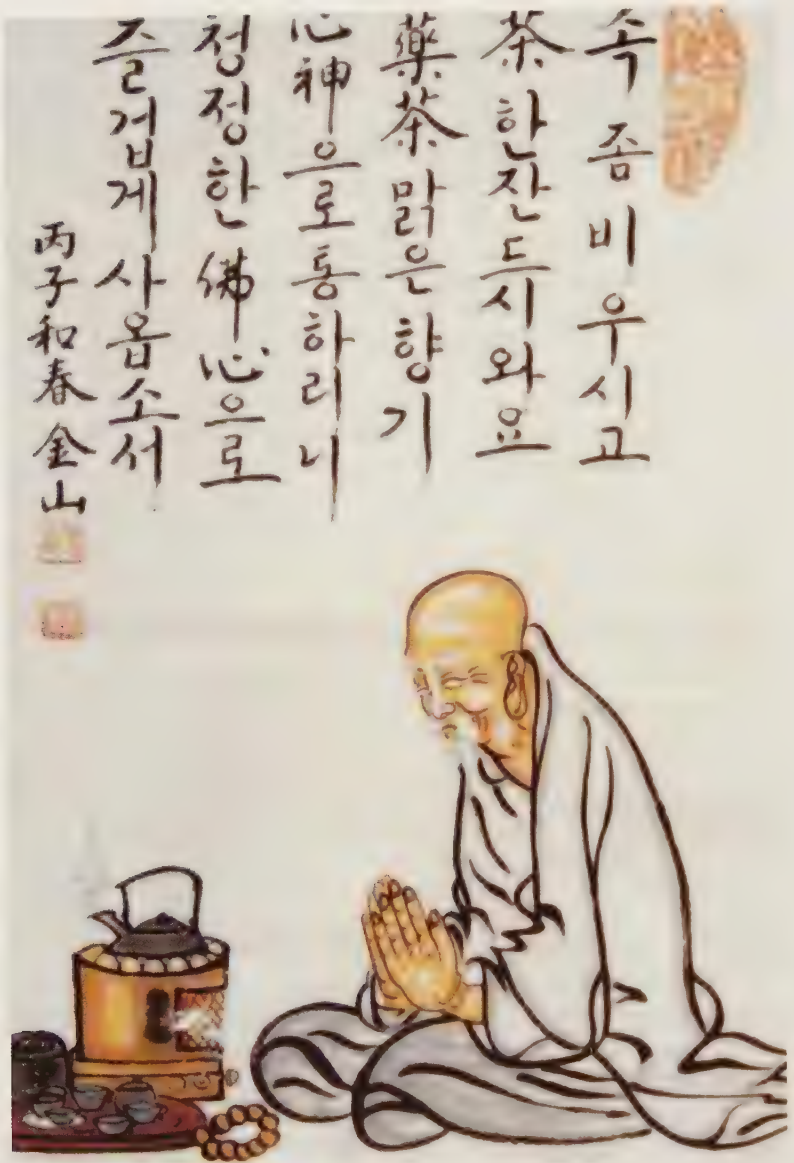
Many of the Chosŏn dynasty kings tried to suppress Buddhism; some actively persecuted Buddhist believers, others merely banned Buddhist monks from living in, or even entering, the cities. The Buddhists retreated into the mountains. This is where their biggest temples and their most ancient art is to be found today, hidden in valleys deep in wild but beautiful mountains. Because of the persecutions and the difficulties of training younger monks, many of their traditions have disappeared and the meaning of the symbolism they used in their pictures has been lost. Modern scholars are trying to reconstruct their history and unravel the old symbols. Much work has yet to be done before a definitive account of Korean Buddhist art and its symbolism can be made.

Although Buddhism was banned by the Korean kings, a few artists used the skills that they had learned in the Confucian schools to produce pictures of the Buddha, bodhisattvas and famous Buddhist monks. I have heard it said that these scholars were well paid to make these pictures, but it is more likely that they were intrigued by the challenge to paint these old subjects using classical brush and ink and Confucian styles to represent the Buddha and the Buddhist saints.

The picture on page 234 was done by a modern Buddhist monk who trained in calligraphy and in the classical Confucian style of painting. It is a nice example of what happens when the Buddhist and Confucian schools of art are combined. The picture depicts an old monk about to take a cup of tea after long hours of meditation. The tea will help him to stay awake so that he can do more hours of prayer.

In typically Confucian classical style, this is not a portrait of any particular person. It expresses a universal concept, applicable to any monk in general, to any old monk. A picture of an old person symbolizes a long life, so this picture falls into the category of an Immortal picture. As such it not only symbolizes a long life, but also wishes this blessing, and carries the magic power to give this blessing.

In this picture the hands are very big. As the artist is too skilled to make such a mistake, it can be assumed that the big hands carry a special significance. His hands may signify that this is a humble monk who used his hands all his life doing manual work. In Korea big hands are powerful hands. So although the monk is old, he is not helpless. Also big hands are regarded as generous hands. He is making tea not just for himself but also for others; there is more than one cup. The hands are joined in the attitude of prayer, so this is a praying monk. He not only gives his tea to others, he also prays for them. Although he is old, he is generous and compassionate.



Zen Master Ch'ou'i

Inscription:

'Empty your heart;
 drink a cup of tea.
 The tea's clear fragrance
 will pass through your inner being.
 Live joyfully
 with pure Buddha mind.'

Artist's name: Kim Kit'aek. Pen-name: Kūmsan. The Buddhist monk Ūnho.

No Korean could look at this picture without thinking of Ch'oŭi sŏnsa (Zen Master Ch'oŭi), a famous monk, artist and scholar who lived in Haenam, South Chŏlla Province about two hundred years ago. Ch'oŭi searched the mountains for new varieties of tea plants. He cured the leaves taken from these plants in many different ways until he got the best teas. He wrote several books on the cultivation of the tea plants and on the best ways of preparing the tea leaves. He also wrote about the rituals that go with the making and the serving of the tea. By his efforts, he reintroduced the tea ceremony into Korean society.

During Paekche and Shilla, Koreans introduced the secrets of tea making into Japan. The Japanese developed the tea ceremonies, which are practised there up to the present day. In Korea, Buddhist monks were credited with finding the best tea plants and with preparing and serving the tea in the best ways. But during the persecutions these traditions were almost lost until revived by Ch'oŭi sŏnsa. This Buddhist monk is counted among the famous scholars of Korea.

□ THE EIGHT EPISODE PICTURES

The Eight Episode Pictures show eight incidents from Chinese history or poetry. These eight have been drawn in Korea for almost the last two hundred years. They were usually made into an eight-panel screen, which was used to exclude draughts and to ornament a room.

It is difficult to see why these particular episodes were made into a set, as at first glance there seem to be no definite links connecting them all together. However, two reasons are given for drawing these eight pictures as a set.

The first reason is that they all show elderly scholars living at peace with themselves and at peace with the world. As such they are pictures that carry the wish that the owner or the viewer enjoy a long, peaceful and happy old age. These pictures also have the magic power to give these blessings.

The second reason for making this set is that the same Confucian attitudes, the rounded out mental attitudes that produce the perfect gentleman, are portrayed in all eight pictures. They hint that the perfect gentleman should be a well read scholar, should live according to his conscience, should cultivate the five virtues, should be in harmony with nature and able to appreciate its beauty, either directly, as seen through his own eyes, or indirectly, as seen through the eyes of the poets and artists.

The Eight Episode Pictures are explained in Part II. Their titles are just listed here.

1. First Episode. The scholar Xu You (Hŏ Yu) washing his ears in the river.
2. Second Episode. The fisherman Yan Guang (Ŏm Kwang) with his friend King Guang Wu Ti (Kwangmunye).
3. Third Episode. The Silver Haired Gentlemen of Shang (Sang) Mountain.

4. Fourth Episode. Zhang Han (Chang Han) fleeing by boat from the Court of the Jin kings.
5. Fifth Episode. Tao Yuanming (To Yŏnmyŏng) enjoying his retirement.
6. Sixth Episode. An old man, Guo Yu (Kwak U), pointing at swans.
7. Seventh Episode. Scholars viewing a waterfall on the Lushan Mountains (Yŏ Mountains).
8. Eighth Episode. The poet Zheng Qi (Chŏng Kye) halts his donkey on the Ba (P'ae) River bridge.

The three pictures shown here represent the third and fifth episodes in the set.

1. The Silver haired Gentlemen of Shang (Sang) Mountain (third episode).

They were four famous scholars who left the royal court of the last king of Jin. They refused to serve in the government because it had become too corrupt. They fled to the mountains of Sang (Shang shan) where they passed their time playing Go (a board game called *paduk* in Korean). The king called them back but they refused to return, instead they went deeper into the mountains and remained hidden.

Some years later Jin was overthrown by Han. The new Han king cleared the courts of corruption and things went well for a while, but the king took a second wife and wished to make her son his heir. These Four Gentlemen considered this decision to be wrong and let it be known that they backed the son of the first wife. The influence that they exerted was so great that the king had to change his mind and appoint his first son as his heir. Their virtuous lives and their great learning were the things that gave them such great influence. The son of the first wife later became king and the Han dynasty flourished. Their wisdom and courage in opposing the Han king safeguarded the future of the dynasty.

Not all the Four Gentlemen have to be drawn. Two or three scholars, drawn in ancient Chinese style clothes, playing Go (*paduk*) under a pine tree, out in the open on the side of a beautiful mountain, always show that this is a third episode picture.

Two pictures are given here showing these gentlemen. In the first picture even the inscription emphasizes that they are Immortals, almost spiritual beings, living in a vague but fantastic place. The second picture shows these gentlemen as being more human, almost like modern men out on a day's picnic in a typical Korean scenic spot.

2. Tao Yuanming (To Yŏnmyŏng) enjoying his Retirement (fifth episode).

This picture shows Tao Yuanming (also known in China as Tao Qian) sitting under a pine tree. The inscription is about the pine tree and not about Tao Yuanming. The artist stresses the pine tree because it is a symbol of a long life and vitality, which he considers more important than the symbol of the Immortal. He is making it clear that this is a picture with a message: it wishes long life, vitality and happiness. He is also making it clear that the picture has the magic power to grant these blessings.

Tao Yuanming (To Yŏnmyŏng), who lived from 365 to 427, was a scholar and a poet who held a high position in the royal court in China over a period



Immortals Playing Chinese Chess

Third Episode: The silver haired gentlemen of Shang (Sang) Mountain.

Artist's name: Yu Myöngyöl. Pen-name: Ch'unchöng



Immortals Playing Chinese Chess

Third Episode: The silver haired gentlemen of Shang (Sang) Mountain.

Inscription: 'Immortals pass the time on a clear long day playing Chinese Chess'.

Artist's name: Kim Kit'aek. Pen-name: Kūmsan. Ūnho, a Buddhist monk.



Immortal Under a Pine Tree

Fifth Episode: Tao Yuanming (To Yŏnmyŏng) enjoying his retirement.

Inscription: 'The pine tree suffers the rains and storms courageously, yet still retains its place and nature.'

Artist's name: Ko Manshik. Pen-name: Kisan

of many years. He wrote two poems that are very well known in Korea. One tells of his desire to leave the strenuous life of a court official and to retire to the small house in the hills where his mother used to live. He describes this house beside an old pine tree with chrysanthemums growing in the garden. Here the birds sing all day long. Here he wishes to rest and enjoy himself writing poetry. In the second poem he says that he will sit in the sun under his pine tree and admire the scenery, while waiting for his servant to prepare a simple meal to be served later with lots of home-made country-style rice beer.

Tao Yuanming did leave his high and well-paid position and retired to the country where he enjoyed his retirement for many years. His poems have made retirement respectable. The refined and peaceful life of the gentleman scholar living down in the country became an acceptable ambition. The chrysanthemums that grew in front of Tao Yuanming's house became a symbol of this life-style.

Chapter 9

Pictures of Beautiful Women



In the days before advertising and before magazines such as *Vogue* and *Glamour* were even thought of, the only way Korean women living in the country could know what was fashionable in the royal courts and in the capital was through Beautiful Women Pictures (*miindo*) produced and sold by artists in Seoul. These pictures showed the latest styles in clothes, the latest combinations of colours, even the latest hairstyles. They were not only fashion pictures, they were also glamour pictures. They showed young women, beautiful women, against a background of beautiful flowers and trees. These women were always shown enjoying a life of leisure. They played various musical instruments, painted pictures, did small pieces of embroidery or just strolled in the sun under a beautiful parasol.

The women in these pictures were not fashion models. In keeping with Confucian theories about painting, people were drawn as universal abstractions. These pictures were of women in the abstract, the universal woman, the ideal of feminine beauty. Drawing the faces of individuals required the skills of portrait painters who were regarded as inferior to classical artists!

The pictures of beautiful women, although supposedly done for women, were sold to rich gentlemen who visited the city. Men preferred pictures done in the classical style. Pictures done according to strict rules became very conventionalized; there was not much room left for originality. Still if one looks at a series of these pictures done over the last one hundred and fifty years or so, one sees that not only did the styles change, but the ideal of feminine beauty also changed. Older pictures show shorter sturdier women with fatter faces. These features were regarded as indicating good health; and in the days before wonder drugs were invented, being healthy looking was as important as being good looking. As time went on the ideal changed to women who were tall and slender with bigger facial features on a smaller face. Also as time went on, the pictures were drawn by women artists rather than by male artists. Possibly modern beautiful women pictures



Young Lady Fixing Her Hair

Artist's name:

Yu Unhong (Eighteenth Century)

show what women would prefer to look like, rather than what men would wish they looked like.

Nowadays, these pictures have lost their original purpose, which was to show fashions and styles. They have become essentially decorative, something a little more lasting than a picture calendar sent out from one of the international fashion houses!



Lady Admiring Herself in a Mirror

Artist's name: Kim Hongdo (1748–1816)

Pen-name: Tanwŏn



Beautiful Women Relaxing with Paintings

Pen-name: Chaun (This picture was painted about 1950)



Two Beautiful Women Seated Beneath a Peach Tree

Artist's name: Pak Yŏnok. Pen-name: Poŭn



Two Beautiful Women with Peach Blossoms

Inscription: 'Beautiful women with high-minded noble characters.'

Artist's name: Pak Taesók. Pen-name: Isan



A Beautiful Woman (a detail from the original)
Artist's name: Kim Kich'ang. Pen-name: Unbo

Chapter 10

Iconography



Classical Korean art, which was based on Confucianism, had no iconography in the strict religious sense. Confucian scholars never drew sacred pictures. Korean scholars, who were really Neo-Confucians, did accept a supreme being whom they called the Lord of Heaven (*ch'ŏnjunim*). This Lord of Heaven was never clearly defined. Sometimes, they seem to say he was the same as Tao; at other times they seem to say he was the same as the Lord of the Sky (*hanūdnim* or *hanūnim*). By definition Tao was an impersonal spirit, the creating force that made and sustained the universe. Also by definition the Lord of the Sky, although a person who could be entreated, was a god and as such was inferior to the Universal Spirit, Tao. Confucian scholars did not feel happy with the idea that there were *gods* who ruled the sky, the stars, the earth and the underworld, respectively. These gods were imperfect and capricious, and if there was one god who ruled the heavens, then there was one who ruled the earth. Now the one who ruled the earth was the king, and nobody wanted to look on him as a god. Their logic said that there was only one perfect God, who was like the impersonal Tao, but in practice they looked upon God as being a personal God to whom they could pray and offer public sacrifices.

Scholar artists never tried to draw this God. Instead they tried to show his power, vitality and beauty through pictures of flowers and trees, and to show the perfection of his creation by drawing birds and animals, and especially by drawing Mountains and Water landscapes.

The other two great religions of Korea did have icons. Buddhists, although they did not have a personal God, did have the Buddha, the Transcendental Buddhas, the Bodhisattvas, the Nahan (or the Arhants who were the first disciples of the Buddha), the Immortal Kings and the Guardians. They made pictures showing all these, but they did so using their own traditional art, with its own theories about composition and the use of colours and its own well-developed symbols. At times they borrowed things from Confucian classical art, but they never adopted it or made it their own.

Shamanists, who practised the other great religion of Korea, had their own pantheon of gods, spirits and demons. Rejected completely by Confucian scholars, the Shamanists had to rely on folk painters to draw their gods and spiritual beings. Often these painters copied from Buddhist artists, so their pictures also have a Buddhist look, but usually the icons they produced, although very colourful, were very unskilled and amateurish.

The Confucian government often persecuted Buddhists, completely suppressed the Taoist religion and always despised Shamanism. Still, if Buddhists and Shamanists knew and kept their place, they were generally tolerated. The place for Buddhists was in their temples in the mountains, and the place for shamans was in their own homes, in the houses of the lower classes, and only in the women's quarters in the houses of the nobles.

This tolerance was allowed because Confucianism was an incomplete religion; in fact it was really only a philosophy that taught people how to live in this world. As it had nothing to offer to women or to the lower classes, these people placed their faith in Buddhism and Shamanism. Koreans themselves used to say that in their everyday life they followed the teaching of Confucius, but, when sickness or family problems arose, they called in the shamans to exorcise the evil spirits that were causing the disease, or to help them solve their family difficulties. Then when death occurred, they called in Buddhist monks to pray for the soul of the person who had died and to perform the funeral services.

Although Buddhism was banned by the Chosŏn dynasty kings (1392–1910), many scholars retained a certain respect for Buddhism. Buddhism had come to Korea officially in AD372, and for more than a thousand years when it was almost the state religion, it had achieved a lot of good for Korea. Buddhist monks were teachers, scholars, and historians, who exerted a continuing civilizing influence on Korean society for countless generations. This respect allowed the Confucian scholar artists to try their hand at producing pictures of the Buddha and the Bodhisattvas using the brush and ink techniques of the classical schools. The scholars did not use these pictures as icons (holy pictures) themselves but probably gave them to their wives, or to their Buddhist friends.

As Confucianism became established as the official state system, Buddhist monks started to study it, and their artists learned the Chinese classical styles of painting. In more modern times, they started to produce icons in brush and ink styles. These pictures are never used publicly in the temples, but they are used in private. (Of the six Buddhist pictures shown in this chapter, three were done by Buddhist monks.)

Just over two hundred years ago, Christianity came into Korea. It was brought in by scholars who obtained books about the Catholic Church and its teaching when they were in China as part of a delegation bringing tribute from the Korean king to the Chinese emperor. At that time many scholars were disillusioned by the contradictions and injustices in the Confucian system of government and wished for some sort of reform. They so admired the teachings of Christ and the Church that they decided to set up a Church in Korea. The next time they went to China they reported to the Catholic

priests there that they had set up their own church complete with priests and bishops. The priests in China told them to disband the priests and bishops as they had not been properly ordained and consecrated. They promised to send them a priest as soon as possible to set up the Church properly. The scholars did as instructed and waited until a priest came. Eventually a Chinese priest, Father James Chu, came in 1795 and worked with them for almost six years. He survived the first persecution but gave himself up during the second in order to save the lives of the Catholics. He was martyred in 1801.

Persecutions were, of course, inevitable as the Korean kings could not allow their subjects to obey another god or to follow their own consciences. So the next hundred years brought many persecutions and produced thousands of martyrs. It wasn't until the eighteen nineties that the kings admitted they couldn't wipe out Catholicism and granted a certain amount of religious tolerance.

The Church was greatly influenced by Confucian traditions in Korea because of its close ties, even from the earliest times, with scholars and the educated classes. So when it came to drawing pictures of Christ, the Virgin Mary, the saints and the martyrs, it was the classical style of painting that was always used. I have never yet seen pictures of Jesus, Mary or any of the saints done in the Buddhist style. Only pictures done in the classical style, or done in the Western style, are accepted by Korean Catholics. Only pictures done in these styles are regarded as holy pictures or icons that can be displayed in the home or used in churches during religious ceremonies.

▣ THE BUDDHA

Images of the Buddha, whether painted or sculptured, are very standardized; they have remained almost unchanged over the last fifteen centuries in Korea. Only the styles have been slightly modified, just enough to make it possible to identify whether they were made in Shilla (57BC–AD935), Paekche (18–660), Koryŏ (918–1390) or Chosŏn (1392–1910). The postures of the body, whether sitting, standing or lying; the positions of the hands and feet; even the features of the face have been standardized. For example, the face is rounded and fat to denote good health and freedom from disease; the earlobes are extended to signify old age or eternal life; the lips are full to show eternal youth; and a gemstone in the forehead symbolizes the attainment of enlightenment. According to Buddhist tradition, every part of the image should be executed in such a way as to teach something about the Buddha and his attributes. (This book does not attempt to deal with Buddhist art or its symbols.)

Pictures done in the other Korean style, the classical Confucian style, are free of all these restrictions. The artist working in this style is free to draw the Buddha any way he pleases. Probably because of this freedom, pictures done in the classical style look livelier, fresher and more interesting than the stereotyped images that Buddhist artists continue to produce. At least, it seems so to the non-Buddhist.



The Buddha

Inscription: 'The black outline of the robes forms the Sino-Korean character *pul*, which means the Buddha.'

Artist's name: Anonymous

The picture of the Buddha on the left is done in the Zen style. This is the style developed by Chinese artists of Tang (AD618–906). These artists were not Buddhists; they were Confucian scholars who had studied Zen Buddhism and the philosophy of Taoism and combined these with Confucianism to produce the new system now called Neo-Confucianism.

Some of the dictates that the artists borrowed from Zen were: 'Express the most with the least,' and 'Line absent, idea present.' As they pointed out, Confucius had said something similar. Confucius said that to point out a field, it was only necessary to show one of its corners; after that anybody could find the other three unaided.

In this picture the outline of the face is omitted, but if one knows what the Buddha should look like, it is easy to imagine the shape of his face. Also the robes are not drawn; instead a very stylized version of the Chinese character for the Buddha (*pul* in Sino-Korean) is written. Buddhists use several different Chinese characters, which are not found in the standard dictionaries, to write this word *pul*. This character is usually written in combination with the character for heart (*shim*). The two characters together (*pulshim*) mean the Buddha

mentality, or the mind that all Buddhists should develop, that is, the detachment from the things of this world and the infinite compassion for all mankind that the Buddha himself had. All of these things are implied in this picture though all of them are not drawn.

▣ DHARMA

Dharma, or Great Priest Talma (Talma *taesa*) as he is known in Korea, is more properly called Bodhidharma. His pictures are very popular in Korea and are seen in the homes of people who have no connections with Buddhism. Some people like these pictures because they are clever sketches, almost cartoons. Others like them because they regard Dharma as a great historical personality who was very instrumental in shaping the East

Asian world. Still others, mainly Buddhists, like these pictures because of their religious and magical powers.

Dharma's history is interesting, firstly because he has two completely different histories, and secondly because both histories make good stories.

The first history says that he was a blue-eyed Indian monk who floated across the River Ganges on a reed and came to China where he preached the Great Vehicle or Mahayana form of Buddhism.

The earliest type of Buddhism is called the Small Vehicle or the Hinayana form of Buddhism. The Buddha taught that each person had to struggle to enlightenment by practising self-denial, self-discipline and by detachment from this world, which was to be achieved through meditation. Those who followed his way and became enlightened were called the Arhant or the disciples of Buddha.

Within four hundred years of the Buddha's death, Buddhist scholars reasoned that there were other good spirits who helped people to live good lives. These good spirits, whom ignorant people called gods and goddesses, lived in the same spirit world where the Buddha and the Arhant lived. They couldn't be enemies because they were good, so they must be friends, interested in helping mankind and making mankind better. The Buddhist heaven now not only had the Buddha and the Arhant but also the spirits of many gods and goddesses. These spirits must have obtained enlightenment; otherwise they could not have got into that world.

It was reasoned that some of these spiritual beings came from either another time or age, or perhaps from another world or even another universe. These were called the Transcendental Buddhas. The others had come from this world. These people, who one way or another, had attained full enlightenment were called the Bodhisattva. They were different from the Arhant, for the Arhant had gone into nirvana to join the universal spirit, whereas the Bodhisattvas had opted to postpone their entry into nirvana and to remain in this world because they wished to help others and console all who called on them. Also in this heaven were good kings who had helped the Buddhist cause while on earth. Even though they did not attain full enlightenment while in this world, they merited immortality, which freed them from reincarnation.

This new type of Buddhism with the Buddha, Arhant, Transcendental Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Immortal Kings and various kinds of Guardian Spirits became known as the Great Vehicle or Mahayana Buddhism. It was this form of Buddhism that Dharma brought into China from India.

The second history, perhaps more fanciful and questionable, is certainly more colourful, and is the history favoured by ordinary people. It says that Da Mou, a Chinese monk, was born just before AD500. Much later he came to be known as Dharma. He was in such a hurry to attain enlightenment that he spent all day studying Buddhist books and all night meditating. Once while meditating he fell asleep. He got so angry that he ripped off his eyelids. This is why his eyes look so big in pictures. Where his eyelids fell on the ground, a tea plant sprung up. Ever since, tea has helped monks and ordinary people to stay awake and attentive.

Da Mou read all the books about Buddha he could find in China and decided to go to India to look for more books and learn all that could be known about the Buddha. From his home in south China, he travelled west along the Silk Road into Persia; from there he went south through Afghanistan into Pakistan and finally ended up in Northern India, the homeland of the Buddha. He spent ten years there learning Sanskrit and other North Indian dialects in which Buddhist books were written. When he returned to China in 526, he brought many new books with him.

Back in China, he wrote a book about his travels in the countries west of China. Then he spent many years translating his new books into Chinese. These books held the new Mahayana Buddhism. His translations were so good and his teaching of the New Way of the Bodhisattvas so well accepted that 'everywhere he went a thousand flowers bloomed', and a thousand new converts were made. This new form of Buddhism spread rapidly all over China.

The Chinese king was very interested in the first book about the countries west of China and wanted to learn more about the strength of their armies because he wished to add those territories to his kingdom. Dharma tried to get the king interested in his new Buddhist books and the new teachings, but the king showed no interest. Although he tried for years, he failed to get the attention or rewards from the king that he thought he deserved. This failure soured his disposition, made him angry and cranky. He went into a sulk and retired to a hermitage in the mountains. For many years, he refused to talk to or teach anybody. There he continued to meditate and pray alone every day.

As time went on, his reputation for stubbornness grew, but so too did his reputation for holiness. He continued to refuse to instruct any disciples until a young man named Hui Ge came along. Hui Ge refused to take no for an answer. He waited outside the master's door for days on end. Finally to convince Dharma that he was really serious about studying the new doctrines, he cut off his hand. When the master saw this, he relented and agreed to teach him. Where Hui Ge's hand fell on the ground, it took root and grew into a banana tree.

These stories are gruesome to us, but the old storytellers added the graphic details to make the story stick in the memory. These shock tactics always worked.

In due course, Dharma overcame his anger, became perfect in the way of the Buddha, attained enlightenment, eventually became a Bodhisattva and is now called Bodhidharma. His disciple Hui Ge also became enlightened, thus proving that enlightenment was something that could be taught. Hui Ge in turn, using and recording the methods he learned from Dharma, became the new master, the first Zen master of China.

The next two most famous Zen masters were the contemporaries Huineng (638–712) and Shenxiu. A kitchen boy in the monastery, Huineng was always perfectly obedient and followed all the rules given to him by his superiors. He got abrupt enlightenment as a result of living the life of a zealous monk and became the Sixth Zen Patriarch after the death of Bodhidharma. He is regarded as the founder and first Zen master of the Southern School of

Chinese Zen. His contemporary Shenxiu, who was a very brilliant student, attained gradual enlightenment after much study and meditation. He became the founder and first Zen master of the Northern School of Chinese Zen.

Buddhism came to Korea about AD300. In 527, it was declared the state religion by the king. The Great Master Ŭisang (625–702) went to China to study Buddhism and to bring back the latest books. He returned in 676, and with the permission of the king, set up a temple where he preached Mahayana Buddhism and Zen and founded the Flower Garden School of Buddhism in Korea.

So Zen, together with Mahayana Buddhism and the Bodhisattvas, came early to Korea. From the beginning, this form of Buddhism was popular, and it has remained so to the present day. Possibly its emphasis on study, learning and meditation has made it so popular.

Dharma is regarded as the founder of Zen because he took Hui Ge as a pupil and showed it was possible to teach enlightenment. Also, because he brought in Mahayana Buddhism, he is credited with bringing in the Bodhisattvas and popularizing the Buddhist style of living, which follows the Way of the Bodhisattvas. He is also said to be the founder of the Pure Lands type of Buddhism, which appeared a little later, because he opened the doors to study, speculation and innovation.

Hinayana Buddhism concentrated on gaining personal salvation. This was obtained through enlightenment. This in turn was achieved by withdrawing from the world, practising austerities, and by meditating on the sutras and teaching of the Buddha. Mahayana Buddhism and Zen Buddhism followed the Way of the Bodhisattvas. This, too, brought about enlightenment but the method was different. The mind had to be disciplined, mainly through contemplating on a koan, a contradictory problem that has no logical solution. This eventually opened up the mind so that it could recognize the Buddha Spirit (the Universal Mind, or Tao,) that lay behind all reality. This enlightenment came suddenly and ensured personal salvation, but it also urged one to return to the world to work 'for the enlightenment of all sentient beings' (*The Spirit of Zen*, Alan W. Watts, Grove Press, New York, 1958, page 95).

The three pictures shown on pages 252 to 254 are representative of the ways that Dharma is drawn. They demonstrate why his pictures are so popular in Korea. The first, by Hyesan, was dashed off for me by the artist in less than fifteen minutes. This shows the old stubborn monk with the strange but kind eyes. The second picture shows the first history story of the Indian monk with the strange eyes (blue eyes), floating across the Ganges River on a reed. The third picture, based on the second history, is an icon or holy picture of Dharma the Bodhisattva, which helps one overcome anger and restore peace of mind. The monk who drew this picture has been drawing such pictures for twenty years. Before he attempts to draw pictures of Dharma, he fasts, meditates and prays for three days to purify his mind so that the pictures can be pure and have the power to grant peace. Buddhists believe that looking at the eyes of Dharma in these pictures, and thinking about how Dharma overcame his violent nature and then went on to achieve so much and become so holy, banishes anger and brings serenity.



Dharma Zen Master

Inscription: 'Dharma *taesa* (great priest).'

Artist's Name: Lee Ujin

Pen-name: Hyesan

All pictures of Dharma can be regarded as pictures of an Immortal because they show an old man full of vitality, a man at peace with himself and at peace with the world. As we saw earlier, pictures of Immortals are regarded as magic pictures, life-giving pictures, which not only wish the beholder a long and happy life but also have the magic power to grant this wish.

▣ BODHISATTVA KWANSEŬM

Strictly speaking, there is only one Buddha, the Indian mystic originally named Gautama Sakyamuni, who was the first to attain enlightenment. He discovered the reason for the continuous rounds of rebirths and the pains and suffering that everybody experiences in this world. The circle of reincarnations was caused by people's attachment to things. Getting rid of desire broke this attachment; then rebirth into this world would stop. The cessation of all



Dharma Standing on a Reed

Inscription: 'The great priest (or Bodhisattva) Dharma. If one is enlightened one can float on a reed and (everywhere one goes) a thousand flowers bloom.'

Artist's name: Lee Chongh'öl. Pen-name: Ilji



Dharma. The Zen Master

Inscription: '*Pulshim*, the mentality and mind of the Buddha, or Buddhist spirituality.'

Artist's name: Im Ch'unghaek. Pen-name: Sŏg'un. A Buddhist monk.

desire paved the way for enlightenment, a great flash of recognition that allowed one to see the whole world, spirit and matter, in proper perspective. This flash of enlightenment is so intense and it changes one to such an extent that one can never go back to being an ordinary person again. People who attain enlightenment became buddhas (become like the Buddha), and at death pass directly into the bliss of the Buddhist heaven, nirvana.

Bodhisattvas were people who attained enlightenment while on this earth and thus were entitled to go to nirvana when they died, but because they had so much compassion and pity for their fellow man, they put off their entry into heaven so that they could help others to get there. Kwanseŭm was the first of the Bodhisattvas and the greatest. Because he got enlightenment he can be called a buddha, but Buddhist scholars prefer to reserve this name for the First and Original Buddha, so they call him a bodhisattva or *posal*.

Kwanseŭm (Guanyin in Chinese, Kannon in Japanese) is officially called Avalokitesvara, 'The Lord who regards the world in mercy' or 'the One who observes the sounds of the world.' He is the Bodhisattva of mercy and compassion. Often he is depicted as having a hundred hands all stretched out and ready to help the people who call on him. Sometimes there is a big fan behind him made from the tail feathers of a peacock. The eyes in the feathers symbolize that Kwanseŭm has a hundred eyes; he sees everybody and everything, and he knows each person's troubles even before they pray to him.

Another symbol often used in pictures of this Bodhisattva is the willow tree. The branches of this tree are very sensitive to even the slightest breeze – just like Kwanseŭm *posal*, the Bodhisattva of Mercy whose ears are as sensitive as the willow tree. He can hear the cry and prayers of the weakest and most forgotten person.

The willow tree is also used as a symbol of feminine beauty as its branches are slender and curved. In some countries Kwanseŭm is shown as a beautiful young woman and the willow tree is read as a symbol of her femininity. This symbolism is never read into these pictures in Korea because here artists regard Kwanseŭm as being a man. (Strangely, Korean poetry seems to regard Kwanseŭm as female.) He is always depicted as having great power, authority and vitality.

One of the most famous and best known Buddhist prayers in Korea is 'Oh gracious and merciful buddha, you who are the Bodhisattva Kwanseŭm, have mercy on us.' (*Na mu amit'abul Kwanseŭm posal*.) The first part of the prayer is most often heard. Depending on how it is said, it can mean 'Oh Lord have mercy on us' or 'May God's will be done.' Sometimes it is used as an exclamation such as 'good grief', or almost as a swear word, but when the prayer is said in a formal or ritual manner, it seems to have the meaning given above.

As Kwanseŭm is the most popular Bodhisattva in Korea, naturally the classical artists drew many of these pictures for their Buddhist friends and relatives. In Buddhist art the ways of representing this Bodhisattva have become very standardized. The classical artists enjoyed more freedom, but even so they could not move too far from the norms. If they did the figure would be unrecognizable and would give no help to Buddhist believers in their prayers and devotions.



☐ HOLY MOTHER AND CHILD

Pictures of the Madonna and Child take as their subject a concept that was foreign to Korean artists until quite recently. These pictures are now called Holy Mother and Child Pictures (*sŏngmoja*), and it is only within the last half century that classical Korean artists have even attempted to draw them. This is of course a Christian subject, which Catholic artists have been painting in the West for centuries. To Western artists, it now only presents artistic problems, but to Korean artists, it also presents psychological and technical problems.

Pictures of a mother with her son have been done by Korean classical artists, but because of the low position of women in Confucian society and the very high value put on male children, these pictures over-emphasized the son and heir, and presented the mother as a submissive prop in the background. Dressing the mother in rich and royal clothes does not change her status; the young male heir is the centre of the picture, the most vital element in the drawing. He is far more important than the woman who is his mother. Western artists have no trouble balancing the mother and her son; making them both look of equal importance. Korean artists are still struggling with the problem.

Korean artists have also a technical problem. Classical art taught them to draw

Bodhisattva Kwanseŭm

Inscription:

'Amen. Loving and merciful most high king
Kwanseŭm *posal* (Bodhisattva);
In our great suffering save us.
Oh beautiful *posal* come quickly
To us who are in this world of strife
And raise us up to virtue and saintliness.'

Artist's name: Kim Kit'aek

Pen-name: Kŭmsan, Ŭnho a Buddhist monk.

people as abstractions, figures that represent any man or woman. Their pictures of the Madonna and Child turn out like 'Beautiful Women Pictures' where the style and beauty of the clothes the figures are wearing is what seems to stand out. These pictures can be colourful and beautiful, but they do not show much character in the faces.

Some artists in drawing mother and child pictures use the skills that they usually employ in drawing pictures of the Immortals. These pictures, done with long thin lines, should look as if they were dashed off at speed. Actually they are drawn slowly with a very steady hand in order to keep the lines at an even thickness. If done well the Immortals look ethereal and insubstantial; if not, they look as if they were cut out of cardboard, flat and characterless. Painters of Immortals use skills akin to that of cartoonists to put expressions on the faces. Often these expressions do not work well on the faces of Mary and Jesus.

There is another group of artists in Korea who use the brush and ink techniques of the classical painters. These are the portrait painters. These artists have been trained to draw the human face accurately so that the person's character is captured. Classical artists look down on these portrait painters as being merely skilled draftsmen who are proficient in

Seated Bodhisattva Kwansŭm

Inscription:

'Oh great King,
Kwansŭm,
You can help us
In all our sufferings.
Because we are in dire distress
Come down and help us
To rise above the strifes
Which are all around us.'

Artist's name: Kim Kit'aek

Pen-name: Kŭmsan, Ŭnho a Buddhist monk.





Mother and Child

Artist's Name: Ch'ae Yonghŭi (1847–1941)

Pen-name: Sŏkchi

only one skill. This is often true, because even though these artists can draw an interesting face, they have not studied how to draw the human body, or how to draw clothes properly. When these artists try to draw the Madonna and Child, even though the faces are good, the overall picture has an amateurish look.

聖母子像

一九五四年歲甲午年春
 吳昌碩畫



Holy Mother and Child

The Child Jesus is holding a swallow in His hands. According to an old apocryphal story, He fashioned it while playing with some wet clay. He made it so perfectly that it became alive and later flew away.

The child is dressed in a 'magpie coat'. (The symbolism of this coat is explained under the red phoenix.)

Artist's name: Chang Usŏng. Pen-name: Wölch'on (1912–present)



Holy Mother and Child with White Roses

Roses are a symbol of eternal youth and beauty. White is the symbol of the spiritual world.

Artist's name: O Söngbok, Pen-name: Mangye



Holy Mother with the Child Jesus

Artist's name: Kim Chǒngnye. Pen-name: Chiwǒn



Mother and Child with Magnolias

This is not necessarily a Holy Mother and Child picture but it is based on the Western concept that both the mother and the child are of equal importance. The magnolias are a symbol of spring, a new year and also a new era.
 Artist's name: Pak Yŏnok. Pen-name: Poŭn

Some Korean painters follow the Western styles of poster painters. They produce colourful, striking pictures that look good on Christmas cards. Generally these pictures are not very satisfying.

Other Korean artists imitate the style of Western oil painters. Although they use brush and ink, they treat their medium as if it were oil paint. This enables them to give character to the faces of Mary and to the child Jesus. These pictures tend to be very personalized; the figures look like people you know so that you wonder who was the artist's model. They make interesting pictures but they lose their classical oriental look.

All the best Korean artists wish to make the Holy Mother and Child look Korean. They use Korean clothes, either the clothes worn by the royal family, or by the nobility, or by common people, depending on whether they wish to emphasize the royalty, nobility or human side of Mary and Jesus. These clothes automatically put Mary and Jesus into the past, make them part of history and define them as being worthy of the best treatment derived from the golden age of classical Korean art.

These pictures often use flowers and trees as a background. Flowers and trees were symbols used by the ancient artists. They symbolize such abstractions as perpetual beauty, youth, vitality, everlasting life or one of the virtues.

I think that even to the present day most Korean Catholics prefer to have a Western picture of the Holy Mother and Child in their homes. Many women reproduce their favourite renaissance picture in needlework. Perhaps some time soon Korean classical artists will solve the problem of how to paint Mary and her Son in such a way that ordinary Catholics will use their pictures instead of pictures done by Western artists. Such pictures will have to be very good, but I feel confident that Korean artists will produce such masterpieces of classical oriental art in the near future.

▣ THE LIFE OF CHRIST

Very few Korean artists have even attempted to draw pictures of Christ using the brush and ink styles developed by classical Confucian scholars. Three top artists of the twentieth century, Kim Ŭnho (Idan), Kim Kijang (Unbo) and Chang Usaeng (Wölch'on) have tried.

A picture by Chang Usaeng (Wölch'on), which I have entitled Holy Mother and Child, is shown in the previous section.

Kim Ŭnho (Idan), the last of the court artists, did a 'Resurrection' which never became very popular, although it did show other artists what could be done using brush and ink skills.

Kim Kijang (Unbo) seems to have been a lot more successful. He used the genre style to depict Jesus as a gentleman scholar teaching people; he dressed him in Korean clothes against backgrounds of Korean type houses and scenery. His series of scenes taken from the gospels were done over fifty years ago when Korea was going through a very hard time on account of wars and famine. Still his pictures are beautiful, optimistic, full of life and always interesting to look at. But then there are few artists anywhere near his standard.



Nativity

Artist's name: Kim Kich'ang

Pen-name: Unbo (1914-present)

The picture of the Crucifixion on page 266 is more in the Zen style. It implies suffering and acceptance, even while using the minimum of detail. The inscription also carries this message of acceptance, 'Not my will but Thine be done.' This picture may not be a masterpiece, but it shows another way in which traditional Korean art can be used to tackle new subject matters.

The realistic and colourful pictures of Western oil painters are still very popular with many Korean Catholics. No doubt, this will change in a few years as they learn to appreciate the beautiful and delicate pictures produced by their own painters using the ancient styles handed down to them by the old masters.



Nativity
 (From a Christmas card.)
 Anonymous



The Last Supper
 Artist's name: Kim Kich'ang. Pen-name: Unbo (1914–present)



Crucifixion

Inscription:

'The Lord's servant,

The Lord's portion.

I pray that everything be done

According to the Lord's will.'

Pen-name: Kūmsan



Resurrection

Artist's name: Kim ũho. Pen-name: Idan (1892–1979)

PART II

Dictionary of the Symbolism in
Korean Literati Ink Brush Painting



The nine most important teachings (sagudo).



The Third of the Eight Episode Pictures

These Chinese scholars, who lived during the Jin Dynasty, are called the Four Silver Haired Gentlemen of Shang (Sang) Mountain. They fled from the courts of the Chinese Emperor because they refused to be part of the corrupt system that governed the country at the time. They lived in hiding in the Sang (Shang) Mountains where they passed the time playing 'Go', a form of Chinese checkers.

The Korean Literati Painters often drew the Eight Episode Pictures to teach Confucian morality. The moral taught in this picture is that a true Confucian gentleman should always follow his conscience even though this might entail living as a fugitive, an outlaw, and even a pauper in the mountains.

Introduction



Most Korean pictures have a symbolism that can be recognized by the average Korean. Some have a hidden meaning that only the literati can read.

There are several ways to 'read' a literati painting:

1. The artist paints one object instead of another. For example, stork, crane, swan and big white bird are interchangeable. Any one of them can be read as *bak* (학) a stork, *paengno* (백로) a white bird, *paekcho* (백조) a swan, or *ilp'um* (일품) a minister. The Manchurian crane was regarded as the biggest of the birds, the First Minister (일품) of the bird kingdom. Another common example is tigers and pumas. These animals have different names in Korean, but the literati painters called them both *p'yobŏm* (표범).
2. In Sino-Korean, many words have the same pronunciation; they sound the same, but they have different meanings. In some cases, the words may not sound alike to the modern ear, but a hundred years ago the Korean pronunciation of the Chinese characters was not standardized and there were many Chinese dialects that gave a variety of pronunciations.
Konggye (공계, 公鷄) is the word for a cock. *Kyemyŏng* (계명, 鷄鳴) is the word for crowing. The two together *kongmyŏng* (공명) means cock crow or a crowing cock. However *kong* (공) can also mean honour or honourable, *myŏng* (명) can mean a name. The two together *kongmyŏng* (공명, 功名) can mean a famous name. The only way to advance oneself and become famous in Korea under the Confucian system was to pass the official state examinations, so a picture of a cock crowing is really a wish that you pass the state examinations and become famous. This then is a pun on words with the same sounds in Sino-Korean.
3. Sometimes, the characters are reversed. For example, a fresh lotus is called *saengyŏn* (생연). Reversed, this becomes *yŏnsaeng* (연생), which means 'always alive'.

4. More complex characters are made up of several parts. The whole character has one meaning but the parts have different meanings. In some pictures, the parts are read separately. For example a duck is called *ap* (鴨, 鴨). The first part of this character (甲) when used alone is *kap* (甲, 甲) which means 'first place' or 'getting honours in the state examinations'. So the duck picture really reads 'Pass your examinations'.
5. Sometimes, a Chinese word sounds like a Korean word but has a completely different meaning, so you end up with a bilingual pun.
6. Sometimes, the puns are based on two Chinese characters that look alike but have different sounds and different meanings. An example of this is given under Dog and Tree where the two characters *sul* (戌, 戌) and *su* (全, 全) are read as *sulsu* (全戌戌) a dog that protects the house, and as 'we must keep the agreement that we have made'.
7. Another way to read these pictures is just to read the symbolism that is normally associated with the objects drawn. For example, a cock is the male of the species, the male is always regarded as the one in charge, the head of the family, the head of the house. So a cock with a hen drawn behind it or beneath it is a symbol of peace in the house because the man is in control and the wife is obedient.
8. Some literati pictures are drawn to remind the viewer of a famous poem, either Chinese or Korean, or of a famous quotation from the classics. For example, a picture of three or more fish of the same species is a reminder of what Confucius said after he met Lao. The quotation starts 'Birds fly, fish swim, animals run . . . I know how these are caught . . . Today I met Lao, he is a dragon. I do not know how to catch a dragon.' (See Fish, Part II.)
9. Where figures are drawn so that they seem to be more important than the background scenery, they are probably Immortals, sages, or characters from Chinese history, Taoist tales or famous novels. Identifying them may be difficult but is great fun. There is often an interesting story associated with each of these pictures. Some of them, those most often found in Korea, are to be found in the sections entitled Eight Episode Pictures and Immortals.

When a man is drawn small, he is a symbol of man in the abstract, one of the Three Abstractions, Heaven, Earth and Man that make up the totality of Creation. These small outline drawings of a figure or figures are never found in the merely literati pictures; they belong to the mainstream of East Asian art.

I have arranged the symbols used in the literati pictures in alphabetical order so that they can be easily found. But as Part II is meant to be more than a dictionary, it is hoped that the reader will get an insight into the philosophy and thinking of the artists who drew the pictures.

Sections written between these < . . . > symbols can be skipped by those who are not familiar with the Korean language.

Most of the information in Part II has been gleaned from *The Rules for Reading Oriental Art* (東洋畫 읽는 법, - 동양화 읽는 법) by Cho Yongjin (조용진). (Cho

followed by a number refers to pages in his book.) There are other ways of arriving at the meanings hidden in the pictures of the literati artists, but the explanations given by Professor Cho seem to be the simplest.

ART AND THE ARTISTS OF EAST ASIA AND KOREA

East Asian artists aspire to being Confucian gentlemen. In Korea, Confucianists are more correctly called Neo-Confucianists because they are more influenced by Taoism and Zen Buddhism than they care to admit.

The philosophers of Taoism said the Universe was controlled by the Universal Mind, Buddhists said this Mind was the same as the Buddha Mind. Zen Buddhists said that union with this Mind gave control over everything. Neo-Confucianists said this Mind was the God of Heaven whose will had to be obeyed even by the king. Union with this Mind gave the king the Mandate of Heaven, the right to rule. If the king did not follow the Mind of Heaven he lost the mandate. This development was introduced during the Song dynasty. Earlier Confucianists said that the will of the king was the only authority on earth.

The rules for becoming a perfect Confucian gentleman were laid down over 2,000 years ago. Learn to talk properly, learn to read Chinese characters, learn to write beautifully, learn the Chinese classics, practise the Confucian virtues and learn to govern men. To do this one had to study the example of the masters. The same rules applied to artists. How to draw and what to draw had already been defined by the masters. Only by first learning everything that had been done before could one come to the point where one could try something new.

So art remained not only traditional but its aims remained restricted because it was always teaching how to become the perfect gentleman. Art was not there to show the soul of the artist, but to draw the soul of Confucianism. In this it is very different from Western art, which had no such restraints since medieval times.

Does East Asian art have any future now that Confucianism is waning? Although Confucianism as a political and social system is losing ground, its philosophy contains eternal truths. But art is not just confined to Confucianism, it also expresses the truths that exist in Taoism and Zen Buddhism. It also captures the beauty that exists in nature and in the mind of the artist. As a result it will always be valid and popular. East Asian art will change, as it has changed rapidly over the last half century; it will continue to find new subjects, new techniques, new ways to express its old beliefs. Still, the artist will have to learn the old, study what went before, in order to understand and appreciate it fully. The modern artist must train both his hand and mind if he wishes to paint in the traditional and ancient way of the masters (Cho 71–84).

APRICOT

In some English books apricot is used to translate the Korean word for peaches. Plums, peaches, cherries, hawthorns and apricots are the same family. Wild plums and cultivated plums bloom first with pinkish-white blossoms. The peaches and apricots bloom slightly later with a more reddish-pink blossom. The cherries bloom later with a whitish colour, but they do not figure much in Korean art. They are more Japanese than Korean. I use the plum blossom as the translation of the Korean word *maehwa* (매화 梅花) and the peach blossom as the translation of the Korean word *poksung'a* (복숭아꽃). (See Moon over Branch of Plum Tree and Plum Blossoms.)

BAMBOO

The bamboo is a symbol of a long life with vigour and vitality. It is also a symbol of the perfect Confucian gentleman. The word for bamboo sounds like the word for congratulations. Pictures of bamboo are used to congratulate someone on their sixtieth birthday. The word for bamboo shoots sounds like the word for grandson, so young bamboo can be read as grandsons or descendants.

The bamboo is one of the Four Gentlemen. It is usually one of the three items (or four) drawn in pictures known as the Three Friends (or the Four Friends). (See Four Gentlemen, Friends – Three, and Friends – Four of the Cold.)

Bamboo grows best in deep, well-drained soil. It does not grow on rocks or in waterlogged places. When we see bamboo drawn between rocks or beside water we know that the artist is not trying to hold a mirror up to nature but is drawing a picture with a literati-style hidden meaning.

Bamboo was supposed to bloom once every sixty years. In East Asia, the year has two names: one from the cycle of the ten celestial branches, the other from the twelve animals of the zodiac. (For a fuller explanation of the sixty-year cycle see Celestial Stems.) It takes ten years to complete one cycle of the ten celestial branches, and it takes twelve years to complete one cycle of the twelve animals of the zodiac, but it takes sixty years to get back again to a year with the same two names that you started with. Anyone who lives for sixty years and completes this sixty-year cycle celebrates with a great feast, called *hoegap* (회갑) when friends come and offer their congratulations. So the bamboo, which was believed to bloom only once every sixty years, became a symbol of this sixty-year cycle. In the old days, before modern medicines, to live for sixty years was an achievement. To young students, studying Chinese characters and literature so that they could pass the state examinations, it seemed very old indeed. It was probably these young students who invented the literati symbols. For them living to be sixty-years old was the same as a very long life. So the bamboo is also a symbol of a long life.

Actually, bamboo blooms more often. Different varieties bloom at different periods. Some Korean varieties bloom every eighteenth year, others every twenty-fourth year.

Bamboo is also a symbol of the virtue of piety. The honouring of parents and ancestors was a virtue highly prized in Confucian philosophy.

<The Sino-Korean word for bamboo sounds like the word for congratulations. A bamboo is *chuk* (죽 竹) and the word for congratulations is *ch'uk* (축 祝). The word for a bamboo shoot *sun* (순 筍) sounds like the word for grandson *son* (손 孫). Bamboo shoot is *chuksun* (죽순 竹筍). The word for grandson is *sonja* (손자 孫子). Here the *sun* (순 筍) of bamboo sounds like the *son* (손 孫) of *sonja* grandson. Congratulations on the birth of a grandson is *ch'ukson* (축손 祝孫).> (See Bamboo, Big and Small.) (Cho 57, 58)

BAMBOO, BIG AND SMALL

Big bamboo is called king bamboo (*wangdae* 왕대, or *kojuk* 고죽). Although more impressive and beautiful than the small varieties, king bamboo is seldom drawn by literati artists. The shoots are a little bitter, whereas the shoots of thin bamboo are sweeter. The thin bamboo is associated with Meng Zong (or Maeng Chong as he is known in Korea) (맹종 孟宗) the young man in Chinese literature who watered the ground with his tears and heated the ground with his body to make the bamboo sprout in the winter so that he could feed the shoots to his old sick mother and cure her ailments. Meng Zong (맹종) is the embodiment of the Confucian virtue of piety, that is, duty to parents. This bamboo symbolizes a dutiful son. So pictures of thin bamboo with young shoots can be read as, 'Congratulations on the birth of a grandson.'

<Thin bamboo is called *maengjongjuk* (맹종죽 孟宗竹) and the shoots are called *chuksun* (죽순 竹筍). As mentioned above, *chuk* (죽) sounds like the word for congratulations *ch'uk*, (축) and *sun* (순) sounds like the word for grandson *son*, (손 孫). Grandson = *sonja* (손자 孫子).> (Cho 58)

Bamboo – Four Friends (See Friends, also Friends – Three.)

Bamboo – Four Gentlemen (See Four Gentlemen.)

BAMBOO, FRAGRANCES OF THE FOUR SEASONS

A picture of plum, orchid, chrysanthemum and bamboo is called 'Pure Fragrance of the Four Seasons.' It denotes all the virtues that a true Confucian gentleman should possess. The bamboo has no scent, but the scents of all the flowers of the four seasons are said to be locked in its fibres. Alive all through the year, it soaks in the scents of all the flowers no matter when they bloom.

Koreans do not like the word for four *sa* (사 四). It sounds the same as *sa* (사 死), meaning death. When Fragrances of the Four Seasons *sashi kumbang* (사시군방) are drawn in Korea, usually another tree or plant is added to make the number five. This extra plant is often a pine tree. Although there are five plants, the picture is still called Fragrances of the Four Seasons. (See Four.)

Plum, orchid, chrysanthemum and bamboo are often drawn separately in four matching scrolls or pictures. No Korean would hang these four together in one room. If there is a fifth matching scroll, or a picture of a pine tree, for example, the set of five can be hung together, but this set is

never called Fragrances of the Four Seasons; it is called the Four Gentlemen. Normally only one or two are used to decorate a room. (See Four Gentlemen.)

Bamboo, Pine, Plum (See Pine Tree, and Friends – Three.)

Bamboo, Pine, Plum, Rock (See Pine Tree, and Friends – Four of the Cold.)

Bamboo, Pine, Stork (See Stork.)

BAMBOO, ROCKS

Message: ‘Congratulations on a long life.’ Or ‘Greetings on your sixtieth birthday.’ This picture is given to a person on their sixtieth birthday.

<Bamboo *chuk*, (죽竹) sounds like congratulations *ch'uk*, (축祝). Rock *sŏk*, (석石) sounds like *su*, (수壽), the word for life. Sixtieth birthday is *hoegap* (회갑回甲)>

BAMBOO SHOOT – ONE

Message: ‘Congratulations on the birth of a grandson.’

<Bamboo *chuk*, (죽竹) sounds like the word for congratulations *ch'uk*, (축祝). Bamboo shoot, *sun*, (순筍) sounds like *son* (손, 孫 or 손자 孫子) meaning grandson.>

BAMBOO SHOOTS – TWO

Message: ‘Congratulations on the birth of two grandsons (twins).’ See the entry above for an explanation of how this reading is arrived at. (Cho 58)

Bamboo, Pine, Two White-Headed Birds (See Pine Tree; Pine Tree, Bamboo and Two White-Headed Birds.)

Bamboo, Three Friends (See Friends – Three, also Friends.)

BAMBOO, WATER-ROCKS

Water-rocks are strangely shaped rocks that have been formed by dropping water, or by having been rolled in a river, or by having been partly dissolved by lake or sea water.

<Bamboo *chuk*, (죽竹) sounds like the word for congratulations *ch'uk*, (축祝). Water-rocks or stones with strange shapes are *susŏk* (수석 = 水石), i.e. stones formed by water. This word sounds like *susŏk* (수석 = 壽石) a stone with life or a



PICTURE 1
Bamboo and Rocks



PICTURE 2
Bamboo Shoots

life-giving rock. The word for life is *su* (수 =壽). As there is usually more than one rock this *su* can be doubled to *susu* (수수) which means a very long life.> (Cho 57)

BATS

Bats are a symbol of good luck or blessings.

<The word for bat is *pakchwi* (박쥐) and it can be shortened to *pak* (박). This sounds like the word for good luck or blessing *pok* (복). There is a rare Sino-Korean word for a female bat pronounced *pok* (복). Possibly this word is the connection between the bat and blessings.>

BATS – FIVE

Five bats stand for the five blessings, which were a summation of all the good things a person should desire.

<Five bats *obak* (오박) sounds like *obok* (오복), five blessings.> (See Blessings – Five.)

Berries – Red, Boxthorn and Chrysanthemums (See Chrysanthemums.)

Big Orange, a Collection of Flowers and Things (See Flowers, also Buddha's Hand Orange.)

Big Peaches, Buddha's Hand (See Buddha's Hand Orange.)

BIRDS

Sparrows, small birds that look like sparrows, and magpies are symbols of joy and happiness.

<Sparrows and magpies are *chak* (작) (참새 작 새 까치 작) in Sino-Korean. This sounds the same as the Sino-Korean word *chak* (작, 織, or 緯 緯 작작하다, with largesse, or unrestrained) which is always read as unrestrained joy or pleasure.

Another word for joy is *hŭi* (희쁨) and this word is usually read whenever these birds are drawn. So magpies or sparrows can be read as joy and happiness.> (See Magpies, also Sparrows, and also Sparrows – Yellow.) (Cho 65)

BIRDS, CATS

Message: 'Wishing you joy and happiness on your seventieth birthday.' Normally birds and cats are enemies, but in pictures they can be drawn as friends. Such pictures are a symbol of peace. In Korea, a symbol of peace has the magic power to give peace. In the literati context this picture means: 'Happiness and joy on your seventieth birthday.' To young



PICTURE 3
Cat and Sparrows

literati students, seventy was very old. So this picture can also be read: 'May you live happily to a very old age.'

<Cat *myo* (묘 猫) sounds like *mo* (모 耄) which means an old man or a man who has reached his seventieth birthday. Bird *chak* (雀) is read as *hŭi* (희 喜) which means happiness.> (See Cat; also Cat and Birds; and also Yellow Sparrows.) (Cho 67)

Birds – White-Headed, and Peony Rose (See Peony Rose.)

Birds – White-Headed, Two, and Bamboo and Pine (See Pine.)

BLACK BIRD

Any black bird represents a crow. (See Crow, Magnolia and Wild Rose.)

BLESSINGS

Many Korean pictures wish blessings on the person to whom the picture is given. Some wish the blessing of many sons, others wish long life, success in examinations, a happy marriage, etc. Some of these are magic pictures with the power to give the blessing they depict. Others are just greeting cards that wish blessings on some big occasion. Literati pictures depict one, a few or all of the classical five blessings. (See Blessings – Five.)

BLESSINGS – FIVE

Classical literature gives two sets of the five blessings.

Before the Tang dynasty, the five blessings were: 1. Long life, *su* (수). 2. Riches, *pu* (부). 3. Wealth and Peace, *kangnyŏng* (강녕). 4. Shining Virtue, *subodŏk* (수효덕). 5. Life to the end without distress, *kojongmyŏng* (고종명).

<*Ko* (고) means accident or pain; *jong* (終) means the last things, death; *myŏng* (명) means life. Thus, *kojongmyŏng* means to live one's full span of life, without disaster or pain, and to die peacefully.>

After Tang the list of blessings changed to 1. Long life, *su* (수). 2. Wealth, *pu* (부). 3. High position or fame, *kogwi* (고귀). 4. Many sons and descendants, *taja* (다자). 5. Radiant Virtue, or getting praise and honour from others, *subodŏk* (수효덕).

(Another list of the five blessings is given under Flowers, a Collection of Flowers and Things.)

A son in high position in the government was very important in post-Tang Neo-Confucian society. Having many sons increased the chances that at least one of them might make it to a top position in the government. In the Confucian system, one son in a powerful position guaranteed the advancement of all the family. Thus, passing the state examinations was all-important. A bright son was a great blessing. He was easy to educate. He could pass both parts of the examinations at one sitting and thus be eligible for a high position. A dull son might take years of expensive studies to pass the examinations one at a time. Even if eventually he passed the examinations, low grades meant a very low position in the civil service. (See Buddha's Hand Orange.) (Cho 87)

BLESSINGS – ONE HUNDRED

I do not think a list was ever made of the hundred blessings although these blessings were often mentioned in Chosŏn dynasty Korea. Many Korean artists painted pictures featuring various flowers, trees and artefacts. Each represents an abstract idea, arrived at by one of the puns or tricks of the literati painters; these ideas or words in turn represent one of the hundred blessings. This manipulation of images into words or ideas to represent the hundred blessings is very traditional, but often what is called a blessing would have shocked the older scholars. The old scholars put more emphasis on virtue than on material well-being.

BOOKS AND BOOKCASE

Message: 'Study hard and become an official in the king's service.' Pictures with books, or bookcases with books, convey the message: 'Study many books zealously, pass your examinations and get a high position from the king.' To pass the state examinations, one had to read and study many books. These books were the tools the student used to build his future. The books or bookcases are usually divided into six sections or compartments, signifying the six grades of officials.

<These grades were: *kap* (과), *ul* (을), *pyŏng* (평), *chŏng* (정), *mu* (무), *ki* (기).>
(For this method of counting up to ten, see Celestial Stems.) (Cho 79)

BOOKS, BOOKCASES AND FISHBOWL

Message: 'Study many books zealously, pass your examinations and get a high position from the king.' The fish in the fish bowl is a mandarin fish, a symbol of the king. The king gave the official appointments to students that passed their examinations.



PICTURE 4

Books and Bookcases

PICTURE 5

Grapes and Gourds

<The mandarin fish is *kwŏl* (꺤). In Korean it is *ssogari* (쏘가리 = 鰻魚). If these Sino-Korean characters are separated, the first part is *kwŏl* (鰻 = 쓰러질 꺤) which means to fall or tumble down. The second part *ŏ* (魚 = 물고기 어) means a fish. The royal palace is called *kunggwŏl* (궁꺤闕). The king's dwelling place *kwŏl* (꺤闕) is synonymous with the king himself.> (See Fish – Two Mandarin Fish.) (Cho 76)

BOTTLE GOURD

Message: 'May you have many sons and descendants.' A bottle gourd is often used as a phallic symbol, it represents a son or many sons. In literati paintings it is a vine-type plant and carries the wish that you may have many sons and descendants who will carry your name through all the ages.

<The word for bottle gourd is *boribyŏngbak* 호리병박, which has no particular literati meaning. If the bottle gourd is read as a vine, it is *mandae* (만대蔓帶). Different Chinese characters with the same sound *mandae* (만대萬代) produce meanings like 'all generations' or 'everlasting.'> (See Vines.) (Cho 89)

BOTTLE GOURD AND COCK

Message: 'May your children and descendants have many virtues and last forever.' The cock is a symbol of 'many virtues', and the bottle gourd is read as a vine, meaning 'generations lasting forever'.

<The Sino-Korean word for a cockcrow is *kongmyŏng* (공명). *Konggye* (공계, 公鷄) is the word for a cock. *Kyemyŏng* (계명, 鷄鳴) is the word for crowing. The two together with different characters, *kongmyŏng* (공명, 功名), can mean a famous name, an illustrious name acquired by practising many virtues. Bottle gourds (see above) are read as vines, *mandae* (만대蔓帶), which sounds the same as *mandae* (만대萬代), meaning generations lasting forever.> (See Vines. For different meanings attached to the cock symbol, see Cock.) (Cho 91)
Boxthorn, Chrysanthemums, Red Berries (See Chrysanthemums.)

BUDDHA'S HAND ORANGE

Message: 'May you receive all the great blessings and live a long life.'

This is the *citrus medica*. It is a kind of orange, but the Korean name for it is *pulsu'gam* (불수감), a persimmon, literally Buddha-hand-persimmon. A persimmon in Korean is *kam* (감, k becomes g between vowels). The Korean name for the *citrus medica* comes from the fruit, which has ridges that look like the fingers of Buddha. The hand of the Buddha gives blessings to all men. So a picture of the fruit of this tree is a wish that you receive all blessings from the Buddha.



PICTURE 6
Bottle Gourds and Cock



PICTURE 7

Buddha's Hand Flowers

<Buddha *pul* (불), hand *su* (수), persimmon *kam* (감) gives *pulsu'gam* (불수감), the Buddha's Hand Orange.>

A picture of the flowers of this tree gives, or at least expresses the wish to give the five blessings. This is because the flower looks like a bat, in fact, a big bat. A big bat means the five blessings. (See Blessings – Five.)

<The word for bat is *pakchwi* (박쥐). This can be shortened to *pak* (박). The word for a big bat is *taebak* (대박). *Tae* (대) = big. *Pak* (박, *bak*: p becomes b between vowels) is a bat. This sounds like *taebok* (대복). Again *tai* (대) = big and *pok* (or *bok*, 복) = blessings. The big blessings always signify the five blessings listed by the scholars. Note that these are Confucian blessings.> (Note that the fruit symbolizes blessings in general, all the blessings that the Buddha can give; and the flower symbolizes the five blessings.)

Things get a bit more complicated when the literati painters draw the fruit of the pomegranate tree with the same shape as the Buddha's hand orange. Pomegranates also denote blessing, the blessing of many sons. The context of the picture sometimes makes it possible to know which blessings are symbolized. If it is impossible to decide which fruit is drawn, one is free to consider the picture as depicting both and hence both kinds of blessings. (See Pomegranates.) (Cho 83)

BUDDHA'S HAND ORANGE AND BIG PEACHES

Message: 'Wishing you the great blessings, namely, the five blessings, and also wishing you a long life.' Although the wild orange fruit of the Buddha's

hand tree only symbolizes blessings in general, that is, all the blessings that the Buddha can give, it is the blessings associated with the flowers of the tree that are read in this picture. The flowers of the Buddha's Hand Orange look like big bats. Big bat in Sino-Korean sounds like great blessings. The great blessings are the five blessings desired by Confucian scholars. (See Buddha's Hand Orange above, also Blessings – 'Five.)

In Chinese literature, big peaches are called heavenly peaches. These peaches grew in the Taoist heaven. They are magic peaches that give long life and even eternal life to those who eat them. So these peaches can be read as 'a very long life'. (See Peaches – Heavenly Peaches.)

<In Sino-Korean heavenly peaches are called *Ch'ondo* (천도 天桃). *Ch'ön* (천 天) is heaven, and *to* (도 桃) is a peach (t becomes d between vowels). Because these heavenly peaches give immortal life they are called *taesu* (대수 大壽) which is made up of the word for great *tae* (대 大), and the word for life or a very long life *su* (수 壽). If many peaches are drawn, it is read as *tasu* (다수 多壽), which can also be read as many lives (*ta* 다 多 = many).

In the same way, if more than five Buddha's Hand Orange flowers are drawn, the message is read as *tabok* (다복 多福), many blessings. If there are many peaches and flowers, the message can be read as *taebok taesu* (대복대수 大福大壽), 'Have many blessings and a great life,' or it can be read as *taesu tabok* (대수다복 大壽多福), 'Have a great life and many blessings.'> (Cho 62, 116)

BUTTERFLIES

Butterflies are a symbol of one's eightieth birthday and also a symbol of a very long life. The word for a butterfly sounds like the word for the eightieth birthday. To live to the age of eighty is to live a long life, so butterflies can be read as 'a long life' or 'Live to a great age.'

<Butterfly = *chöp* (접 蝶). This sounds like the Sino-Korean word for the eightieth birthday = *chil* (칠 壽)>

Butterflies and Cat (See Cat and Butterfly.)

Butterflies, Cat, Chrysanthemum and Grasshopper (See Chrysanthemums.)

Butterflies, Cat, Peony Rose (See Peony Rose.)

Butterflies, China Pink Flowers (See China Pinks.)

Butterflies, Day Lily, Rocks (See Rocks.)

Butterflies, Peony Rose, Plum blossoms and Rocks (See Peony Rose.)

Butterflies and Rocks (See Rock and Butterflies.)



PICTURE 8
Buddha's Hand Orange and Big Peaches

CAMELLIA

The camellia is a symbol of spring. In modern Korea there are two schools of traditional ink brush art, the Seoul School and the Southern School. The Seoul School is usually more colourful as the pictures are used to ornament modern apartments. The Southern School is closer to the classical paintings of Southern Song. This style is more subdued; it suggests things in nature rather than trying to represent every detail of nature. Both schools are traditional; they follow the masters; their works are based on the Chinese classics. Both are now being influenced by Western art and the need to become modern.

One of the innovations found in the Korean Southern School is the use of the camellia. In Chinese paintings and in the older classical Korean paintings, the camellia was a symbol of spring. In modern Korea, it has become a symbol of winter. It appears in 'Three Friends of the Cold' and in 'Fragrances of the Four Seasons Gathered in One Place,' where it is a symbol of winter. Camellias grow in the south of Korea. They bloom in winter even in snow. Korean artists in these regions have now abandoned the classical symbolism. (For symbols of spring and more about the symbolism of the camellia, see Pine Tree, also Daffodil and Plum Blossom. Also Friends – Three, and Four Seasons – The Fragrances of.)

CARP

According to Chinese legends, the carp was able to become a dragon. Old Korean legends favour the idea that it was the snake that could become a dragon. Literati painters because they were trained in the Chinese classics normally follow the Chinese mythology.

The carp when young lived in the deep rivers. As it grew older it jumped up the waterfalls, battled its way up the fast flowing waters until it reached the streams flowing down the mountains. By now it had grown big and powerful, so when the rains flooded these streams, it was able to jump from one pool to the next, climbing the waterfalls until it reached the top of the mountain. From there, with one mighty effort, it leapt and swam up through the rain clouds until it reached the heavens. At this stage it turned into a dragon and became immortal.

So, the carp has become a symbol of a person who by great endeavour can transform himself from being just another fish in a pond into something with power and glory. It became a symbol of the student who studied hard, passed the state examinations and rose to high position in the court. As only a boy could sit these examinations, the carp became a symbol of a son, especially a clever son who could bring honour, glory and wealth to himself and his family.

In many of the literati pictures, the carp is a symbol of the examinations themselves. The examinations were in two parts. One carp symbolized the first part and two carp symbolized the whole examination. (See Magic Mushrooms, also Magic Jewel.)

CARP – TWO, ONE BIG, ONE SMALL

These symbolize the two parts of the State Examinations. Message: 'Study hard and pass both parts of your examinations.'



PICTURE 9

Two Carp, One Big, One Small, Minnows and Water Chestnuts

CARP – TWO, MINNOWS AND WATER CHESTNUTS

Message: 'While you are young, study hard in a foreign land (China) and pass both parts of your examinations.' Some very bright students were sent to China to study.

This reading is obtained by a very involved juggling of words for minnows and water chestnuts.

CARP – THREE OR MORE

This picture is really a reference to the quotation in the Chinese classics where Confucius talks about meeting Lao Zi. The quotation starts: 'Birds fly, fish swim, animals run . . . I know how these are caught. Today I met Lao . . . He is a dragon. I do not know how to catch a dragon.' In other words the practical-minded Confucius wasn't able to understand Lao and his metaphysics. (See Fish – Three.)

CARP, PHOENIX, GEESE, LOTUS FLOWERS, REEDS, WATER PEPPERS, MINNOWS, MANDARIN DUCKS, WATER CHESTNUTS ETC.

Message: 'Study hard in China, pass your examinations, get a high official post from the king and enjoy every success.'

This kind of picture is often seen in modern Korean hotels. It seems to be a collection of all the symbols used by the literati painters. Actually it carries a rather complicated message, originally directed to students studying overseas. The message when expanded reads: 'May you survive the rigours and



PICTURE 10

Minnows, Storks, Mandarin Ducks, Lotus Plants, Carp, etc.

sufferings you have to endure while living in a foreign country (China). Study well and pass both parts of your examinations, so that like the mighty carp, which by its efforts becomes a dragon, you too may be transformed into a person holding high office. May you also have many illustrious sons; may you live a peaceful life well into old age and may you enjoy a long and happy retirement.'

Arriving at this message from the symbols in the picture is a long and involved process. I will not even attempt an explanation.

CARP – JUMPING

This is not a literati picture but it is very often seen in Korea. A picture of a carp jumping out of the water acts as a charm to help a young married woman have a son.

CARP – JUMPING, THREE MINNOWS AND WATER CHESTNUTS

Message: 'Living and studying in a foreign land, China, is very difficult while you are young, but if you strive hard then like the mighty carp (which jumps the waterfalls in order to ascend to heaven to become a dragon), you will be successful.' (Cho 130)

CAT

A cat is a symbol of one's seventieth birthday. It is also a symbol of a very long life, or of living to a great old age. Cats are not very popular in Korea, so when one is drawn in a picture it almost always has a literati meaning. (See Owl.)

CAT AND BIRDS

Cats and birds are normally enemies, yet they are drawn as friends. So these pictures are obviously literati pictures. But as well as having literati meanings, these pictures are also symbols of peace. The literati meaning is: 'Joy and happiness to you on your seventieth birthday.'

<Birds are called *chak* (작 = 참새작새 or 작까치작새) which are read as *chak* (작첩).

These in turn are always read as *hŭi* (희) which means joy or happiness. The word for cat is *myo* (묘猫), which sounds like *mo* (모耄), meaning a great age or the seventieth birthday.> (See Yellow Sparrows.) (Cho 67)

CAT AND BUTTERFLIES

Message: 'Wishing that you live to be seventy or eighty years old.' Substituting one word for another that sounds like it creates this meaning.



PICTURE 11
Cat and Butterflies

<The word for cat is *myo* (묘猫), which sounds like *mo* (모耄), the word for seventy. The word for butterfly is *chöp* (접蝶), which sounds like the Sino-Korean word for eighty, *chil* (칠龔). Both 耄 and 龔 mean an old man.> (Cho 68).

Cat, Butterfly and Peony Rose (See Peony Rose.)

Cat and Chrysanthemums (See Chrysanthemums.)

CAT AND ROCKS

Message: 'Wishing you a long life on your seventieth birthday.'

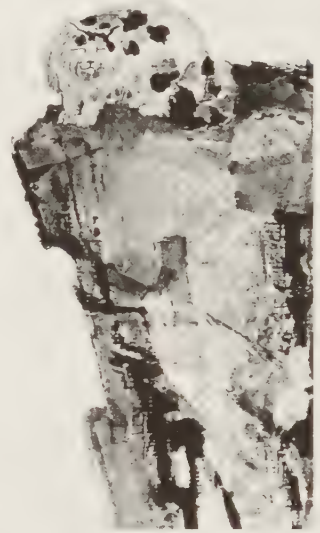
<*Sök* (석石) rock, sounds like *su* (수壽), life. So the rock means long life. The cat is *myo* (묘猫), which sounds like *mo* (모耄), an old man living to his seventieth birthday.> (Cho 71)

CAT, KITTENS, MAGPIES, PINE TREE AND SPARROWS

Message: 'On your seventieth birthday we wish you a long, peaceful, happy life as you live with your grandchildren.'

Cats and birds are normally enemies, but here they are shown together in peace, so this picture is a symbol of peace. Cat is read as the seventieth birthday. The kittens are read as grandchildren. The pine tree is a symbol of long life. The magpies mean happiness or joy.

<The cat is *myo* (묘猫), which sounds like *mo* (모耄), the word for seventy. This means the seventieth birthday. The pine tree is *paek namu* (백나무百) literally a white tree because it produces white timber, i.e. white deal. The word for one hundred is *paek* (백百) which sounds the same as the *paek* (백) of the white pine tree. A hundred years is a very long time, so the pine tree can be read as a very long life. The word for magpie is *chak* (까까지사鴉). This word is changed to *chak* (작緙) which is always read as *hŭi* (희喜), which means joy or happiness. So the magpies can be read as joy.> (See Cat; also Pine Tree; and also Yellow Sparrow.) (Cho 67)



PICTURE 12
Cat and Rocks



PICTURE 13
Cat, Kittens, Magpies, Pine Tree
and Sparrows

Pine Tree; and also Yellow Sparrow.)

CAT AND SPARROWS

Message: 'Wishing you happiness and joy on your seventieth birthday.'

<The cat is *myo* (묘 描), which sounds like *mo* (모 毛), seventy. *Myomo* means the seventieth birthday. Sparrows are *chak* (작, 참새 작) and this sounds like *chak* (작 續) which is read as *hwi* (희 喜) joy.> (See Cat and Birds, also Yellow Sparrows.)

Cedar (See Pine.)

CELESTIAL STEMS

In English books the celestial stems are usually called the Ten Celestial Branches but it is more accurate to call them the Ten Celestial Stems. They are derived from a combination of the Five Elements (오행) and the two principles yin and yang (음양). The Five Elements are: Fire (화), water (수), wood (목), metal (금) and clay (토). Each of the five elements can be combined with, or be dominated by, either the yin or the yang principle. This gives ten forms of the five elements: yin-fire, yang-fire, yin-water, yang-water, yin-wood, yang-wood, yin-metal, yang-metal, yin-clay, yang-clay. These ten combinations are given ten names: *kap* (갑), *il* (을), *pyong* (병), *chong* (정), *mu* (무), *ki* (기), *kyong* (경), *shin* (신), *im* (임) and *kye* (계). As far as I know these have no English translations. They seem to be an archaic way of counting from one to ten. (These words are still used in schools and medical reports, for example, *kap* means perfect, *il* means something short of perfect, second.) They are known as the Ten Stems (십간), and also as the Celestial Stems (천간).

These Ten Stems are combined with the Twelve Animals of the Zodiac *shibiji* (십이지) to give names to the years. These Twelve Animals are also used to name the months, the days and the time of any particular day. These names are important in fortune telling and were a very important factor in determining who could marry whom. (See chart on page 288.)

The Ten Celestial Stems series starts with *kap*, and the Twelve Animals series start with the rat.

In 1984, the two cycles started together. It will be sixty years, i.e. 2044, before this happens again. If you started in 1984 with the *kap* (갑) and rat *cha* (자), then the year 1984 was called *kapcha* (갑자). Ten years later 1994 was again the *kap* (갑) but the eleventh of the animals, namely the dog *sul* (술) was used, so it is called *kapsul* (갑술). The year 1996 started the animal cycle again with rat *cha* (자) but it uses the third of the celestial stems, namely *pyong* (병) so it was named *pyongcha* (병자)

The Twelve Animals, *shibiji* (십이지, 十二支), also called *shibisu* (십이수, 十二獸), have Korean names that are different from the Chinese names. The English translations are: rat, ox or cow, rabbit or hare, dragon, snake, horse, sheep or goat, monkey, cock, dog and pig. Note that it is the



PICTURE 14
Cat and Sparrows

Year Names from 1984 to 1996

Twelve Animals Twelve Earth Branches Twelve Terrestrial Branches			Ten Stems Ten Calendar Signs Ten Celestial Stems		Years
Rat	쥐	자(子) <i>cha</i>	갑 <i>kap</i>	갑자	1984 <i>kapcha</i>
Ox	소	축(丑) <i>ch'uk</i>	을 <i>ül</i>	을축	1985 <i>ülch'uk</i>
Tiger	호랑이(범)	인(寅) <i>in</i>	병 <i>pyöng</i>	병인	1986 <i>pyöngin</i>
Hare	토끼	묘(卯) <i>myo</i>	정 <i>chöng</i>	정묘	1987 <i>chöngmyo</i>
Dragon	용	진(辰) <i>chin</i>	무 <i>mu</i>	무진	1988 <i>mujin</i>
Snake	뱀	사(巳) <i>sa</i>	기 <i>ki</i>	기사	1989 <i>kisa</i>
Horse	말	오(午) <i>o</i>	경 <i>kyöng</i>	경오	1990 <i>kyöng'o</i>
Goat	양	미(未) <i>mi</i>	신 <i>shin</i>	신미	1991 <i>shinmi</i>
Monkey	원숭이	신(申) <i>shin</i>	임 <i>im</i>	임신	1992 <i>imshin</i>
Cock	닭	유(酉) <i>yu</i>	계 <i>kye</i>	계유	1993 <i>kyeyu</i>
Dog	개	술(戌) <i>sul</i>	갑 <i>kap</i>	갑술	1994 <i>kapsul</i>
Pig	돼지	해(亥) <i>hae</i>	을 <i>ül</i>	을해	1995 <i>ülhae</i>
Rat	쥐	자(子) <i>cha</i>	병 <i>pyöng</i>	병자	1996 <i>pyöngja</i>

Chinese name of one of the Twelve Animals that is combined with one of the names of the Ten Celestial Stems to form the name of the year in Korean.

The words for the Ten Celestial Stems, *chö'n'gan* (천간, 天干) or *shipkan* (십간, 十干) and the words for the Twelve Branches or Animals, *shibiji* (십이지, 十二支) are combined in the list given above. The Celestial Stem name is always given first, then the name of the animal of the Twelve Animals is placed next.

In East Asia this cycle of 60 years was regarded as the active time of a person's life. On the sixtieth birthday, a great feast was held; one's life achievements were recalled; children, grandchildren, relatives, friends and neighbours gathered to offer congratulations. One retired after the sixtieth birthday, called the *hoegap* (회갑, 回甲). One could sit back and enjoy the years that were left. This cycle of sixty years is called *ilchu* (일주, 一周). (Cho 69)

The chart on page 289 gives a list of the years from 2005 to 2020. The Ten Celestial Stems are given first, and then the Twelve Branches or Animals are added on to make up the names.

CHARMS

Some pictures are good luck charms; they have the power to grant the blessings and virtues they depict. Others are able to repel evil.

<Good luck in Sino-Korean is *taegil* (태길). Evil-repelling charms are called *pujök* (부적).> (See Good Luck Charms.)

Chestnuts, Chinese Dates (See Flowers – A Collection of Flowers and Things.)

Years from 2005 to 2020

Year	Year Name	Year name	Ten Stems	Animal	Korean	Sino-Korean
2005	Ŭlyu	을유 乙酉	ŭl 을 乙	cock	닭	yu 유 酉
2006	Pyŏngsul	병술 丙犬	pyŏng 병 丙	dog	개	sul 술 犬
2007	Chŏnghae	정해 丁亥	chŏng 정 丁	pig	돼지	hae 해 亥
2008	Muja	무자 戊子	mu 무 戊	rat	쥐	cha 차 子
2009	Kichuk	기축 己丑	ki 기 己	ox	소	ch'uk 축 丑
2010	Kyŏngin	경인 庚寅	kyŏng 경 庚	tiger	호랑이	in 인 寅
2011	Shinmyo	신묘 辛卯	shin 신 辛	hare	토끼	myo 묘 卯
2012	Imgin	임진 壬辰	im 임 壬	dragon	용	chin 진 辰
2013	Kyesa	계사 癸巳	kye 계 癸	snake	뱀	sa 사 巳
2014	Kabu	갑오 甲馬	kap 갑 甲	horse	말	o 오 馬
2015	Ŭlmi	을미 乙未	ŭl 을 乙	goat	양	mi 미 未
2016	Pyŏngshin	병신 丙申	pyŏng 병 丙	monkey	원숭이	shin 신 申
2017	Chŏngyu	정유 丁酉	chŏng 정 丁	cock	닭	yu 유 酉
2018	Musul	무술 戊戌	mu 무 戊	dog	개	sul 술 犬
2019	Kihae	기해 己亥	ki 기 己	pig	돼지	hae 해 亥
2020	Kyŏngja	경자 庚子	kyŏng 경 庚	rat	쥐	cha 차 子

CHINA PINK – ONE FLOWER

This is a symbol of obedience, especially obedience to one's parents. Obedience to one's parents ensured a long life for the child and also for the parents. Pictures of China Pink flowers (often called Chinese Pinks) are usually read as, 'Congratulations on a long life.' A solitary bloom stresses the virtuous life of piety and obedience to parents that makes a long life possible. (See next entry.)

CHINA PINK – MORE THAN ONE FLOWER

The words for this flower sound like the words for 'life' and 'congratulations'. This picture is given at a sixtieth birthday. Message: 'Congratulations on a long life.'

<The Korean word for a China Pink is *p'aeraeng'i kkot* (패랭이꽃). This is written in Sino-Korean as *sŏkchukhwa* (석죽화). *Sŏk* (석) sounds like *su* (수壽), life. *Chuk* (죽) sounds like *ch'uk* (축祝), congratulations. *Hwa* (화) means flower (花).> (Cho 58)

CHINA PINK FLOWER AND ROCK

Message: 'Congratulations on a very long life.' This picture is given on the sixtieth, seventieth or eightieth birthday.

<The Sino-Korean word for this flower is *sŏkchukhwa* (석죽화). *Hwa* (화) means flower (花). *Sŏkchukhwa* = (석죽화). The first part *sŏk* (석) sounds like the word for life, *su* (수壽) and *chuk* (죽) sounds like *ch'uk* (축祝), which is the word for congratulations. The word for a rock is *sŏk* (석石). This also sounds like *su* (수壽), which is again the word for life. In Chinese doubling a character gives



PICTURE 15

China Pink and Butterfly

the plural or an emphatic form. So, instead of reading *sökchuksök* (석죽석) we can read *ch'uksusu* (축수수 祝壽壽), congratulations on a very long life.>

CHINA PINK, FLOWER AND BUTTERFLY

Message: 'Congratulations on a long life as you celebrate your eightieth birthday.'

<Butterfly is *chöp* (접蝶) which sounds like *chil* (칠) meaning eighty. The China Pink flower is *sökchuk* (석죽), which sounds like the word for life, *su* (수) and the word for congratulations *ch'uk* (축).> (See China Pink, More Than One Flower.) (Cho 58)

CHÖKSONGJA

Chöksongja (적송자 赤松子, Chisongzi in China) is one of the old immortals. I have not been able to track down his history. Different books say he was a sage, a philosopher, a hermit, or a wild man who lived naked on the mountains. All agree that he was an immortal, a sort of spiritual being who roamed through all the scenic parts of the mountains. His name is used in some of the literati pictures and always implies a long life and a ripe old age. (See Phoenix, Pine Tree and Roses.)

CHRYSANTHEMUM

This is one of the Four Gentlemen. The other three are orchid, plum blossom and bamboo. These four pictures symbolize the lifestyle and virtues of the true Confucian gentleman. (See Four Gentlemen.)

The chrysanthemum is also one of a set called Three Flowers of Ambition: lotus, peony rose and chrysanthemum. The lotus flower symbolizes the scholar, the peony rose symbolizes power, high position and wealth in the royal court and the chrysanthemum symbolizes the quiet life of a gentleman scholar living at home in the country. (See Lotus, also Peony Rose.)

The chrysanthemum also represents autumn. In the Chinese lists where each month is assigned a flower, the chrysanthemum represents the tenth lunar month.

In literati pictures, a chrysanthemum can be read as a quiet and peaceful retirement.

<The word for chrysanthemum is *kukbwa* (국화). *Kuk* (국菊) sounds like the Sino-Korean word *kǒ* (거북) (or *ǔn'gǒ*, 은거) which is the word for retirement.>

Chrysanthemums derive most of their symbolism, especially the symbolism of retirement, from a famous poem by Tao Yuanming (陶淵明) (AD365–427). In Korea he is known as To Yŏnmyŏng (토원명). In the poem 'Returning Home after Retirement' (귀거래사) he describes the small house owned by his mother where he hopes to retire after he resigns from his arduous government office. 'On the east side, beside the fence chrysanthemums grow, and when the dew descends on them life giving water drips from them. . . . To the front of the house is a great view of the Great South Mountain. . . .' These are the main symbols associated with the chrysanthemum, namely, coming home after retirement, getting away from the busy court to a quiet life in the country, in close harmony with nature; a long life, an easy life, lived in peace and freedom, with time to do all the things you wanted to do.

Chrysanthemums are not just a sign of retirement but they are also a symbol of a life of ease and refinement in the country, free from financial worries because the eldest son takes over the running of the farm. To live to retirement age also meant to live a long life. So, chrysanthemums are a symbol of such a long life.

In Korean literature, the chrysanthemum is used as a symbol of the ephemerality of life, as it symbolizes the end of the year and coming of winter, the end of life and the coming of death. Painters avoid this symbolism and the sadness it entails.

The chrysanthemum also symbolizes fortitude. The chrysanthemum blooms in autumn and keeps blooming until it is cut down by the frosts of winter. So it is a symbol of maintaining loyalty to the end of one's days and of great courage and fortitude in the face of great danger.

<In Korean the virtue of fortitude is *innaeshim* (인내심). It means patience, perseverance or endurance.> (Cho 123)

CHRYSANTHEMUMS ON A LONG VERTICAL SCROLL

Message: 'Wishing you a long life.' The chrysanthemums are read as 'life' or 'long life', that is, living to retirement age. The long scroll adds the word 'long' again, so it is a wish that you live a very long life. (See Chrysanthemums.)

CHRYSANTHEMUMS, BOXTHORN WITH RED BERRIES AND SCISSORS

Both the chrysanthemums and the boxthorn can be read as 'long life,' so the message reads, 'Enjoy a very long life' or 'a long life and again an even longer life.'

<The boxthorn, also called a matrimony vine, can be easily identified because it is a long stringy bush with distinctive red berries. The scissors in



PICTURE 16

Chrysanthemum, Boxthorn with Red Berries and Scissors

Korean is *kawi* (가위), and this sounds like the word for retirement, which is *kǒ* (거퇴). In Korean the boxthorn is called *kugi* (구기). When the syllables are reversed, it sounds like *kiguk* (기국), which is the word for the wild or mountain chrysanthemum. As this is a chrysanthemum, it symbolizes a long life, which is a life where one lives to and beyond retirement age. So these double symbols of a long life, even after retirement, mean a very long life. It is this sort of juggling around with symbols and words that gave the literati painters a bad name.> (Cho 123)

CHRYSANTHEMUM AND CAT

Message: 'Having got many honours from the king, may you retire in peace and live a very long time.'

The chrysanthemum is read as 'retire in peace', and also as 'a long life', a life that stretches beyond retirement age. The cat too symbolizes a long life, so these double symbols mean a *very* long life. The cat can also have the meaning 'rewarded for loyal service'.

<Chrysanthemum = *kukbwa* (국화). *Kuk* (국菊) sounds like *kǒ* (거퇴), the word for retirement. This is the retirement the Chinese mandarins looked forward to, a life of ease, luxury and peace. Here it seems that the peace is emphasized. Cat in Korean is *koyang'i* (고양이), a pure *han'gŭl* word, but *yang* (양) sounds like the Sino-Korean word *hyang* (향亨), which means 'in the king's favour'. Favour meant that the king trusted the person, gave him big responsibilities and rewarded him for loyal service. So the cat symbol can be read as 'having received many honours'. The cat symbol can also be read in its Sino-Korean character *myo* (묘猫). This sounds like *mo* (모耄), the word for seventy. To live to be seventy was the same as living a long life. So in this picture the cat can be read as 'May you live for a very long time.'> (Cho 66-72)



PICTURE 17
Chrysanthemum and Cat

CHRYSANTHEMUMS, BUTTERFLIES, CAT AND
 GRASSHOPPERS (OR LOCUSTS)

Message: 'May it certainly happen that you retire to a life of ease, live to be seventy or eighty years of age, that is, live a very long time.'

A grasshopper or locust in pure Korean is *pangakkaebi* (방아깨비), but here the Sino-Korean word *tang* (당) is used. This word is pronounced the same as another Sino-Korean word *tang* (당當舖當舖當舖), which means 'it will come about' or 'it will certainly happen'. The words for cat and butterfly are changed into the words for seventy and eighty years old.

<Cat = *myo* (묘猫). Seventy = *mo* (모老). Butterfly = *chöp* (접蝶). Eighty = *chil* (칠십). The chrysanthemum *kuk* (국菊) is read as a retired life of ease, *kö* (거부).> (See Cat and Butterflies.) (Cho 71)

CHRYSANTHEMUMS, CAT AND GRASSHOPPERS
 (OR LOCUSTS)

Message: 'May you grow in wisdom and virtue in your retirement so that you are recalled by the king to an important position.' The



PICTURE 18
**Chrysanthemums, Cat and
 Grasshopper (or Locust)**

chrysanthemum here does not mean retiring to a life of ease and idleness, but to a life of seclusion where one can read, study, think and practise the virtues in order to grow in wisdom and become a perfect Confucian gentleman.

During the Zhou dynasty in China, Jiang Taigong (姜太公) or Kang T'aegong (강태공) as he is known in Korea, lived and studied alone in the country and meditated every day as he fished on the banks of the river. The king heard about this famous scholar and called him to his court. Although Kang T'aegong was seventy years of age at the time, he left his home and his fishing and went to join the king. He set up the basic laws of the Zhou dynasty. These laws were so good and just that the Zhou dynasty lasted for 800 years. So these pictures of a cat, chrysanthemums and grasshopper are really saying: 'May you be called by the king out of your life of seclusion, even in your old age, to an important position.' This message could also be read as follows: 'This is a wish that in your retirement you will continue to grow in virtue and wisdom, so that even at seventy years of age you will most certainly be called by the king to serve your country.'

<Chrysanthemum is *kukhwa* (국화 菊), which sounds like a place to retire, a solitary hermitage where one can study and attain perfection. Retire is *kŏ* (거 居) (or *ŭngo*, 은거). Cat in Korean is *koyang'i* (코양이). *Yang* (양) sounds like *hyang* (향 享), which means a high position granted by the king. The grasshopper or locust is *tang* (당), but this also means 'it will happen for certain'. (當 마땅할 당)> (Cho 71)

Chrysanthemum – Four Gentlemen (See Four Gentlemen.)

Chrysanthemum – Flower of the Four Seasons (See Four Seasons – Flower of.)

Chrysanthemum – the Fragrance of the Four Seasons (See Four Seasons – Fragrances of.)

CHRYSANTHEMUM AND ROCK

The message in this picture can be read in four different ways. The chrysanthemum blooms in early autumn and continues to bloom right into winter. It is not affected by disease or harsh weather. So it is a symbol of a long life without disease or pain. Thus the picture can be read: 'Live a long and healthy life.'

The rock is also a symbol of life. Doubling the symbols for life produces the comparative form 'live longer.' So, this picture can be read: 'Live a long and healthy life and then live longer again' or 'Live even better in the future.'

This picture can be used as a New Year card in which case it means: 'New Year's Greetings and may you live better (healthier) and longer.'

The chrysanthemum also means retirement. But retirement in the classical sense means a peaceful retirement in the country where one



PICTURE 19
Chrysanthemum and Rock

can live to old age. Adding the 'life' symbol of the rock brings the old age to a 'greater old age'. So this message can also be read: 'Live to a ripe old age.'

<The chrysanthemum (flower) is read as *kukhwa* (국화 菊). This sounds like the word for retirement *kŏ* (거퇴). Living to retirement age means a long life. The rock is *sŏk* (석 石), which sounds like *su* (수 壽), which means life. Doubling the long life symbols can always be read as a 'ripe old age' = *iksu* (익수 益壽) = 'live to a ripe old age'.>

CLASSICS

This word usually refers to the Chinese books that make up the Confucian canon. These books were studied and learned by the Korean scholars who wished to become Confucian gentlemen. It should be remembered that the Classics formed only one of the four traditional divisions of Chinese literature.

The Six Classics

These books had become so important to Chinese Confucian scholars that they were carved in stone between AD175 and 183. They are:

1. *The Book of Changes*
2. *The Book of History*
3. *The Book of Odes*
4. *The Book of Rites*
5. *The Annals* with the Kung Yang commentary
6. *The Sayings of Confucius*

The Thirteen Classics

These make up the complete Confucian canon, the books that the Neo-Confucian scholars regarded as the most important sources. English writers have used different words to translate the titles. Some of these variations are given in brackets.

1. *The Book of Changes* (The Changes, I Ching). This book gives the sixty hexagrams, their explanations, and also Ten Appendixes.
2. *The Book of History* (The Writings of Old, Shu). This book records the most ancient stories, exploits and dramas of ancient China.
3. *The Book of Odes* (The Book of Songs, The Poems, Shih). Confucius collected these poems, which even in his time were very ancient.

Next comes *The Book of Rites* (The Ceremonials). This consists of a collection of several essays or treatises about the rituals that should be practised and the virtues that should be cultivated. In this list of The Thirteen Classics it is regarded as being three separate books.

4. *Notes on the Rites* (Li Chi, Li Ki). This is from the first section of *The Book of Rites*.
5. *Ceremonials* (I Li). This is from the second section of *The Book of Rites*.
6. *Laws of Government* (Chou Li). This is from the third section of *The Book of Rites*. This gave the idealised bureaucratic organisation of the Chou Dynasty (1100–250BC).

Next come the *Annals* (The Chronicles of Lu, The Spring and Autumn Annals, Chun Chiu). In Chinese the characters for spring and autumn written together mean a year. This is a diary of political events and natural phenomena written between 722–481BC.

The Annals have come down to us in three versions with three different commentaries attached to them. In this list of The Thirteen Classics it is regarded as being three separate books.

7. *The Annals with the Tso Chuan commentary*
8. *The Annals with the Kung-Yang Chuan commentary*
9. *The Annals with the Ku-Liang Chuan commentary*
10. *The Sayings of Confucius* (The Analects, Lun Yü)
11. *The Treatise on Filial Duty* (Hsiao Ching)
12. *Collection of Glosses* on the difficult terms used in the Classics (Erh Ya)
13. *The Book of Mencius* (about the travels and teachings of Mencius)

The Five Classics, The Four Books and The Three Schools
Chinese and Korean scholars often refer to these sources.

The Five Classics

1. *The Book of Changes*
2. *The Book of History*
3. *The Book of Odes*
4. *The Book of Rites*
5. *The Annals with the Tso Chuan commentary* (see No. 7 above).

The Four Books are sometimes called the Four Commentaries (which is rather confusing). These reviewed the Classics and drew from them rules of conduct for public and private life.

The Four Books are:

1. *The Sayings of Confucius*
2. *The Book of Mencius*
3. *The Great Learning* (an excerpt from *The Book of Rites*)
4. *The Doctrine of the Mean* (also excerpted from *The Book of Rites*).

The Three Schools. There were many schools of philosophy developed during the age of the philosophers, that is, about the time of Confucius. Lao Zi, the founder of Taoism, was one of these philosophers. His writings were not included in the Confucian canon. Only one of these schools was associated with the master Confucius. Mencius (Meng), who lived from 371–289BC, was accepted into the Confucian canon but this did not happen until about AD1100. It was only at this late stage that his writings (*The Book of Mencius*) were admitted as the thirteenth classic.

1. Mo Zi
2. Meng Zi (Mencius)
3. Hsün Zi

The Two Practical Books

Two other books were used by Confucian scholars. These books were not part of the Confucian canon.

1. *The Official Dynastic Histories*, giving the histories of the twenty-five dynasties of China
2. *The Ancient Book of Mathematics*.

(This information is taken from the Introduction to *The Sayings of Confucius*, a translation of the Lun Yü by James R. Ware, pages 11–14, Mentor Religious Classics, The New American Library, 1955. In this book the Wade-Giles system of transliteration is used.)

CLOTHES AND COLOURS

First, the Chinese kings, and then later the Korean kings decreed that everyone should wear certain clothes dyed with certain colours according to rank and position in society. It became a crime to wear clothes or colours of another caste. Some Chinese kings were very sensitive about these laws. A Chinese king saw a fisherman dressed in red. Red was the king's colour at the time, so he had the fisherman executed on the spot.

COCK

The cock is a very rich symbol in Korean art. Depending on the context in which it is drawn it can have one of the following ten sets of meanings:

1. One of the animals of the Zodiac. (See Celestial Stems.) As such it can be a New Year's greeting during the Year of the Cock. One would expect the phoenix to be one of the Zodiac animals. Obviously, the cock symbol is much older.
2. A pastoral symbol. The cock is a nostalgic reminder to city dwellers of the carefree life they once enjoyed in the country before they came to the bustle of city life. The literati painters did not use the cock as a symbol of peace and contentment down on the farm, but both classical Chinese painters and classical Korean painters have often used this symbol.
3. Shamanistic associations. The cock is linked with the sun and with the god of the sun. It can be a symbol of the sun god. It can also be a messenger of the sun god. It announces the dawn, it tells the time during the night. In China, they say that the cock helps the sun to rise each morning. The cock is also a symbol of summer. In summer the sun comes north and warms the land and so makes it fertile. So the cock, being very closely associated with the sun, is a symbol of fertility and plentiful crops. As a sun and summer symbol the cock is closely related to the phoenix. In Korea, these two symbols are almost interchangeable. A picture of a cock used to be put on the door or wall of a house on New Year's Day to frighten away evil spirits. It is a magic picture able to protect people from demons. The cock was used as a sacrificial animal in Shamanism. Its blood has purifying properties, so it is not strange to find in Korean myths that even the sound of the cock crowing had the

power to send all ghosts and devils back to the underworld. Needless to say, literati painters did not use these Shamanistic associations.

4. In Korea, the cock is called the 'Noble Bird' because it has all five signs of nobility: education, military authority, courage, friendliness and trustworthiness. The Phoenix has the five qualities that denote royalty. (See Phoenix.)

These five signs are as follows.

- Education *mun* (문): a man who was educated could pass the state examinations and get an official appointment. Korean officials wore hats that distinguished them from the ordinary people. The comb on the top of the cock's head was a symbol of this special hat (see 8. below). *Mun* (문) also means a feather pen, which is a brush for writing made from feathers. We would call it a quill. The cock has his quill so he must be able to write and hence is educated.
- Military Authority *mu* (무): The state examinations also admitted successful candidates into the military. An officer has the power of the sword. The cock when he puffs up his feathers for a fight has the haughty arrogance of a general.

<*munmu* (문무) = civil and military authority, also means 'pen and sword'.>

- Courage *yong* (용): The word for a cockscomb sounds like the word for a brave soldier. The cock always carries his spurs and so is always ready for battle. He is like a courageous soldier who always carries his sword and is ever ready for war.

<The word for a field-grade officer (NCO) or a soldier is *yonggwon* (용관). This sounds like the word for bravery *yonggam* (용감), which also means fearless and courageous. The word for a cock is *konggye* and this is shortened to *kong* (공). A word used for cockscomb is *kwan* (관) = crown. These two can be added together to produce *konggwon* (공관) = the comb of a cock. This sounds like the word for a soldier *yonggwon* (용관).>

- Friendliness *in* (인): The cock is friendly to people. He is also friendly to his own kind always calling the hens and chicks to feed with him. As such he is a symbol of the friendliness a gentleman should possess.

<Friendliness = *in* (인), but it also means selflessness, goodwill and benevolence.>

- Trustworthiness *shin* (신): The cock can be relied on to announce the dawn. He calls out the time, he is a good timekeeper and always does his duty. This quality of trustworthiness is also the mark of the gentleman.

<*Shin* (신) means trustworthiness, fidelity, reliance and faith.>

5. The cock is a symbol of a true Confucian gentleman who rules his household with authority. The cock rules hens and chickens; he keeps peace in the brood; he protects and feeds his charges. The Confucian gentleman does likewise in his own house.

6. The cock is a symbol of integrity. Reversing the syllables of the word for a cockscomb gives the word for integrity. In a corrupt world it needed courage to remain just and virtuous. The word *kwan'gye* (관계) means both honesty and courage. (Cho 128)

<The word for cock is *konggye* = 공계. *Kong* (공) = male, and *kye* (*gye*) = 계 = chicken or fowl. The cockscomb is *kyegwan* (계관), *kye* (계) being the chicken or cock and *kwan* (관) being hat or crown. Reversing *kyegwan* (계관) gives *kwan'gye* (관계) which means honesty and courage.>

7. The cock is a symbol of virtue. The word for a cock's crow is the same as the word for all virtues. A cock, and especially a crowing cock, is a symbol of a fame acquired by hard work and the practise of all the virtues.

<Cock's crow is *kongmyǒng* (공명). Separating these words gives *kong* (공), which means hard work or diligent effort, and *myǒng* (명), which means an illustrious name. The two together mean an illustrious name obtained by hard work and the practice of virtue.>

8. A cockscomb was also a symbol of high office. The cockscomb is shaped like an official's hat, low in the front and high at the back.

<A cockscomb is called *talg'ŭi pyŏt* (닭의 뿔). The comb = *pyŏt* (뿔) sounds like *pyŏsŭl* (벼슬), which is an official position. A high office entitled one to wear the hat that could be worn only by a high official.>

9. The cock is also a symbol of the state examinations, which opened the way to authority, fame and wealth.
10. The cock is a symbol of a son. Only boys could sit the state examinations. So, it is especially a symbol of a bright son, one who has the potential to bring honour, wealth and patronage to his family. 'May the cock have a phoenix as an offspring' is a wish often expressed by the literati.

COCK AND BOTTLE GOURD

Message: 'That you may have many sons and descendants for ten thousand generations, who will be virtuous and famous.' In these pictures the cock is drawn as crowing and is read as 'many virtues'. The bottle gourd is one of the vine-like plants with long tendrils that spread out on all sides.

<Cock = *kong* (공, 공계, 公鷄), cock crow = *myǒng* (명, 계명, 鷄鳴). *Kongmyǒng* (공명功名) is a famous name attained by practising many virtues. The vines or bottle gourds are *mandae* (만대蔓帶) which sounds the same as *mandae* (만대萬代), meaning ten-thousand generations or to the end of time.> (See Bottle Gourd and also Vines.)

COCK AND CHICKENS

Message: 'Rule your house with authority and enjoy peace.' The cock in these pictures is a symbol of the male as head of the household. This idea of the man



PICTURE 20
Cock and Chickens

lording it over the women and the children is a very Confucian concept. In these pictures the chicks are obeying the cock so they are symbols of peace, both pastoral and familial.

COCK WITH A COCKSCOMB

Message: 'May you pass your examinations and be granted a high position by the King.' In this picture the comb is drawn low in the front and high at the back. It looks like the hat which officials were allowed to wear. The message in this picture can also be read: 'May you pass the state examinations and be called by the king to a high official position.'

<Cockscomb is *pyōt* (뿔) that sounds like *pyōsūl* (벼슬), a position granted by the king that entitled one to wear the appropriate official hat.> (Cho 39)



PICTURE 21

Cock with Cockscomb

COCK AND COCKSCOMB FLOWER

Message: 'May you attain success and become a famous teacher.' The message may be expanded to read: 'May you not only have personal success but also may you have fame as a leader or teacher so that you will have many disciples who will imitate your good example and bring you further honours.' To get this meaning the cockscomb flower must be drawn above the cock with a well-developed comb. This is read as 'a crown on top of a crown'. The cock's comb is regarded as his crown. The cockscomb flower, because it has a vivid purple flower that looks just like a cockscomb, can also be read as a crown. In its simplest form, this picture reads: 'May you get a first crown by passing your examinations and then get a second crown by getting a high position from the king.' But it is



PICTURE 22

Cock and Cockscomb Flower

is complicated by the fact that the Korean (*han'gŭl*) word for cockscomb flower sounds like the words for 'things that have been made'. Transferring this meaning to the cockscomb doubles the phrase. This reads, 'The good and right

works you do will be repeated by your disciples', that is, those who learn from you and imitate you.

<The cockscomb flower is *kyegwanbwa* (계관화). *Kwan* (*guan* when voiced) = 관冠 = crown. A crown over a crown is *kwansang kagwan* (관상가관). The Korean word for cockscomb flower is *maendŭrami* (맨드라미), which sounds like *mandŭrŏno`ŭn kŏt* (만들어놓은 것), things made or done.> (Cho 128)

COCK CROWING

Message: 'Pass your examinations and acquire a famous name.'

<Cock = *konggye* (공계). *Kong* (공) = male. *Kye* (계) = chicken or fowl. A cock's crow is *kongmyŏng* (공명). Here *kong* (공) = cock and *myŏng* (명) = cry, call or crow. But *kong* (공 功) can also mean 'use all effort and power to do work.' (Compare *sŏnggong* 성공 = success). *Myŏng* (명 名) can also mean a name, especially a famous name. So *kong* and *myŏng* combined (공명 功名) means: 'By your own great effort acquire a famous name.'> (Cho 39)

COCK AND HEN

In this picture, the hen must be drawn behind or lower than the cock. In Confucian society, the wife was inferior to the man and so had to be subject to her husband in all matters. If the man was always in charge and the woman servile and obedient, then you had a peaceful and happy household. This picture teaches obedience, but it is also a symbol of peace and happiness.

COCK CROWING AND PEONY ROSE

This picture has three different meanings. At face value, it is a reminder of nature and the peaceful life in the country. Its second meaning is a literati one and reads, 'May you become wealthy, successful and famous,' or 'May your studies be successful and bring you wealth and fame.' If this picture is given to a businessman, it has a third meaning: 'May you be successful in your business and become wealthy.'

To get the second and third readings, the cock should be shown as crowing. But even though the cock is not crowing, it is understood that cocks crow, so these meanings can always be taken from these pictures.



PICTURE 23
A Cock Crowing



PICTURE 24
Cock and Peony Rose

<Cock's crow is *kongmyǒng* (공명). *Kong* (공 功) can be read as efforts, or success that comes from these efforts, such as merits, credits or honors. *Myǒng* (명 공명 功名) can mean a name, a famous name. Peony rose is *pugwi* (부귀). *Pugwi* (부귀 富貴) can be read as wealth and fame, or *pu* (부 富) alone which can be read as just wealth. The two different literati messages are derived from the words successful, famous and wealthy.> (Cho 97, 98)

COCK, PLANTS, FRUITS, TREES, THINGS – A COLLECTION

These are things that would not normally be seen together in nature; plum blossoms and chrysanthemums, for example, flowers that bloom in spring and in autumn, drawn together to form one picture. They are not related by time, season or place, so it can be presumed that they carry a coded message.

The messages in these pictures can be read by using any of the tricks with words that the literati painters use. The more polished literati painters produced a message that could be read in grammatical Chinese. Those with lesser talents produced messages that depended on bilingual puns, or required lengthy explanations.

CRAB

The crab likes to walk sideways. This is his natural walk. However, in the presence of the king he has to walk forwards and backwards. This is against his nature, so he retreats to a place far from the king where he can be himself. A crab is thus a symbol of the gentleman scholar who leaves the corrupt court of an evil king and retires to the country where he can follow his conscience. The crab is also a symbol of a dissenter. (Cho 52)

CRAB – ONE, WITH REEDS (OR MILLET)

Message: 'Pass your examinations and get honoured by the king.' Students that passed the state examinations celebrated with a party. The king sent food from his own kitchens as a token of his respect. The crab has a hard shell so it is a symbol of the hard examinations that the students had to pass. The reed of millet can be read so that it sounds like the word for the special food sent from the king's table. The message in full is: 'Pass your



PICTURE 25

Crab and Millet Stalk

examinations with honours so as to be in that group of students who are honoured by getting the special food given by the king.¹

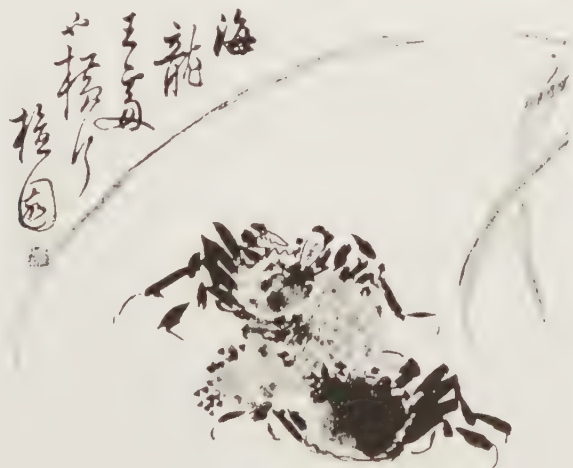
<The crab is *kap* (갑甲), which means literally a 'hard thing'. It can also mean a shell, carapace or a case (*kapgak*, 갑각 甲殼). It can also mean 'the first place in the examinations'. (See Celestial Stems where *kap*, *ül*, *pyöng*, *chöng* = 갑, 을, 병, 정 are used for counting.) The word for a reed is *kaldae* (갈대) in Korean, but in Sino-Korean it is *chöllu* (전로 傳簾) and this also means millet stalks, which look like reeds. *Chöllu* sounds like *chölyö* (차려 傳膳), which is food cooked in the king's kitchen and given by the king to students who were successful in the examinations.> (Cho 51, 52)

CRABS – TWO

A pair of fish symbolizes peace, and a pair of birds or animals symbolizes a happy marriage. Pictures of these confer these blessings on a husband and wife. Two crabs are never used in this sense. This is one of the conventions Korean painters always keep. Crabs are never regarded as underwater creatures. They travel between the sea and land and so are neither fish nor animal. They are never a symbol of married bliss or peace. (Cho 53)

CRABS – TWO WITH REEDS (OR MILLET)

Message: 'Pass both parts of the examination together and get the king's recognition,' or 'Pass both parts of the examination with distinction (honours) and get recognized by the King.' The two crabs stand for the two parts of the examination. The reeds or millet stand for the food sent by the king in recognition of those who passed. The same process is used to get this message as is used above under Crab – One, With Reeds (or Millet). (Cho 52)



PICTURE 26

Two Crabs and Reeds

CRAB, WITH STRING TYING ITS CLAWS

The crab was often used as a symbol for someone who went against the king to follow his conscience. However, the crab with its claws tied means that one should not fight the king but serve him with all one's might. (Cho 52)

CRANE

In literati pictures, cranes, storks, egrets, swans and sometimes even geese can all be looked on as being the same. The Korean and Sino-Korean names can be interchanged until a suitable word is found that sounds like the word wanted to convey the message of the whole picture. (See Stork.)

CRICKET

This insect is a symbol of summer in Korea. In China it is a symbol of courage. In Korean literati pictures it is read either as a high official or as 'it will certainly come about'.

<Cricket in Korean is *kwitturami* (귀뚜라미) but in Sino-Korean it is *kwig'a* (귀아 龜兒). This sounds like the word for an office where a high official works *kwana* (관아 官衙). The cricket can also be read as *tang* (당 瞳 불당) an insect. This is read as *tang* (당 堂 집당), a hall, or one who works in a hall. This also gives the first meaning. To get the second meaning the cricket is read as *tang* (당), a praying mantis (螳 = 버마재비당 or 蟻 = 사마귀당 = praying mantis). The second of these words (螳) is usually used for the cricket in these pictures. It is read as *ūdang* (의당 宜當, 宜마땅할 의 and 當마땅할 당) and means 'it will certainly happen', or 'it will come about'.> (Cho 60, 72.)

Cricket and Iris (See Iris and Cricket.)

CROW

During the Chosŏn dynasty, the virtues most respected were filial piety and loyalty to king and country. Older Koreans to this day are familiar with the poem 'In Praise of a Child'. It is a long poem and was often used by parents as a prayer. It starts 'Oh! child like silver. Oh! child like gold. Oh! child best in the world for respecting parents, for being loyal to king and country . . .' Parents who raised children to practise these virtues were highly honoured in the community. Children who respected their parents and helped them in their old age, brought peace, joy and blessings. Note that in the Confucian order of things it was the young who lived to benefit the old.

The crow was a symbol of filial piety. It was believed that young crows, once they left the nest, fed the old crows. This mistaken belief probably arose because the young crows with their feathers puffed up looked bigger than their parents, so the small crows were seen to be feeding the bigger crows, the younger generation seemed to be feeding the older. Anyway, the crow has become the symbol of filial love and obedience and it is called 'the bird that knows how to respect its parents'. (Cho 119)

CROW, MAGNOLIA AND WILD ROSE

Any black bird can represent the crow. The message in this picture can be read in three different ways. First: 'May you have a son who is so perfect in the virtue of filial piety that your house and family become an example for all.' Second: 'May you have an exemplary family.' Third: 'May you have an illustrious son (sons).'

The crow is 'the bird that knows how to respect its parents'. (See Crow above.) The crow is also known as 'the bird that sings'. A highly-respected family was known as 'a house where the bird sings that knows how to respect its parents'. This was a house with a child that honoured, respected and helped its parents. The crow is a symbol of such a family, or a symbol of the children, especially the sons, of such a family.

The magnolia is *ong'nanbwa* (옥란화 玉蘭花) in Sino-Korean. The first syllable *ok* (옥) also means jade. Jade was so expensive that only the very rich could afford it. It was the symbol of the nobility. According to Confucius the nobility had the right to rule because they were better, that is, better educated and more virtuous than the ordinary people. So jade was not just a symbol of the nobility but of the noble virtues that they were supposed to practise.

The wild rose is *baedangbwa* (해당화 海棠花). The second syllable of this word *tang* (당) is changed into another character for *tang* (*dang* 당) and this is added to the first syllable of the word for magnolia *ok* (옥) to form a new word *oktang* (옥당 玉堂) which means a noble house, a virtuous house, or a house with a noble and virtuous family. By juggling around with these ideas of a filial son, a noble house and an exemplary family, you can get the three readings given above. (Cho 119, 120)



PICTURE 27

Crow, Magnolia and Wild Rose

DAFFODIL

This flower is often used as a symbol of spring. Any bell-shaped flower can be read as a daffodil = *susŏnbwa* (수선화), and as a symbol of spring.

DAY LILY

Used as a symbol of 'mother of many sons'. (See Rock, Day Lily and Butterflies.)

DEER

This animal is one of the ten long life symbols. To be a real long life symbol, the deer should have at least a few white spots. These show that it is very old. Deer were believed to grow to a great age because they eat the magic

mushrooms that grow wild on the mountains. These magic mushrooms give immortality to whoever and whatever eats them. The white spots show that the deer is in the process of becoming a white deer, which is a deer that has attained immortality. (See Mountains 4. Also Ten Long Life Symbols. Also Magic Mushrooms. Also Deer – White.)

DEER – WHITE

The white deer is regarded as being of heavenly origin. It is a spiritual animal, a messenger of the gods, an immortal being. It is also a good luck symbol, a symbol that brings blessings from heaven, especially a very long life.

<Paek (백) means white and it sounds the same as the word for a hundred paek (백). To live to a hundred years of age is the same as living forever.> (Cho 53)

DEER – WHITE, UNDER A PINE TREE

Message: ‘May you have such good fortune that you get a hundred commissions (to high positions) from the king.’

The white deer is first read as good luck. The word for a deer also sounds like the word for a commission from the king. The pine tree can also be read as a hundred, so the two symbols can be read as a hundred commissions.

<Deer = rok (록鹿) also means an appointment by the king to a government job rok (록祿 = 복록, 벼슬록). The pine is song (송); but it can also be a scented cedar tree paeksong (백송). This paek (백) sounds like the word for a hundred (백百). The two words are read as paengnok (paekrok) (백록 or 백록百祿) a hundred commissions from the king.> (See Pine Tree.) (Cho 54)



PICTURE 28

White Deer and Pine Tree



PICTURE 29

A Hundred Deer and a White Pine

DEER – A HUNDRED UNDER PINE TREES

This picture can be read in two different ways. First it can be read like the picture of one white deer under a pine tree (see above): ‘May you get a hundred noble appointments from the King.’ Secondly it can be read: ‘May you live to a very ripe old age.’ To get this meaning, both white deer and pine tree have to be read as meaning a hundred. In Chinese doubling a character gives the plural or an emphatic form of the word, so it is not just ‘a great age’ that is wished here but ‘a very ripe old age.’

<White *paek* (백). Deer *rok* (鹿). A hundred *paek* (백). A hundred commissions from the king *paengnok paekrok* (백관목). White pine is *paeksong* (백송) but the *paek* (백) of this word is read as a hundred *paek* (백) years of age, which is a very long life. (The white pine was supposed to live for over a hundred years.) Doubling the word for white and pine tree into *paek paek* (백백송) and reading it as a hundred hundreds means a great old age or a ripe old age (익수益壽).> (Cho 55)

DOG

The dog is not highly regarded in Korea; it is just another farm animal, a source of meat. In China the dog had an even worse reputation as in many Chinese myths it is associated with death. Koreans do not have these associations. In Korea, dogs were valued because they barked when thieves came at night, so they are regarded as animals that protect the house from robbers. Pictures of dogs were drawn because it was believed that these pictures had the magic power to keep thieves out. (Cho 74)

DOG AND TREE

The tree is any tree, and the dog looks strong enough to put up a fight. This picture can be read in two ways. First it can say: ‘A dog that guards the house.’ The second message is: ‘We have made a pact that both of us must keep.’

<The first meaning is obtained by using the Sino-Korean word for dog, *sul* (술). This character is written very like another character pronounced *su* (수), which means to protect by the sword, or to fight. So, this picture is read *sulsu* (술수) a dog that protects the house.

The word for tree *su* (수) in Sino-Korean sounds the same as *su* (수) which means to protect. The second meaning is obtained by reading both the word for dog *sul* (술) and the word for tree *su* (수) as *su* (수). This can be read in Korean as *chik'il su* (지킬수수) = something that must be kept or protected.



PICTURE 30
Dog Under a Tree

Doubling this to *susu* (守守守守) gives an emphatic form that means ‘we must keep that which must be kept,’ that is, we must keep the pact we have made.> (Cho 75)

DONG FANGSHUO

Dong Fangshuo (東方朔), or as he is known in Korea, Tong Pangsak (통방삭) was a young fisherman who stole a magic peach, ate it and became an immortal. (See Tong Pangsak.)

DUCK – ONE

Message: ‘In one attempt get the top place in your examination’ or ‘Pass your examinations and get good results.’

The examinations consisted of two parts. Lesser students attempted one part this year and the second part next year, but a bright student was able to pass both examinations at one sitting. Passing both parts together was called *ilgap* (일갑). When the examinations were finished, the students were graded. The grades were named *kap* (갑) for first place, *il* (을) for second place, *pyŏng* (병) for third place, *chŏng* (정) for fourth place, and so on. (See Celestial Stems for this method of counting.) So a wish that someone would get a *kap* (갑) in their exams was a wish for first place. The one duck in these pictures symbolizes either ‘one sitting’ *ilgap* (일갑) or ‘top grade’ *kap* (갑).

<The Chinese character for duck is 鴨 = *ap* (압). The first part of this character 甲 = *kap* (갑) = something hard, or difficult, like the state examinations. One duck = *ilgap* = one sitting. One duck can also mean first place = *kap* (갑).> (Cho 81)

DUCKS – A PAIR

Ducks are normally drawn in pairs, a duck and a drake. These pictures are symbols of marital bliss and fidelity. They are also a charm to give a happy marriage. When only one duck is drawn, this means it is a literati picture referring to passing the state examinations.

DUCK – ONE AND MANDARIN FISH

In this picture, the duck’s feet are tied with string and the mandarin fish has a big fishhook in its mouth. The message is: ‘Tie up your studies so well that you will surely pass the state examinations and be certain to get a good commission from the king.’ Or ‘Be certain to get good grades in your examinations so as to be able to get a good job.’ The tied-up duck and the hooked fish mean that neither will be able to escape.

<The word for duck is *ap* (압,鴨) which gives the character 甲 = *kap* (갑) = first place in the examinations, or if read with the one duck is *ilgap* (일갑), which means



PICTURE 31
Duck with Feet
Tied and
Mandarin Fish
with a Fishhook
in its Mouth

passing all of your examinations in one sitting. The mandarin fish is called *kwöl* (귤쏘가리 = 鰻魚 = 귤어). *Kwöl* (궁궐 闕) means the place where the king resides, or, more simply, the king.> (Cho 77)

DUCK – ONE, AND WILLOW TREE

Message: 'Pass the examinations with honours and get a commission from the king and hold this position for a long time.' With all the intrigue that went on at the court, holding a commission was as difficult as getting one. The duck means first place in the examinations. The willow tree means: 'Stay in one place for a long time.'

<One duck is read as *changwön küpche* (장원급제. 장원 = first place, 급제 = success in the exams) pass the examinations with honours. (See entry above for how this reading is found.) The willow tree is *ryu* (류). In Korean this tree is called *pödülyu* (버들류柳). In Sino-Korean there is another *yu* (류描) written with a different character but pronounced the same and it means 'stay in one place'. (*mömul yu* = 머물류描 = to stay, to remain.)> (Cho 81)

DUCKS – TWO AND WILLOW TREE

Message: 'Pass your examinations, get a good job, hold this job for a long time, get married and have many sons.'

In Korean paintings, the willow is a sign of spring. Its buds open early and it holds its leaves till the first cold days of winter. It retains its youth, beauty and virility for a long time, so it is used as a symbol of a 'long youth.'

A picture of a willow tree giving shade to a pair of ducks is a picture given to newly-weds wishing them happiness, and expressing the wish that they stay young forever.

The literati painters give this picture other meanings. First, it can mean: 'Pass both parts of the state examinations and get a job from the king which you will be able to hold for a long time.' Second, it can



PICTURE 32
Duck and Willow Tree



PICTURE 33
Two Ducks and Willow Tree

mean: 'Pass your examinations, get a good job that is permanent, and have many sons who in turn will be able to pass their examinations.' Getting married, having sons and sending them to school required money, which of course came from the 'high position granted by the king'.

<The duck is *ap* (압鴨), which is changed into *kap* (갑甲), which means an examination. Two ducks stand for the two parts of the state examination. The willow tree is *ryu* (류) which is pronounced the same as the word 'to stay' = *yu* (머물류). (See Duck – One and Willow Tree above for the explanation of how this is done.) This means stay in the job that success in the exams will bring you. To get the second meaning the willow tree is changed into a pomegranate tree *sōng'yu* (석류=石榴). This can be done because both are *yu* (유). The willow is *pōdŭl'yu* (머들류柳) and the pomegranate is *sōng'yu* (석류石榴). The pomegranate tree produces fruit that is full of seeds. Seeds are used by the literati painters to symbolize sons. So, this picture says, 'Pass your examinations, get a permanent job, earn money, get married, have many sons and be able to send them to school'.> (Cho 82)

EIGHT EPISODE PICTURES

The Eight Episode Pictures (팔일도 八逸圖) are often put on the panels of an eight-panel folding screen. Sometimes they are put on scrolls and you can find one alone, or a pair, decorating a room. Each of these pictures has distinctive characteristics, which make it easy to identify them even when they are separated.

All of these eight episodes are about Chinese philosophers, scholars and poets so their names and the names of the places where they lived are all in Chinese. The Korean equivalent is given in brackets.

(A) FIRST EPISODE

Man Washing His Ears in the River (영천세이도)

Xu You (許由), Ho Yu (허유), was a famous scholar. King Yo (요) offered him a kingship in the empire. Xu You refused and fled into Jishan, Ki Mountain (기산). Disobeying the king of China could be a risky business. While Yao You was in hiding, he was offered the job of provincial chief. He regarded this suggestion as being so filthy that he went to a mountain river called Yingchuan, Yōngch'ōn (영천), to wash these dirty requests from his ears. As he was washing his ears, a local man came to water his ox in the river. The man would not let his ox drink the water



PICTURE 34

Xu You Washing His Ears in the River

dirtied by Xu You, so he took his ox upstream to drink clean water. This picture is easy to identify. It has two men by a river, one of them is leading an ox.

(B) SECOND EPISODE

The Fisherman Yan Guang (嚴光) and His Friend the King (동강수조도)

In China in the late Han Dynasty, Yan Guang (嚴光), Om Kwang (엄광), and Guang Wuti, Kwangmuje (광무제), were friends who fished together on the East River (동강). Kwangmunje became king. Yan Guang was delighted his friend had risen to this exalted position. He immediately went to the king's court and paid his respects, but then quickly left and went to the Shejiang River (철강) beside Fuchun shan mountain (부천산) and hid there, where he continued to live by fishing. King Guang Wuti searched for him and eventually found him. He did not summon him to the court but instead went to meet him. They fished again together and then they went to Yan Guang's little house. They ate together, talked as friends and slept in the one tiny room.

During the night while asleep Yan Guang put his leg over the king's stomach. The guard, who was protecting the king while he slept, saw this and told the king that Yan Guang had violated the king's person and had occupied the king's space. In China these were treasonous crimes. The king dismissed the guard's accusations because he trusted his friend. The act was unintentional and in no way was it an armed invasion of his territory. The king offered Yan Guang a high office but he refused. So, we see from this story that King Guang Wuti showed himself to be a good king and a perfect Confucian gentleman able to make a just judgement. He did not forget his friend after he became king. Yan Guang is also seen to be a perfect gentleman because he had no ambition to benefit from his friendship. He did not fear the king so he could follow his conscience and refuse the office the king offered. Because he was a true gentleman, he did not wish to embarrass the king by a public refusal when he went to pay his respects at the court.

Pictures of this second episode show a young man fishing alone in a river near a mountain. An old man fishing alone is usually Jiang Taigong (姜太公), (Kang T'aegong 강태공). Sometimes there are two young men in a boat. Sometimes just a small house is drawn beside a mountain river with one guard standing outside; sometimes just a house, mountain and river are shown with no people visible. When there are no people visible, it is hard to know whether this is a Mountains and Water picture (산수화) or the second of the Eight Episode Pictures. If other eight episode pictures are mounted beside it, we can know from the context that it is a picture of Yan Guang.



PICTURE 35
**Yan Guang Fishing
with the King**



PICTURE 36

The Silver Haired Gentlemen of Shang Mountain

(C) THIRD EPISODE

Old Scholars Playing Go in the Mountain (상산위기도)

These old scholars are called the four silver haired gentlemen of Shang Mountain (商山 Shang shan in Chinese or Sang san 상산 in Korean). Their names are 1, Dong Yuangong (東園公), Tong Wǒngong (동원공), 2, Xia Huanggong (夏黃公), Ha Hwanggong (하황공), 3, Lu Li Xian Sheng (角里先生) or Teacher Nongri (농리선생) and 4, Qi Liji (綺里季), Ki Rigye (기리계) in Chinese and Korean.

These four scholars left the court during the Jin dynasty (진나라) because they could not live with the corruption practised there. They fled to Shan Mountain (商山 상산). There they passed the time playing Go or *paduk* (바둑) as it is called in Korean. The king called them back but they refused to return.

Later, the Jin dynasty was overthrown by the Han dynasty (한나라). Things went well for a while, but the new Han king preferred his second wife and wished to make her son the next king. The four scholars backed the son of the first wife. They had such influence because of their virtuous lives that the king was forced to change his mind. The son of the first wife became king and after that the Han dynasty flourished. Their refusal to go along with the evil plans of the first Han king safeguarded the future of the empire.

These pictures are easily recognized; all four scholars do not have to be drawn, two or three old scholars playing chess always indicate this picture.

(D) FOURTH EPISODE

Boat Sailing with Full Sails on the River (강동패범)

During the Jin dynasty (진나라) a scholar named Zhang Han (張翰), (Chang Han 장한), was serving in the court of the king. Things got so corrupt that he could not stay there any longer, so he decided to leave in order to follow his conscience. When the cold autumn winds began to blow, he used these winds to flee by boat from the court and return home.

This is of course another example of a Confucian gentleman living according to his conscience. It also teaches the moral that subordinates must be responsible for their actions no matter what superiors order.

This picture is easy to recognize. The time is autumn, the boat is sailing under full sail and it is passing a little village at the edge of the river.

(E) FIFTH EPISODE

Old Man Enjoying Retirement in the Country

(율리의송)

This picture is not so standardized. It can be drawn in at least three forms. But no matter what form it takes, it is always Tao Yuanming (陶淵明 or Tao Qian), (To Yŏnmyŏng 도연명), in his retirement.

Tao Yuanming (365–427) left his position in the royal court and retired to his mother's humble house in the mountains. He left riches, power and fame in order to live a life of peace in harmony with nature. His mother's house had a fence around it, an old pine tree close by, and hills in the background where the birds were always singing. Beside the fence, chrysanthemums grew. Dew formed on the flowers, which could be collected as pure water. This clean water could be used to mix inks for writing poetry. Touching the pine tree beside the house one could stand and look over the mountain river and view the sun shining on the Southern Mountains. This description of the little house is contained in one of his famous poems (귀거래사 歸去來辭, 'Going Home Song', 고향으로 돌아오는 노래)

Tao Yuanming in another poem, 'The Pine Tree of Chestnut Village' (율리의송 栗里倚松) describes the simple joys of living in the country. He writes: 'Using a straw hat we strain the wine and enjoy our primitive drinks.' In some pictures Tao Yuanming is shown waiting patiently under a pine tree while his servant (sometimes he has more than one) prepares his drink. Sometimes he is shown as an old man beside his house with its pine tree and chrysanthemums. Other times he is shown sitting under an old pine tree admiring the scenery while his servant prepares a brew of tea or hot rice wine. He is always shown as the wise and virtuous scholar who is enjoying himself with humble pleasures during his retirement.



PICTURE 37

Chang Han Fleeing Home by Boat



PICTURE 38

An Old Man Under a Pine Tree

Incidentally, his poems made chrysanthemums synonymous with the refined life of the gentleman in the country.

(F) SIXTH EPISODE

An Old Man Pointing With His Hand at Flying Swans (or Geese) (임해지흥도)

The old man is Guo Yu (郭瑀), Kwak U (곽우), who lived during the Jin dynasty. During the time of the Five Dynasties, the king Quianliang (Chǒn Yang) (전양) died and Zhang Tianxi, Chang Ch'önsök (장천석), took over the king's position. He was having trouble ruling the kingdom so he wanted the scholars (the mandarins) to back him. He sent a messenger named Gai Kongming (Kae Kongmyöng) (개공명) to ask Guo Yu to come and work for him. Guo Yu pointed to the flying swans (홍鴻 = 큰기러기홍, swans or big geese) and said: 'My mind is like those swans. How can you coop up those birds?' He refused to take a high official appointment from the new king and fled deeper into the mountains where he hid in solitude.

The usurper king Zhang Tianxi later put pressure on Guo Yu's disciples to take positions in the government. Some became mandarins, but they had a very hard time trying to please the upstart king. Many of those who gave into the pressure later regretted their decisions and committed suicide.

This picture is easy to identify. It shows the old scholar Guo Yu pointing to a flock of flying swans while talking to the king's messenger.

(G) SEVENTH EPISODE

Scholars Viewing a Waterfall (여산망폭)

This picture is a drawing of a waterfall on Lushan (廬山, or Yo Mountain 여산) as described by the poet Li Bai (李白이백), Yi T'aepaek (이태백). This poem is called 'Watching Lushan Waterfall' (망여산폭포수 望廬山瀑布). This waterfall was famous and scholars used to go there to savour its awesomeness. It is strange that this was included in the Eight Episode Pictures as Li Bai was regarded as a Taoist poet, one of the Eight New Immortals of the



PICTURE 39

'How Can You Coop Up Those Birds?'



PICTURE 40

A Taoist Philosopher Contemplating the Beauty of a Waterfall

Tang dynasty. It is probably because his poetry was so beloved by Confucian scholars.

The huge waterfall flowing down a high mountain with at least one scholar contemplating the beauty of the scene easily identifies this picture. Other scholars may be playing Go (*paduk*), or having a meal nearby, but at least one person is looking at the waterfall.

(H) EIGHTH EPISODE

A Scholar Riding a Donkey Over a Bridge Pauses to Admire the Scenery (패교기리도)

This picture is drawn from a poem by Du Fu (杜甫 712–770), Tu Po (투보), another famous Tang dynasty poet. He wrote a poem about eight of his contemporaries called the Eight New Immortals of the Wine Cup that made them famous. Asked to write a poem, he said he could not write amidst the confusion of the city, that he had to cross the Ba river (P'ae 패) and get among the beauty of the mountains before he could compose a poem. The next day, he rode out on his donkey, stopped on the bridge and composed a poem in praise of the beauty that was around him.

Like the seventh picture in this group of eight, this picture stresses that a Confucian scholar should know classical poetry and should contemplate the harmony of nature so as to bring this harmony into his own life and into the life of the state. This picture is easy to recognize. A scholar sitting on a donkey has stopped on a bridge (or in midstream) with mountains in the background.

In Korea, these pictures have the same symbolism as pictures of Taoist Immortals (both Old and New) and as pictures of the sages. They are all symbols of a long life and happiness and they are all regarded as charms that have the power to give a long life of freedom and ease in harmony with nature.

The primary purpose of all Confucian pictures is to teach Confucian philosophy. The figures in these pictures are not immortals in the Taoist sense, yet they are immortal because their teaching, their example, their poetry and their memory is never going to die.

EIGHT NEW IMMORTALS

These were eight famous poets in China during the Tang dynasty (AD618–906). They reintroduced in their poetry the original philosophy of Taoism. They became famous for their 'Taoist visions, their hard drinking, their profligate ways and their fine poetry.' These Eight are mentioned in Du



PICTURE 41
**Taoist Philosopher
Contemplates the Beauty of
the Mountains**

Fu's poem 'The Eight Immortals of the Wine Cup'. (See *Taoist Tales* by Raymond Van Over, page 224).

EIGHT NEW IMMORTALS – NAMES

- | | |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Cui Zongzhi (崔宗之) | 2. He Zhizhang (賀知章) |
| 3. Li Shizhi (李適之) | 4. Wang Jin (王璉) |
| 5. Su Jin (蘇晉) | 6. Li Bai (李白) |
| 7. Zhang Xu (張旭) | 8. Jiao Sui (焦遂) |

There were other famous poets, painters and calligraphers of the Tang period who were active during the reign of Emperor Minghuang from 712 to 756. His reign is considered the most brilliant era in all Chinese history and is known as the High Tang Period.

Wu Hung lists the following famous scholars of that period:

- Poets: Wang Wei (699–750), Li Bai (Li Po 李白 이백 701–762), Tu Fu (杜甫 712–70) (Tu Po 두보). Also there were Zheng Qi (鄭綮 Chǒng Kye 정계) and Jia Dao (賈島 Ka To 가도 777–841) beloved by Korean artists.
- Painters: Wu Daozi (active 710–60), Zhang Xuan (active 714–42), Han Gan (ca. 720-ca. 780).
- Calligraphers: Yan Zhenqing (709–81), Zhang Xu (active 714–42), Huaisho (725–85). (This information is taken from *Three Thousand Years of Chinese Painting*, Yale University Press, page 59.)

There were also many others, but the eight listed by the poet Du Fu 杜甫 (712–70) (Tu Po 두보), whom he called The Eight New Immortals, were famous not only for their art but also for their drinking.

In Korea, there is a special category of paintings that were done by artists while under the influence of alcohol. Some of these are brilliant. The Eight



PICTURE 42

Eight Old Immortals with the Spirit of the Southern Star

New Immortals have to take some credit, or blame, for inspiring these works. (See Immortals.)

EIGHT OLD IMMORTALS

The Eight Old Immortals are probably mythical characters that have acquired a pseudo history. Their 'history' is given in Part I, Chapter 8, under Eight Old Immortals. The eight are listed in the following table.

EIGHT OLD IMMORTALS – NAMES

English Name From Chinese	When They Lived	Profession	Symbol	Name in Korean	English Name From Korean
1 Zhong Lìquan 鍾離權	Han Period	Chemist	Fan or peach	종이권	Chong I'gwŏn
2 Lǚ Dongbin 呂洞賓	8th cent.	Scholar	Sword or fly-whisk	여동빈	Yŏ Tongbin
3 Zang Goalao 張果老	7th cent.	Magician	Donkey or drum	장과로 장과노인	Chang Kwaro
4 Lan Caihe 藍采和	Not known	Singer poet (Woman*)	Flowers or lute	남채화	Nam Ch'aehwa
5 Han Xiangzi 韓湘子	9th cent.	Scholar	Flute or peach	한상자	Han Sangja
6 Cao Guojiu, or Cao Gua 曹國舅	9/10th cent.	Nobleman	Castanets, jade tablet	조국취	Cho Kukch'wi
7 He Xiangū 何仙姑	7th cent.	Shopkeeper (Woman)	Lotus or reed organ	하선고	Ha Sŏn'go
8 Li Tieguai 李鐵拐	Not known	Magician and Beggar	Iron staff or crutch	이철과	Yi Ch'ŏlgwa

*In China Lan Caihe (4) is sometimes depicted as a young boy.

There were many other Chinese immortals. These Eight are the most famous. (See below under Immortals, 5. Other Immortals)

THE EIGHT OLD IMMORTALS

Korean artists liked to draw these eight human Immortals with the god of the South Pole Star. The South Pole Star spirit is also called 'The Old Man of the Water Star'. He is depicted as a very old man with a high forehead. All pictures of Immortals express the wish that you live to a great old age, and they are regarded as charms that can actually give a long life.

<The Water Star = Susǒng (수성 水星) is the planet we normally call Mercury. Yet for some unknown reason when the writers speak of the Old Man (노인) of the Water Star (수성노인) they refer to the god of the South Pole Star and they use different characters (수성 life star or 壽星 Shou Xing in Chinese).> (See Southern Star, also Part I, Chapter 8, Immortals Old and New.)

IMMORTAL RIDING HIS DONKEY

This is one of the Eight Old Immortals. He is Zang Goalao (張果老) the old man Zang Goa, Chang Kwaro (장과로, 장과 노인). He had a magic donkey (some say a horse), which he could fold up like paper after a journey and put into his pocket. In the morning when he wished to go on a journey, he unfolded the paper, splashed some water on it and the donkey filled out to its proper size. When he rode this donkey, he always sat looking backwards. When asked why he sat like this, he replied that a philosopher cannot see into the future no matter how hard he tries; all he can think about are the things that have passed by and which are now in the past.

This picture wishes that you live to be as old as the Immortals and that you live as happily as they do. The picture is also a charm with the power to give this blessing.

(See Part I, Chapter 8, Immortals Old and New. See also; *Outlines of Chinese Symbolism and Motives*, page 153. C.A.S. Williams; also see above Eight Old Immortals.)

EXAMINATIONS

During the Chosŏn dynasty the king made the appointments to top positions in the civil service. The students with the best marks in the state examinations got the best positions. Only boys could sit for these examinations. Their education started at home. A teacher was hired to give them the basics. When they grew older, they were sent to a local school where the best teachers were hired to prepare them for Seoul. In Seoul, they attended university for at least two years. The civil service examinations (*kwagŏ*) were held every year. They were in two parts and bright students could pass both in the same year. Many students took up to ten years to pass both parts even taking them one by one. Students who failed had to go home in disgrace. Without passing these examinations, no job could be held in the civil service. It cost a lot of money to prepare for these examinations. A less intelligent child cost his parents a lot more, and even if he did manage to pass eventually, he ended up in a job that paid very little. Getting a good job in the



PICTURE 43
The Old Magician Zang
Gualao On His Donkey

king's service meant that one had power to protect the other members of the family. One could make money, by fair means or by foul, so as to educate the next generation.

FISH

Both Chinese and Korean artists liked to draw fish. Normally these pictures symbolize freedom, peace and harmony. A fish can swim up or down and in any direction, so it has freedom to go anywhere. Scholars believed that fish did not fight, that they always lived in peace and harmony. They always had enough to eat so they lived in prosperity. They had many offspring so they were fertile and prolific. Therefore they were used as symbols of freedom, peace, harmony, prosperity and fertility.

Pictures of fish can also be used as greeting cards. Pictures with pairs of fish wish a peaceful and fertile marriage; a picture of a carp leaping can ensure that a son will be born. Pictures of fish or underwater animals are not used as magical charms to give a happy marriage.

Literati painters used pictures of fish to convey many different messages. A picture of a group of fish could refer to a classical quotation from Confucius, or to one of the poems in the *Book of Odes*.

Pictures of carp usually refer to the state examinations or to the sons who would later sit for these examinations. As the carp could change into a dragon, so too a son by passing his examinations could become a person of great authority, power and wealth by getting a good commission from the king.

Pictures of mandarin fish refer to the king. The Chinese word for a mandarin fish sounds like the word for a king.

Pictures of minnow or very small fish usually mean 'while you are young', and urges the person who gets these pictures to study hard.

The word for fish can also sound like the words 'beneficial' and 'profit'.

FISH – TWO

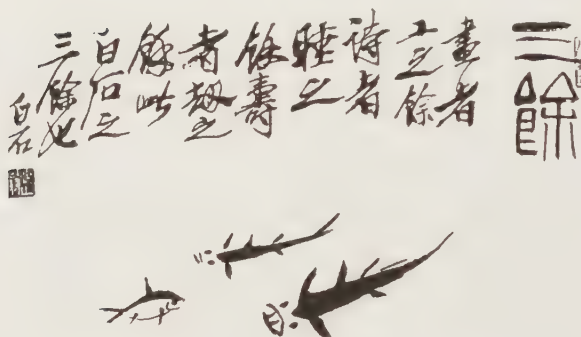
This picture is given as a sort of 'good wishes' greeting card to newly-weds. It wishes them peace and harmony and also wealth and many children. Fish were supposed to live in peace and harmony, to always have plenty to eat and to have many offspring. This picture not only symbolizes these blessings but some argue that it has the magic power to grant them.

FISH – TWO MANDARIN FISH

One could be executed for drawing this picture: it means revolution. The mandarin fish represents the king. To say that there are two kings is high treason. Its message is: 'Let's overthrow the king.' Crabs are a symbol of dissenters but two mandarin fish are a symbol of a revolutionary.



PICTURE 44
Two Mandarin Fish



PICTURE 45

Abstract Drawing of Three Fish

<Mandarin fish = *kwŏl* (鰓). This fish in Korean is *ssogari* (쏘가리) but in Sino-Korean it is *kwŏlaŏ* (鰓魚). The king's palace or the king himself is also *kwŏl* (鰓闕 = 궁궐 闕).> (Cho 150)

FISH – THREE

Message: 'Strive for the three beneficial things.' These fish do not represent any particular species. Often they are drawn with just a few brushstrokes in the Zen tradition, so that the idea of fish is all that is present. These pictures are read as the 'Three Sufficiencies' or the 'Three Beneficial Things'. The three sufficient or beneficial things were night, winter and rain. These three are found in a famous quotation. A student in order to pass the state examinations had to read and learn many books. One student, worried about how he could ever find time to study all the books he was given, consulted a famous scholar. He was told to study at night, during the winter and when it was raining. This way he could get sufficient time. These became known as the three sufficiencies.

In later times, these three sufficiencies were known as the three reasons for studying and were listed as: get a good commission from the king and become rich, become powerful and famous, and live a long life. This is a very cynical reading of this picture and is far from the high ideals of the ancient scholars. (Cho 148)

A GROUP OF FISH

This is a reference to the famous statement that Confucius made after he met Lao. He said: 'Birds fly, fish swim, animals run. I know that animals that run on the ground are caught with a net, fish that swim are caught with a hook, birds that fly in the air are caught with an arrow. A dragon rides the clouds and winds. I don't know for sure if dragons exist. Today, I met Lao. He is like a dragon. I don't know how to capture a dragon. In the same way I was not able to capture him.' Confucius the great pragmatist was not able to understand the metaphysical Lao. (Cho 155, 156)



PICTURE 46
A Group of Fish



PICTURE 47
Fish Travelling in Different Directions

FISH — A GROUP

Message: 'Wishing you peace, freedom, wealth and virility.' Fish can move in any direction; they symbolize absolute freedom. Fish were supposed to live in harmony (classical scholars weren't well up on natural history), to always have enough to eat, and to produce many offspring, so they were regarded as symbols of freedom, peace, wealth and fertility.

<A fish is ǒ (어 = 魚 = 물고기 어) A surplus is yǒ (여 = 餘 = 남을 여). If there is a surplus then there is wealth. The words ǒ and yǒ sound alike so wherever a fish is drawn the word for wealth can be substituted.>

FISH — NINE (천보구여도 天保九如圖)

In the *Book of Odes* there is a poem in the form of a prayer in praise of the king. In this poem there are nine words that all sound like yǒ. These nine

words, which have different meanings, all sound very like the Sino-Korean word for a fish.

<A fish is 魚 (어 魚 = 물고기 어) Nine fish *kuǒ* (구어 九魚). The 'nine words which sound as *yǒ*' is *kuyǒ* (구어 九如). The poem in the *Book of Odes* is 'Tian Bao' (Eulogy for a King) Ch'ǒn bo (천보 天保).>

A free translation of the poem runs like this: 'The king is like the sun and the moon, the mountains and the hills. He is like the river. He is infinite and immortal like the Great Southern Mountains (of China). He is like the cedar pine and the white pine and his good works never cease.' This poem is the source of the Nine Attributes of the king. A picture with nine fish is a reminder of these nine attributes. These nine attributes are also seen in pictures that look like landscapes. In these pictures are drawn nine peaks of mountains and hills with sun and moon, water and rivers, cedars and pine trees.

Note that pictures with nine peaks, nine quails, nine storks and nine fish have completely different meanings. (See Mountains.) (Cho 151, 152)

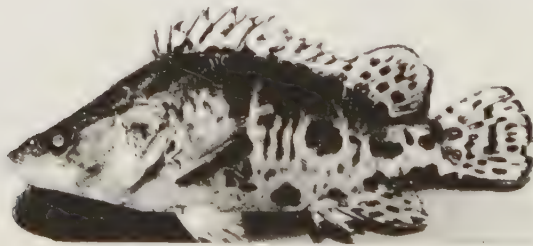


PICTURE 48
Nine Fish

FISH – MANDARIN FISH

Mandarin fish are an exception to the rule that all fish live in peace. These fish are supposed to be vicious fighters. If two are put together they fight until only one is left. The Sino-Korean word for mandarin fish has the same sound as the word for king. There can only be one king. A picture of two mandarin fish meant that there were two kings, a new king who was going to overthrow the present one. It was high treason to draw such a picture because it said, 'There is another king who will oust the reigning king.'

<The Korean word for mandarin fish is *Ssogari* (쏘가리), but the Sino-Korean word for mandarin fish *kwǒl* (궐 = 권어 鰐魚) is used in these pictures. The king's palace or the king himself is also *kwǒl* (궐 闕 = 궁궐 闕).> (Cho 76)



PICTURE 49
Mandarin Fish
(Chinese species)

Fish – Mandarin Fish and Duck (See Duck – One, and Mandarin Fish.)

Fish – Minnows, Carp, Lotus Flowers, etc. (See Carp.)

FISH AND PERSIMMONS

Message: 'From the many things you have, may a surplus be produced.' Or in a shorter form 'May your business prosper.'

<In Korean the word for a persimmon is *kam* (감 = 감나무 시 柿). In this picture it is the Sino-Korean word *shi* (시 柿) that is used. This sounds like the word *sa* (사 = 일사 事) meaning a thing. As there are many persimmons, the plural form *shishi* (시시) can be used. This sounds like *sasa* (사사 事事) which means many things or everything. The word for a fish is *ǒ* (어 漁) or *yǒ* (어 魚 = 물고기 어), which sounds like *yǒ* (어 = 여의하다 如意 a success, that produces a surplus), which can be read to mean a surplus.> (Cho 107, 108.)

Fish Bowl, Books, Bookcases (See Book, Bookcases and Fish Bowl.)

Five Bats (See Bats.)

Five Blessings (See Blessings.)

Five Elements (See Celestial Stems.)

Five Relations or Five Moral Rules (See Friends.)

Five Peaks (See Mountains.)

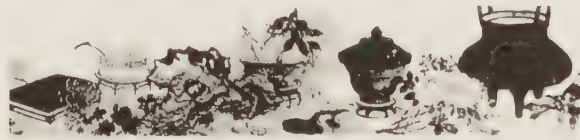
FLOWERS

Flowers are symbols of beauty, youth, virtue and happiness. Particular flowers have special meanings attached to them. Some of the meanings are common to both China and Korea. In both countries the lotus is a symbol of the arduous life of the poor student, the peony rose a symbol of wealth and the glamorous life of the court, and the chrysanthemum a symbol of the refined life of a gentleman scholar living peacefully at home in the country. Many flowers have a different symbolism in Korea than in China. For example, in China there are lists of twelve flowers associated with the twelve months. These lists are not found in Korea. Again in China the iris is a symbol of spring, but in Korea it is a symbol of summer.

In Korean literati paintings, sometimes the classical symbolism is used, but more often than not there is another implied meaning, obtained by juggling the names of the flowers or because the shapes of the flowers resemble something else.

FLOWER – COLLECTION OF VARIOUS FLOWERS

These collections consist of flowers, plants and trees, which neither grow together nor bloom at the same time. Firstly, they can be 'Friends' pictures,



PICTURE 50

Flowers and Things

namely, Three Friends, Three Friends of the Cold or Four Friends. Secondly, they can represent Flowers of the Four Seasons or Fragrances of the Four Seasons. Thirdly, they can represent a list of things needed to live happily in this world. Such a list is given in the next entry below. (See Flowers – A Collection of Flowers and Things.)

FLOWERS – COLLECTIONS OF FLOWERS AND THINGS

These pictures show things that are needed for happiness in this world. A typical collection would include: a brazier = peace (평안); *citrus medica* = good fortune (복); white lily = a hundred blessings (백); peony rose = wealth and fame (부귀); magic mushroom = eternal youth or every desire granted (역의); peanut = long life (장생); big orange = great luck (대길); rock = life or long life (수); chrysanthemum = refined life in the country (거 or 은거); jujube (Chinese date) = many descendants (대추); chestnuts = many sons (빔); books = things needed by a student. These meanings can be obtained by substituting one word for another that sounds like it, or by substituting one Chinese character for another that looks like it. (Cho 110)

In earlier times, these pictures would only show symbols of the five blessings or things that should be in a student's room. Later pictures would have shocked the old scholars because they show a very materialistic outlook on life.

Another list of the materialistic five blessings is: wealth and fame (부귀); a peaceful life with no troubles (평안); good health (강녕); good luck or a hundred blessings (백복); and not to grow old (불로). (Cho 111)

For two different listings of the real five blessings see under Blessings – Five.

Flowers – Four Gentlemen (See Four Gentlemen.)

Flowers – The Four Seasons (See Four Seasons – The Flowers of.)

Flowers – Fragrances of The Four Seasons (See Four Seasons – Fragrances of the Four Seasons.)

FOUR

The word 'four' in Korean sounds the same as the *sa* character for 'death'. It is an unlucky number, a source of evil, and Koreans avoid it.

Of course, there is nothing they can do about the four seasons, there are only four of them. Sometimes landscape painters draw two pictures of summer, that is, an early summer and late summer, so that they have five pictures of the four seasons instead of four. This just shows the extremes that some painters will go to in order to neutralize the evil influences emanating from the word 'four'.

The tradition of drawing the Four Gentlemen came from China. They are called the Four Gentlemen in Korea, but no Korean would hang these four pictures together in a room; they would always add a picture of a pine tree to the set to negate the evil or bad luck attached to the four *sa* character. For the same reason, pictures of Flowers of the Four Seasons will have at least five different flowers drawn. The same is true of Fragrances of the Four

Seasons and pictures of Plants of the Four Seasons, where more than four symbols will be used.

<Four = *sa* 사四 . It sounds the same as *sa* meaning death = *sa* 사死 .>

FOUR FRUITS OF SACRIFICE

The four fruits of sacrifice are Chinese dates, chestnuts, persimmons and pears. (See Sacrifices.)

FOUR GENTLEMEN

Plum blossom, orchid, chrysanthemum and bamboo comprise the Four Gentlemen Pictures (사군자도 四君子圖). Each is a symbol of the perfect gentleman, that is, a man who has perfected himself through study of the Confucian classics and the practice of the virtues as taught by the ancient philosophers and sages.

The most perfect gentleman was the sage-king. Next to him, came the sage, who although not a king, was able to advise the king and so bring about harmony in the kingdom. The perfect man was one who brought justice and virtue to the state, and so brought blessings from heaven. The greatest blessings were peace and prosperity. In Confucianism, the perfect gentleman holds the same place as the Immortals of Taoism and the Enlightened of Buddhism (the Bodhisattva).

Normally, the four are not drawn together in one picture. They are drawn as four separate pictures. If a plum tree with blossoms is drawn with bamboo, it cannot be called a Four Gentleman picture. The four separate pictures can form a set, especially if done by the same artist, or when they are the same size, style and quality but done by different artists.

The classical Chinese order (read from the right if the four pictures are hung together) is that spring is represented by the orchid, summer by the bamboo, autumn by the chrysanthemum and winter by the plum blossom. The purists would say there is no connection between the four gentlemen pictures and the four seasons; they are just four plants that survive in neglect and adversity and as such are symbols of Confucian ideals. Yet Koreans often draw these four and the pine tree together in a picture they call Fragrances of the Four Seasons, which shows that they do associate each plant with a



PICTURE 51

Plum, Orchid, Chrysanthemum and Bamboo



PICTURE 52

Scents of the Flowers of the Four Seasons

particular season. Ask any Korean to list the Four Gentlemen and he will give them to you, not in the classical order, but in the one that matches the four seasons in Korea: plum (spring), orchid (summer), chrysanthemum (autumn) and bamboo (winter). (See Bamboo, also Chrysanthemums, also Orchid, also Pine Tree, and also Plum Blossoms.) (Cho 140)

FOUR SEASONS – THE FLOWERS OF

This is a collection of flowers, trees and plants that bloom in, or are at their best in, each of the four seasons. They are all gathered together in one place, in one picture, where they become a symbol of the vitality and power of all the four seasons. They are also a symbol of all the remembered beautiful things of the world.

In oriental philosophies, the Progression of the Four Seasons is regarded as one of the Five Universal Principles, the five primary forces that form and rule the universe. They are:

1. First Principle: The One: Tao, The Invisible, The Prime Mover.
2. Second Principle: The Two: yin and yang, dark and light, earth and heaven, female and male, matter and spirit, cold and hot, heavy and light. They would have separated into two different parts of space: all the yang things would have gone up and all the yin things would have gone down unless they were constantly mixed. The thing that kept them mixed and in balance was the third universal principle, namely The Four.
3. Third Principle: The Four: The Four Seasons or the Progression of the Four Seasons. The Third Principle ensures that there is always a balance between yin and yang. When it got too cold in winter, spring came along so that things could grow again. Then the summer arrived to ripen everything. When it got too hot, autumn came to cool the world down, but this brought on the dark and cold of winter again.

As a result of the mixing done by the Four Seasons, the fourth principle was able to come into existence and survive. The Fourth Principle is the Three.

4. Fourth Principle: The Three: Heaven, Earth and Man. Not just the physical sky, ground and people, but the spiritual beings that dwell in

heaven, under the earth, and man who lives in the middle place where these two spheres meet. The inhabitants of these other two spheres regard man as an equal. He has the potential to become greater than the others. He has a living physical body as good as the bodies of those who dwell under the earth; he has an intelligent spirit that is equal to, and that can even be greater than, the spirits of the air. A man who perfects himself can control the spirits of heaven and earth and he can make everything he needs from the Fifth Principle.

5. Fifth Principle: The Five: The Five Elements – fire, water, wood, metal and clay. Everything in the world is made up of these five things. ‘From the Five arise the Ten Thousand, and The Ten Thousand are all manifestations of Tao,’ so you are back again to the One, which caused the Two, which caused the Four, which caused the Three, which caused the Five. Westerners don’t like this sort of re-entry chain, but the East Asian philosophers have no trouble with this kind of logic.

The Flowers of the Four Seasons symbolize the Universal Forces that are contained in the four seasons, forces so powerful that they rule the whole world. This picture expresses the wish that one possess the vitality and power of the four seasons. (See Plants of the Four Seasons, also Landscapes.)

FOUR SEASONS – THE FRAGRANCES OF

Usually, in this picture, the four symbols of the Four Gentlemen are drawn together. They are plum tree and blossoms, orchid and blossoms, chrysanthemum blossoms and bamboo. But usually there is another tree or flower added to make five plants. This is because the Koreans do not like the word for four which sounds the same as the word for death (four *sa* 사四, death *sa* 사四).

The bamboo does not have any flower on it; only the bamboo stalks are drawn. It is supposed that the bamboo grows all year round and never loses its leaves. So it is always alive and absorbs into itself the scents of all the flowers that bloom around it.

The extra tree is usually a pine tree, but sometimes the bamboo is drawn with only two of the three flowers. Even though there are only three symbols drawn, the picture can still be entitled ‘Fragrances of the Four Seasons’ because the scents of all the flowers of the Four Seasons are locked up in the sap of the bamboo. (See Bamboo – Fragrances of the Four Seasons.)

FRIENDS

Confucian ethics, and ultimately the harmony of the ideal Confucian state, are based on the Three Bonds and the Five Relationships.

The Three Bonds *samgang* (삼강) are the natural bonds that exist between:

1. King and subject (임금과 신하).
2. Father and son (아버지와 자식).
3. Husband and wife (남편과 아내).

The Three Bonds give rise to the Five Relationships (오륜):

- A. The relationship between a king and his subject (의리).
- B. The relationship between parents and children (친애).
- C. The relationship between brother and brother (자서).
- D. The relationship between husband and wife (분별).
- E. The relationship between friend and friend (신의).

The Five Relationships are defined by the Five Virtues that flow from them and that should exist or be practised in these relationships. These five virtues have no exact translation in English. Several words have to be used to convey their meanings.

The Five Virtues are called the Five Rules (오륜):

- A. Between king and subject, or between Lord and servant, there should be (의리): benevolence, wisdom, justice, propriety, respect and a sense of loyalty and duty. (It really takes all these words to explain *üiri* 의리.)
- B. Between parents and children there should be (친애): filial piety, obedience and love. Children should honour and respect their parents.
- C. Between brothers and younger brothers there should be (자서): fraternal love. The elder brother should care for, correct and train his younger brother; the younger brother should respect, obey and assist his older brother; all fraternal duties are included in this virtue.
- D. Between husband and wife there should be (분별): a sharing. The husband should protect his wife from outsiders, but not necessarily from his mother, his sisters or his elder brothers' wives. The wife should obey, serve and respect her husband and all his relatives. Love between spouses was not highly prized. If it existed, good. If not, then as long as the wife fulfilled her duties, there was no great loss.
- E. Between friend and friend there should be (신의): trust, belief and sincerity. Friends should remain constant, sincere and truthful. They should observe the rules of propriety. They should grow together in wisdom, support each other in adversity, and their friendship should last even into old age. Friendships were very important for young men not yet married, who were separated from their families while they studied in Seoul.

As it is so difficult to translate the Five Virtues, many English books just list them as benevolence, justice, propriety, wisdom and sincerity. All five of these words could be used to define each of the Five Virtues. It is the Five Relationships that give meaning to the Five Virtues. The fostering of these Five Relationships and the practising of the Five Virtues (or the Five Rules of Conduct) became the mark of the Confucian gentleman.

FRIENDS – FOUR FRIENDS OF THE COLD

These 'Four Friends of the Cold' pictures are very common in China. They are pictures of trees and flowers that grow or bloom even though the snow

is on the ground. The Chinese painters use many groups of flowers and trees. These groups have become standard in China. One group is the white plum blossom (the wild plum), the pink plum blossom (apricot or peach), the camellia blossom and the bamboo.

Another group gives the bamboo and the pine tree and any two of the three flowers mentioned above. In these pictures the stronger trees are shown protecting the weaker flowers as they all weather adversity together. These pictures are a symbol of the relationship that exists between friends, their constancy, sincerity and mutual support. The old Korean artists often used these symbols.

Modern Korean artists never draw the Four Friends of the Cold pictures because of their dislike of the 'four' word that sounds like the word for death. Instead they draw pictures that they call the Three Friends of the Cold. Often there will be four symbols in the picture to show that the artist knows the classical Chinese origins of these pictures, but he will still call it a Three Friends of the Cold picture. (See Friends, also Friends – Three of the Cold.)

FRIENDS – THREE

In the *Sayings of Confucius*, Confucius is reported as describing some of his friends who come to visit him. First he tells of three good friends who visit him. They are a help to him and always lift up his thoughts and spirits (Three Good Friends = 익자삼우 益者三友). Then he describes another three friends who visit him, and although he enjoys their company, they leave him with a hangover and feeling depressed (Three Bad Friends = 손자삼우 損者三友). Korean artists often draw pictures representing the Three Good Friends,



PICTURE 53

Pine, Plum and Bamboo

namely: Three Pine Trees and Three Friends of the Cold. They are direct references to the passage in the *Sayings of Confucius*. (Cho 138)

FRIENDS – THREE OF THE COLD

These pictures are a symbol of three friends who help each other. This is a very Korean type of picture. It is based on the Chinese type of picture called The Four Friends of the Cold but as the Koreans don't like the word for 'four' they prefer to paint Three Friends of the Cold (매화삼우 歲寒三友) or sometimes Three Friends of the Snow even though there may be four symbols in the picture.

The three friends refer to the quotation in the *Analects* where Confucius said that he had three good friends and three bad friends. (See above entry.) Various symbols are used in these pictures:

- The bamboo, plum blossom and pine tree are the ones most often seen. However, other combinations are used.
- Plum blossoms, birds and rocks.
- Plum blossoms (white plums), peach blossoms (pink plums), camellia and birds.

The message in these pictures is: 'Remain good friends for a very long time, even to old age, and enjoy a healthy life.' If birds are included in the picture then joy and happiness is stressed so the message reads: 'May you enjoy each other's company and friendship during a very long life.' People who don't know the classical background to these pictures often buy the pictures with two birds in them as wedding presents. As gifts to newly weds these pictures wish 'a long, happy and joyous marriage.'

<Rock = *sök* (석石). This sounds like the word for life *su* (수壽). The word for bamboo is *chuk* (죽竹). This sounds like the word for congratulations = *ch'uk* (축祝). So these two words can be read as congratulations on a long live. But a long life is = *iksu* = (익수益壽) = a ripe old age. This sounds like and so can be read as *ig'u* (익우益友) and this is a word for a good friend. The words that Confucius used when talking about his three good friends were (*ikchasam'u* 익자삼우 益者三友) or (*samig'u* 삼익우 三益友). *Ik* (ig between vowels) = 익 = good, *cha* = 자 = person, *sam* = 삼 = three, and *u* = 우 = friend.

Pine trees are also long-life symbols. The white pine is called *paeksong* (백송白松). *Paek* (백白) is the word for white, but *paek* (백百) also means a hundred. To live to a hundred years of age is to live a very long time, that is, to have a long life. The plum blossom is *mae* (매, 매화梅) and this sounds like *mi* (미, 눈썹眉) which means eyebrow. Both the rock symbol *sök* (석石), or a rock shaped by water *susök* (수석水石), and the pine tree *su* (수樹) symbol can be read as another *su* (수壽), the word for life. Combining the word for eyebrow and the word for life a new word, *misu* (미수) is obtained which means 'white eyebrows', or 'until your eyebrows turn white in your old age'. The birds, of course, are always read as being sparrows. Sparrows *chak* (작) are read as joy or happiness. To have joy and happiness in old age presupposes that you have good health and can be active.>

(See Friends; also Friends – Three; and also Friends – Three Friends of the Cold; also Yellow Sparrows.) (Cho 139)

Friends – Three Friends of the Snow (See Friends – Three of the Cold.)

FRIENDS – THREE; PINE TREES

Three pine trees drawn in a close standing group that support and protect each other from the forces of nature also represent the Three Good Friends mentioned in the *Sayings of Confucius*. The pine trees are drawn as ancient and one of them seems to have been damaged by a storm. A picture of these three trees represents the relationship that exists between friend and friend. The three pines are the three friends who remain constant, sincere, loyal and trusting, who observe the rules of propriety, grow old together, grow together in wisdom, and who support each other in adversity and practise the Confucian virtues together, even into old age. (See Friends; also Friends Three, and also Friends – Three of the Cold.)

FRIENDS – THREE; BAMBOOS

This picture has the same meaning as the three pine trees above. Three bamboos are drawn together; all have the same size and age. Often one is broken but the other two seem to be protecting the damaged one. (See Friends – Three, and also Pine Tree.)

GEESE

Geese are found in pictures with a collection of symbols that include carp, geese, lotus flower, minnows, phoenix, reeds, water peppers, etc. The messages in these pictures are given under Carp. (See Carp, also Goose.)

Gentlemen – Four (See Four Gentlemen; also Four Seasons – Fragrances of. See also Bamboo, Chrysanthemum, Plum Blossom and Orchid.)

Glass Cup and Peony Rose (See Peony Rose and Glass Cup.)

GOLDFISH

These pictures are called 'Gold, jade, full house' or 'Gold plenty, full house' pictures. (금옥만당) Two messages can be read from these pictures: 'May you become very rich' or 'May you have many sons and become very rich.' In Korea for a picture to qualify for these interpretations it must have more than four goldfish all of roughly the same size. Substituting words that sound alike creates the message. Only an expert in Chinese characters could unravel the process. (See also Fish – Three, also Fish, a Group, and also Three Fish or More, a Group of the Same Species. Each of these pictures with groups of fish has a different meaning.) (Cho 120)

Good Friends (See Friends – Four Friends; also Friends – Three; and Friends – Three, of the Cold; and Pine Trees – Three.)

GOOD LUCK CHARMS

In Korea, many pictures are regarded as magical pictures. Some have the power to repel evil. Pictures of cocks, dogs and tigers fall into this class. They frighten away evil spirits, or at least prevent them from entering the house.



PICTURE 54
Many Goldfish

<These charms are called protective charms, = *pujök* 부적 in Korean.>

Other pictures have the power to bring blessings such as wealth, marriage bliss, fertility, a long life and peace. Pictures of dragons, deer, birds, insects, flowers, fruit with many seeds, trees such as the pine and bamboo, and, of course, fish are all included in this category.

<These charms are called good luck charms, = *taegil* 태길, or blessings *pok* 복.>

Many pictures get their magic from old Shamanistic beliefs; others have their roots in the Confucian scholar's love of Chinese characters. Not only pictures but also texts or good wishes written in Chinese characters on paper and stuck to the walls were also regarded as charms to repel evil or to give blessings. Up to quite modern times these pictures and texts were very common in Korean houses. With modern education the belief in magic has gone. These pictures are still being used, but they express only the wish that the house be free from evil and that it get many blessings.

The Chinese seem to be more superstitious than the Koreans. They seem to have a great belief in charms that can bring wealth. Koreans believe that great wealth is only given by heaven and there is nothing that a man can do to force heaven to grant it to any particular man. They have an old saying: 'Everybody wishes to be rich. A little wealth is the result of a man's efforts, but great wealth is only given by heaven.' (Cho 71, 121)

GOOSE

There is an old Chinese story that a young soldier away from home for a long time while fighting for his country in the north against the invading barbarians, used to tie a message to the leg of a goose flying south in the autumn. This message told his girlfriend at home in the south that he was still alive and still loved her. In spring she sent her love letter back to him by the same airmail. Mainly because of this story the goose has become a

symbol of true love and is also used as a symbol of communication. A goose with a letter in its beak is found on Korean postage stamps.

GOOSE AND REEDS

The Sino-Korean word for reeds sounds like the word for old, and the word for a goose sounds like the word for peace, so this picture reads: 'May you have a peaceful old age.' This picture can be presented to anybody especially on his or her birthday. Often two geese are drawn; this is to improve the 'feeling' of the picture. One gander by himself might be lonely, but having a female with him not only makes him feel happy but makes the whole picture feel happy.

<Reed is *ro* or *no* (로 or 노). The word for a reed is *kaldae* (갈대) in Korean, but in Sino-Korean it is *chóllo* (전로傳蘆). It is the *ro* (로蘆) part of this that is used. *No* or *ro* (노老) also means old or old age. The goose is *an* (안雁), which sounds the same as the word for peace *an* (안安).

(Goose = *an* = 안雁. Peace = *an* = 안安.) The two words for reed and goose put together give *noan* (노안老安) which means peace in your old age.> (Cho 64).



PICTURE 55
Goose and Reeds

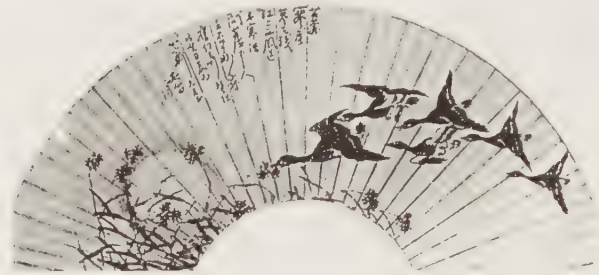
GOOSE WITH REED IN ITS BEAK

Geese in autumn and winter are thin and fly high in the sky. In the spring, just before they migrate back to the north for the summer, they are fat and heavy, it takes them longer to get off the ground and they fly low. The Chinese used to catch them at this time of year with nets. According to an old story, the wise geese carried reeds in their beaks. The reeds prevented their head and necks from going into the holes of the nets so they were able to escape. So the picture is read: 'Go in peace but be very careful'. (Cho 64)

GOOSE, REEDS AND MOON

Usually, there are two geese drawn in this picture because in the oriental way of thinking not even a goose could be happy without a mate! The word for a goose sounds like the word for peace; the word for the moon sounds the same as the word for music, or a party with music and therefore a joyful and happy time, and the word for the reeds sounds like the word for old age. Combining these three words gives the message: 'Peace and joy (or enjoyment) to you in your old age.'

<Goose = *an* = 안雁. Peace = *an* = 안安. Moon in Korean is *tal* = 달 but here the word for the moon in Sino-Korean, taken from Confucian philosophy, is read as *taeüm* = 태음 = the great yin principle. (The



PICTURE 56

Goose Reeds and Moon

Two Great Principles, Yin and Yang, were the *t'ae yang* (태양 太陽) which is the sun, and the *t'ae ŭm* (태음 太陰) which is the moon.) The *ŭm* (음 of *t'ae ŭm* 태음 太陰) sounds like the word for music *ŭmak* or *ŭmrak* (음악 音樂 or 음락). The *rak* (락) part of this word is the enjoyment one gets from listening to music at a party, so it can be read as 'joy' or 'enjoyment'.> (Cho 65, 102)

GOURD

A symbol for many sons. (See Bottle Gourd.)
 Gourd and Cock (See Bottle Gourd and Cock.)
 Grapes, Pomegranates, Pumpkins,
 Watermelons (See Vines.)
 Grasshoppers, Butterflies, Cat,
 Chrysanthemums (See Chrysanthemums.)
 Group of Fish (See Fish.)

HAWTHORN

This word is sometimes used in English books to translate the Chinese word for plum, or plum blossoms. The plum tree and plum blossoms usually drawn are the wild plum or sloe tree or blackthorn. Cherry blossoms are probably closer to the hawthorn or whitethorn blossoms. Apricot, and peach blossoms in the literati pictures are usually read as plum blossoms (매화 梅) unless there are peaches drawn on the same tree in which case they are called Heavenly Peaches (천도 天桃). (See Bamboo; also The Four Gentlemen; also Peaches; and also Plum Blossoms.)



PICTURE 57

Five of the Eight Old Immortals with the South Pole Star

Heavenly Peaches (See Peaches – Heavenly Peaches.)

Hens – Quails (See Cock, also Quails.)

Hills, Mountains, Moon, Pines, Rivers (See Mountains.)

IMMORTALS

'Immortals' is a name that can be applied to any picture of an old man, or men, who look contented and happy in their surroundings. Often, they are dressed in old-style Korean clothes or in Chinese dress; sometimes they are dressed in a style that is only imaginary but is in keeping with what the ancients might have worn. These pictures were drawn by the literati painters as symbols of a long life or of a great age. The message that these pictures carry is: 'a wish that you live a long life in peace and contentment, that you retain your vitality and virility, and that you grow in wisdom in your enjoyable old age.'

The idea of Immortals has its origin in Taoism. The philosophers of Taoism theorized that if one lived in perfect harmony with nature, one would not grow old; one would be able to control nature, suffer neither want nor disease, appear and disappear at will and travel any time to any place one wanted. When one attained this state of perfect harmony with nature, one did not die but retreated to one of the heavens reserved for these sages. This heaven was either in one of the high and picturesque mountains of China or else was on one of the islands in the sea east of China.

The Confucian scholars also adopted a theory of immortality. People who attained perfection, or who became perfect gentlemen through the practise of the five virtues, could become immortal. This was immortality of the spirit. The great Confucian philosophers, the sage kings and the sages lived on forever in the next world retaining their individuality, wisdom, authority and their power to control the natural forces of both this world and the next, while the souls of ordinary mortals gradually dissolved and became part of the cloud of spirits called the ancestors. Certain Chinese emperors declared famous philosophers, former kings, great statesmen, teachers, poets and sages to be Immortals. The emperors assumed this right because they considered themselves to have been appointed by heaven to deal with all things concerning men.

Later, the Taoists believed there was a short cut to immortality. The Taoists were people who developed the philosophy of Taoism into a religion but in the process replaced the one God, called Tao, with a pantheon of Taoist gods, goddesses and demons. These Taoists believed that if they could find the right chemical formula, the right herb, the right food or fruit or even find the right magical words, they too could become like the Immortals of Taoism. This set off a period in Chinese history when a lot of time was spent studying chemistry in order to find the right combination of chemicals to produce the right medicine to give immortality. Others searched all over the world for fruits, herbs and roots from which the elixir of life could be made. Others searched the occult world for magical powers and formulas. Oriental medicine owes a lot to the Taoists. They may not have found the elixir of life, but they found cures for many of the diseases that afflict man. Some of

the famous Taoist alchemists, herbalists and magicians are said to have been lucky enough to have hit on the right formula, but as soon as they tried it on themselves they turned into Immortals and so took the knowledge with them into the next world. Later, the Taoists believed the Great Queen of the Taoist Heaven could give immortality to those whom she deemed had merited it. She brought them to her kingdom in the Eastern Paradise where she lived with all her beautiful servants and all the other Immortals. Once there and accepted by the other Immortals, the newcomer was given one of the heavenly peaches. This gave him immortality and prevented him from growing any older.

The pictures that the Korean literati painters liked to draw most often are:

1. An old Taoist Philosopher

An old Taoist philosopher contemplating the scenery as he merges his mind with nature in perfect harmony.

2. Chinese Sages

A Chinese sage king roaming in scenic mountains with heavenly handmaids. Two sages in a secluded valley amusing themselves playing a form of chess (*paduk* 바둑 in Korea, *wei ch'i* 圍棋 in China and 'Go' everywhere else). In these pictures the scenery is important and the philosophers and sages are there to show that this is really a heavenly place.

3. The Eight Old Immortals

These are eight famous Chinese Taoists who became Immortals by their magic, by drinking the elixir of life or by eating the heavenly peaches. Korean artists like to draw the eight together with symbols that identify each individual. Sometimes they draw just one of them: Li Tieguaì (李鐵拐), Lee Ch'olgwa (이철과), who is drawn as a beggar with an iron crutch. In life he was able to leave his body and travel all around the world. Once when he was on a long trip his servant decided that he was dead so he disposed of the body. When Li Tieguaì came back, his body was gone. But at that time a crippled beggar had just died so Li Tieguaì went into that body. The Koreans maintain that the beggar was a drunkard so that is why Li Tieguaì has to carry a bottle of spirits, to keep the beggar's body topped up with alcohol.

4. Zhang Gaolao (張果老)

Zhang Gaolao (張果老) known in Korea as Chang Kwaro (장과로), is another of the Eight Old Immortals that Korean artists liked to draw. He had a donkey drawn on paper. When he opened out the paper a real donkey was produced. He always rode this donkey sitting backwards. He said it was impossible for a philosopher to know the future so there was no profit in waiting for the future to unfold before your eyes. All anybody could do was study the past so he was only interested in the scenery that he had passed. When his journey was finished, he folded up his donkey again and put it in his pocket. (See Eight Old Immortals in Part II and also in Chapter 8, Part I.)

5. Other Immortals

There are many other Immortals found in Chinese literature that are not included in the Eight Old Immortals. Ge Zhichuan, also called Ge Hong (AD283–343), was an alchemist who became an immortal by distilling cinnabar from which he made the elixir of life. Xu Sun, also known as Xu Jingyang (late third century), was so adept at magic that he made his whole family immortal and brought them all to the Taoist heaven. Another Immortal, named Chi Songzi (赤松子) or Chöksongja (적송자), is well known in Korea. He lived as a hermit or as a wild man in remote mountains in China. Scented red pine trees or cedars are named after him. Chöksongja is often referred to in Korean literati pictures.

The true number of Taoist Immortals is unknown. Lionel Giles in his book *A Gallery of Chinese Immortals* says 'a literature of almost incredible bulk has grown up around them. A considerable portion of the huge Taoist Canon consists of works dealing with their lives, teachings, and multifarious activities. And in the great encyclopaedia *Tu Shu Chi Chéng* we find biographies of well over a thousand Immortals, drawn from various sources and arranged in order of date.'

6. The South Pole Star (壽星수성)

The South Pole Star (壽星수성) was often drawn together with the Eight Old Immortals. This is really a Taoist god. Korean artists weren't interested in the Taoist gods, but they drew this god to show their erudition. The stars of the South Pole could not be seen from Korea. Only those who had travelled to the south of China, or those who had studied Chinese literature, knew about the South Pole. It was always fun to draw the South Pole god, also known as the Old Man of the South Pole (수성노인), because he had a very high dome on his head. It was supposed to be cone shaped. Drawing him with a cone shaped head as the Japanese artists did made him look ridiculous. Drawing him with a high dome on his head and yet making him look human was a challenge that literati painters enjoyed.

7. Dong Fangshuo (東方朔)

Dong Fangshuo (東方朔) or Tong Pangsak (동방삭) as he is known in Korea, was a young fisherman who saw peach blossoms floating on the water when it wasn't springtime. He found the river that was bringing these petals down to the sea. He traced the river back to the mountain where strange peach trees were blooming. They were blooming in the garden of the Eastern Paradise where the Queen of Heaven and the other Immortals lived.



PICTURE 58
The Fisherman Who Stole
the Heavenly Peaches

These peach trees not only had flowers but they also had ripe fruit on their branches. Tong Pangsak realized that these were the heavenly peaches that gave immortality so he stole one and ate it. He immediately became an Immortal. However he was caught before he could escape. The gods were angry that he had become an Immortal without meriting this great gift. They could not make him mortal again but they took away his memory of where the heavenly garden was and threw him out. The heavenly peaches give immortality for three thousand years. After three thousand years the magical peach trees bloom again and produce new fruit. The Immortals will then reassemble and eat the peaches. But Tong Pangsak has forgotten where the garden is. In the meantime he is going around the coasts in his boat looking for the river that flows down from the mountains of paradise. Although he is immortal he is not free from aging. He is usually drawn as a young fisherman with some characteristics of an old man such as black hair but going bald, or with big shoulders with his young head sinking down between them.

8. The Woodcutter Watching the Immortals Playing *Paduk*

This is another picture that one often sees in Korea. A young woodcutter comes across two Immortals playing a form of chess called *paduk* (바둑) in Korea in a clearing in the forest. He stops to watch them playing. When the game is over, the wooden handle of his axe has rotted, his clothes are in rags, and he has become an old man. What appeared to him only a few hours was in reality fifty years. When he



PICTURE 59

The Woodcutter and the Immortals

returned home nobody knew him.

9. Two Famous Scholars

Korean artists like to draw pictures of (a) Lin Hejing (林和靖) (or Lin Tong 林通), known in Korea as Im Hwajöng (임화정), and (b) Jiang Taigong (姜太公) or as he is called in Korea, Kang T'aegong (강태공). Both seem to have been real historical characters that lived long ago in China. But the details about their lives as given in Chinese histories are more like mythology than history. Pictures of these old men symbolize a life lived in harmony with nature and carry the wish that you live to a ripe old age.



PICTURE 60

Old Man Looking at Blossoms and Storks

A. Lin Hejing (林和靖) Im Hwajöng (임화정)

Lin Hejing (林和靖) (or Lin Tong 林通), known in Korea as Im Hwajöng (임화정) lived in Northern Song. He lived so perfectly in harmony with nature that he looked upon the plum blossoms as his wife and the storks as his sons. Pictures of Im Hwajöng depict him sitting under a blossoming plum tree with two storks flying by. Sometimes, a servant or a friend accompanies him. He is regarded as a typical Taoist philosopher in perfect harmony with nature. (Cho 172)

B. Jiang Taigong (姜太公) Kang T'aegong (강태공)

Jiang Taigong (姜太公), better known in Korea as Kang T'aegong (강태공), is probably the most popular Confucian sage seen in Korean paintings. These pictures show an old man fishing on the bank of a river, or from a boat, in the midst of beautiful scenes of mountains, rivers and lakes (산수도). He is alone, yet he is at peace and in absolute harmony with nature. Jiang Taigong lived during the Zhou Dynasty (주나라) (1030–256BC). Korean writers say his original name was Tai Gongwang (태공망, 太公望 T'ae Gongmang in Korean) but after he became famous his name was changed to Kang T'aegong (강태공 姜太公). Kang T'aegong spent his life in seclusion, studying, meditating and becoming a superior gentleman. He relaxed by fishing, yet even while fishing he meditated on the complexities of the world and thought of ways to bring harmony and order into society. (Confucius later adopted these ideals into his own system.) Jiang Taigong was discovered by the new king of Zhou and given

high office. He went immediately to the king's court, and although he was seventy years old at the time, he took on these arduous duties. He set up the basic laws of the Zhou dynasty. These laws were so just that the Zhou dynasty lasted for over 800 years.

This is the story told about Jiang Taigong, and at the moment it is hard to know whether it is history or mythology. To the artists Jiang Taigong is a symbol of the perfect gentleman. His life exemplifies the sayings that 'Virtue is its own reward,' and 'First seek perfection and all other things will be added.' Pictures of Jiang Taigong carry the message and hope 'that your efforts will be rewarded eventually and that you live in good health to a great old age'. (Cho 71, 162.)

10. Three famous Philosophers

Any famous philosopher can be drawn as an Immortal. Confucius, Lao and Mencius are probably the most famous of the Chinese philosophers. Confucius was always acceptable to the Neo-Confucian scholars of Korea. Mencius's teachings were not too popular in Korea. The ruling classes did not like his teaching about the right of subjects to refuse obedience to evil masters. Often in Korean pictures Mencius is depicted as being an object of fun. (See Part I, Chapter 8, Famous Philosophers.) Lao, of course, is the philosopher who invented the philosophy of Taoism that all the artists loved. All of these philosophers are usually drawn with a famous quotation from their works inscribed along the top or down the side, which helps to identify them.

11. **Ancient Poets of Korea and China** are also drawn as Immortals. The few lines of poetry inscribed on the picture can help to identify the poet.

12. Three Famous Quotations

Three Quotations taken from Chinese classics have become so standardized that even though there is no quotation written on the picture they can still be recognized. These are: (A) A sage washing his feet. (B) My master is in those mountains. (C) Old fisherman fishing in waters covered with peach blossoms.

A. Sage Washing His Feet (Mencius)

This is a drawing of an old man sitting on a stone in the middle of a mountain stream soaking his feet in the water.



PICTURE 61
Sage Washing his Feet in a River

It is based on the famous passage in Mencius's work where he says: 'When the waters of Canglang (Changnang) River (창랑강 or 창랑지수 滄琅之水) are clear one washes one's body up to the straps of one's hat. When the waters are muddy one washes only one's feet.'

The Canglang River was a famous place where travellers stopped to rest and wash themselves. Mencius implied that both actions, both types of washing, were right, but one is done at one time of the year while the other is done at another time, depending on whether the river is clear or muddied by flood waters. He was teaching that one should always live in harmony with nature; yet at different times, as different conditions demand, one's actions should be different. One should be versatile.

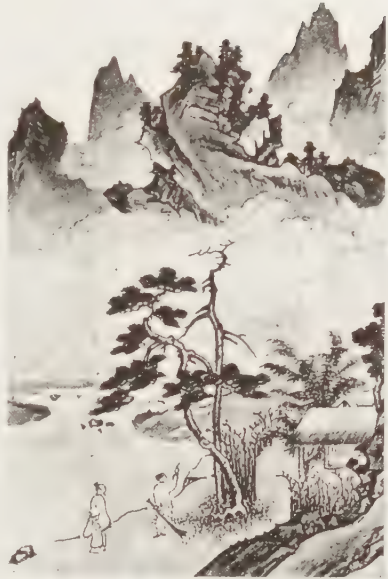
Later, Confucian politicians twisted this quotation to justify going along with the king's wishes even though they were unjust and immoral. But Mencius did not mean this as an excuse for doing evil. Rather he was teaching how men should be in harmony with nature in order to be able to resist evil.

This picture should be drawn to give the feeling of cooling, resting, refreshing the body and escaping the summer heat. It should also imply cleansing the spirit, renewing the energies of the spirit and striving for more virtue. (Cho 52, 141, 142)

B. My Master Is in Those Mountains (Jai Dao 賈島)

This is a scene drawn from a poem by the famous Chinese poet Jia Dao (가도, 賈島 Ka To in Korea). Jia Dao lived in China from AD777 to 841 during the Tang dynasty. A rough translation of the passage runs as follows: 'I asked the young boy under the pine tree where was his master. He pointed to the mountain range and said, my master is in those mountains, but as there are too many paths he could have taken, and as the mountains are covered with clouds, I cannot find for you the path that leads to him.' This poem teaches that the educated man is never 'lost', he always knows what he is doing.

The picture is drawn with a scholar talking to a boy under a pine tree and the boy is pointing to the huge mountains in the distance that are half covered with fog. What the boy is really saying is that his



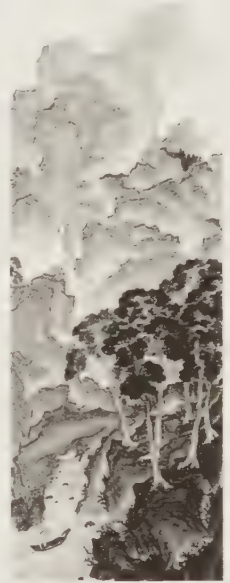
PICTURE 62
A Young Boy Pointing at the Mountains

master is so in tune with nature that he knows all the mountains, their paths and passes and can travel through them even in a fog. (Cho 159)

C. An Old Fisherman Fishing in Waters Covered with Peach Blossoms (Li Bai 李白)

This picture of an old fisherman fishing on a mountain river with peach blossoms falling on the water is a pen picture found in a poem by Li Bai (李白), better known in Korea as Yi T'aebaek (이태백 or just Yi Paek 이백). Li Bai lived during the Tang dynasty. He is one of the Eight New Immortals, eight famous poets who revitalized the philosophy of Taoism by their poetry.

A rough translation of the poem is: 'Why do you live in this green mountain? I only answered with a smile for my heart was here in harmony with nature, where the peach blossoms continuously bloom and drop their petals on the water. And just over those mountains on the distant horizon is probably a whole new world.' This poem summarizes the Taoist ideal of living in the midst of beauty in harmony with nature. This picture is drawn with a man fishing from a boat, green mountains in the background, trees in the foreground, with peach blossoms and petals falling on the water. Peach trees with blossoms falling on the water always identify this picture. (See Eight New Immortals.)



PICTURE 63
**Mountains with
Peach Blossoms
Falling on the
Water**

13. Chinese Moral Stories

Chinese Confucian Moral Stories were made up to instruct people by giving examples of how people in the olden days practised the Confucian virtues. Many pictures showing these heroic characters were drawn in Korea. The virtuous people in these pictures have become immortal through their practice of virtue. Pictures of these people are regarded as pictures of Immortals.

In Korea, the best known and the most often painted is the story of Meng Zong (孟宗) called Maeng Chong in Korean (맹충). Meng Zong was a very dutiful son. His old mother got sick and the doctors said that she would die unless she ate young bamboo shoots (or bamboo sprouts). As it was winter there were none to be had anywhere. Meng Zong went to a nearby bamboo grove and warmed the frozen ground with his body and watered it with his hot tears. Some days later bamboo shoots sprang up and he brought these to his mother and saved her life.

The picture is drawn with a young man sitting and crying in the snow. A bamboo shoot comes out of the ground and he is warming it by holding it close to his chest. Nearby, is the house where his mother lies

sick. The purpose of this story was to teach filial piety. Meng Zong became immortal because of his virtue. At least the story about him has become immortal.

14. Eight Episode Pictures (팔일도 八逸圖)

These are eight pictures that Korean artists love to draw. As these have been given under the special heading 'Eight Episode Pictures' I only give the names here. Korean artists give each of these pictures a special name which is given in brackets below:

1. Man Washing His Ears in the River. (영천세이도)
2. The Fisherman Yan Guang (嚴光), or in Korean Om Kwang (엄광) and his friend King Guang Wuti, Kwangmunje (광무제). (동강수도)
3. The Four Silver Haired Gentlemen on Shang Mountain (商山), or in Korean Sang Mountain (상산), playing Go or *paduk*. (상산위기도)
4. Boat Sailing with Full Sails on the River. (강동쾌별도)
5. Old Man Enjoying His Retirement in the Country. (율리의송)
6. Old Scholar Pointing at Flying Swans. (임해지홍도)
7. Scholars Viewing a Waterfall. (여산망폭)
8. Scholar Riding a Donkey Over a Bridge. (패교기려도)

All of these pictures are regarded as pictures of Immortals. As such they are symbols of a long, happy life, free from guilt, a life of leisure in harmony with nature. These pictures act as charms that have the power to give long life, happiness and ease.

These pictures are also called 'Giving Life Pictures.' They are also called 'A Grouping Together of Immortals that Forms a Life Giving Picture.'

<Giving life pictures *kongsudo* (공수도 供壽圖). *Kong* = 공 = giving. *Su* = 수 = life. *Do* = 도 = picture. A grouping together of Immortals that forms a life-giving picture *Kunsŏn kongsudo* (군선공수도 群仙供壽圖). *Kun* = 군 = a gathering together. *Sŏn* = 선 is a short way for writing *shinsŏn* = 신선 = Immortals. *Kongsudo* (공수도) means = giving life picture, or life giving picture.> (Cho 118, 164.)

IRIS

Irises are often drawn like orchids. It is hard to distinguish between irises and orchids, especially when drawn using only black ink. Orchids and irises are completely different plants; they belong to two separate families.

The flower of the Korean orchid is greenish on the outside and white on the inside, and in the wild it blooms in the spring. It only grows in well-drained light soil.

The flower of the iris is different. There are many forms of the wild iris to be found in Korea. The different varieties have different coloured flowers; some are blue, some are yellow, and they all bloom in the summer. The iris only grows in heavy soil that holds a lot of water.

The literati painters regard these two flowers as orchids because they both have *nan* (난) in their names and so both can carry the same symbolism.

Strictly speaking only the iris should be read as a grandson, but as both flowers are 'read' the same way, the orchid is also read as grandson.

<In Korean the iris is *nanch'o* (난초) and the orchid is *nan* (난). In Sino-Korean they are both called *nanch'o* (난초) or *ran* (란) and the same character is used for both (난초란 蘭). The literati artists called the iris *son* (손 孫 = 향플 이름 손 = 라손 蘭孫) by using a different character. This word *son* (손 孫) sounds the same as the word for a grandson, *son* (손 孫 = 孫子 손자).> (Cho 60)

IRIS AND CRICKET

The word for iris sounds like the word for grandson, and the word for cricket in Sino-Korean sounds like the word for an office, that is the place where a high official works. So this picture reads: 'May you live to see your grandsons and see them rise to positions of honour.'

<Iris is *son* (손). This sounds like the word for grandson *sonja* (손자). See iris above. A cricket is usually called *kwitturami* (귀뚜라미) but here the Sino-Korean word *kwig'a* (귀야 蝸甲) is used. This sounds like *kuvana* (관아 官衙) a place where a high official works.> (See: Cricket.) (Cho 60, 72.)

IRIS AND ROCK

Message: 'May you live a long life and see your grandsons.'

<Iris is *son* (손 蘭 孫) which sounds like grandson *sonja* (손자 孫子). Rock is *sök* (석 石) which sounds like the word for life *su* (수 壽).> (Cho 60)

JIANG TAIGONG

Jiang Taigong (姜太公) the old fisherman and philosopher is better known in Korea by his Korean name Kang Taegong (姜太公). (See Kang Taegong below and also Immortals.)

JUJUBE

These are Chinese dates. When ripe they are brownish yellow and are the size of a small plum or a big cherry. The jujube tree produces countless fruit. This symbolizes numberless progeny or grandsons.

<Jujube is *taech'u* (대추) and is always read as 'grandsons'.>

JUMPING CARP

This is a charm picture to produce a son. (See Carp; also Part I, Chapter 5, Fish, Birds and Animals, Leaping Carp.)

KA TO (가도 賈島)

Ka To (가도 賈島 Jia Dao) was a famous Chinese poet and gentleman who lived during the Tang dynasty. His dates are given as AD777-841. In one of his poems he writes: 'I asked the boy who was standing beneath the pine tree: Where is your master? He pointed to the mountains and said: "My master is in those mountains, but because of the clouds and fog on the mountains I cannot find him for you."' The poet Ka To coming to visit his friend is drawn as an Immortal. Ka To also wrote the famous poem about the Eight New Immortals of the Wine cup. (See Immortals.

This picture is the second of the Three Quotations. See also Eight New Immortals.)

KANG T'AEGONG (강태공 JIANG TAIGONG 姜太公)

In Chinese history (or is it mythology?), Kang T'aegong (강태공 姜太公) is the typical gentleman fisherman. This fisherman is always drawn as an old man fishing alone on a beautiful lake surrounded by picturesque scenery. The story about this famous philosopher is given above under Immortals. Pictures of Kang T'aegong are regarded as Immortal Pictures (선인도) and as such are charms that can give a long and peaceful life. (See Immortals, also Charms, and also Good Luck Charms.) (Cho 71, 162.)

KINGFISHER

In literati pictures, the kingfisher bird is the same as the phoenix. Normally the phoenix is regarded as a land bird, but as it is an imaginary bird, how do you paint it? Some drew it as a peacock, others as a domestic cock, some as a cross between the two. All agreed that it had beautiful plumage with every colour of the rainbow. So any multicoloured bird can be drawn to symbolize the phoenix. Mandarin ducks and kingfishers, although they are water birds, were drawn to symbolize this mythical bird. (See Phoenix, and Part I, The Four Mythical Animals, Phoenix.)

KITTENS

Kittens are never drawn alone; they are always drawn with the mother cat. (See Cat.)

KI RIGYE (기리계 綺里季)

Ki Rigye is one of the Four Silver Haired Gentlemen of Shang Mountain. He is known as Qi Liji in China. This picture is the third picture in the set of eight called The Eight Episode Pictures (팔일도) (See Eight Episode Pictures, Third Episode.)

KWAK U (곽우 郭瑠)

Kwak U is the old gentleman pointing to the swans in the sixth picture of the set called the Eight Episode Pictures. In China he is known as Guo Yu. (See Eight Episode Pictures, Sixth Episode.)

KWANGMUNJE (광문제)

King Kwangmunje (광문제) is the friend of Om Kwang (엄광) or Yan Guang (嚴光). The story of these two friends is drawn in the second of the set of pictures known as the Eight Episode Pictures. (See Eight Episode Pictures, Second Episode.)

KUNLUN MOUNTAINS (곤륜산맥 崑崙山脈)

These mountains, called Kunlun Mountains in English, or Kullyun Mountain Range (곤륜산맥) in Korean, were supposed to be in the middle of China (崑崙山脈 Kunlun Shanmai). China was supposed to have five great

mountains, one at each of the four cardinal points, that is, in the north, south, east and west, and one in the middle which was greater than any of the others. This highest mountain was therefore king of all the other mountains. This central mountain became a symbol of the emperor of China. These mountains are also called the five peaks. (See Mountains.)

LANDSCAPES

Oriental landscapes (산수도) are not pictures of scenic spots. They are an attempt to depict Tao. In Chinese philosophy Tao is regarded as a spiritual all-powerful God who created nature and everything in it. This spirit does not have a personality as in the Christian notion of God.

Tao is the One. It created the Two, yin and yang.

The Two are moved and held in equilibrium by the Four, that is, by the progression of the four seasons.

The Four established order, time, space and the five directions and made it possible for the Three to exist. The Three are heaven, earth and man.

The Three, that is the spirits who inhabit heaven, who inhabit the underworld and man who inhabits the earth, are all made from different quantities of the Five. These are the five elements, namely, fire, water, wood, metal and clay.

From the Five are made the Ten Thousand (the myriad) things. This Ten Thousand includes all things that are in the world.

The Ten Thousand eventually revert to Tao, return to Tao, make up Tao, that is, the One. (For a fuller account of this cycle of creation see Four Seasons – Flowers of.)

East Asian artists could not draw Tao but they could draw the Two, yin and yang, by drawing the sky of heaven and the mountains of earth. They could draw the Four by drawing the flowers of spring, the lush greens of summer, the yellow leaves of autumn and winter snow. They could draw the Three by drawing the sky, earth and man. Man could be made present by just drawing some artefact of man such as a house, a boat or a bridge. The Five could be depicted by the light of the sun for fire; lakes, rivers and sea for water; trees and all kinds of vegetation for wood; mountains and rocks for metals; and earth (clay) by all the things that grow in soil. The artists couldn't draw the One that was Tao, nor could they draw the Ten Thousand that was also Tao, but they could draw the Two, the Four, the Three and the Five and in this way depict Tao the Creator God. In oriental art landscapes are always drawings of Tao, drawings of God. The artists use all their powers and skills to put beauty, harmony and vitality *ki* (氣) into these pictures. Because landscapes carry this depth of symbolism and meaning they are not called landscapes or scenic pictures in Korea, but are given a special name: 'Mountains and Water Pictures' *sansudo* (산수도 山水圖).

Modern landscape artists seem to be losing the lofty ideals of the Old Masters. Some seem to be just drawing a Shangri-La picture, a dreamland of impossible beauty with strange flowers, trees and animals, or a quiet place in the country where one can retire to, where one can find one's roots, away from the dirt, pollution and hectic life of the city. Some seem to be drawing

a quiet place with a Temple where one can meditate in a sacred place. Or maybe their aim is just to draw a beautiful picture to hang on an apartment wall to decorate a room. A landscape can have different meanings for different people, but unless it has the deep symbolism that the ancient masters intended it to have, it cannot be called a 'Mountains and Water Picture'. (See Mountains, also Landscapes That Are Not Mountains and Water Pictures.)

LANDSCAPES THAT ARE NOT MOUNTAINS AND WATER PICTURES

At first sight, these pictures seem to be ordinary landscape pictures of the Mountains and Water type (산수도 山水圖) but a careful examination will show that they are one of the following: 1. Ten Long Life Symbols, 2. The Nine 'Ye', 3. The Kunlun Mountains or the Five Peaks, 4. Nine Mountains with Nine Peaks, 5. Landscapes with Immortals, 6. Genre Paintings, 7. The Pleasures of Fishing.



PICTURE 64
A Mountain with
Nine Peaks

1. **Ten Long Life Symbols.** These are charm pictures that give the blessing of a long life. The symbols can be any of the following: sun, moon, clouds, mountains, rocks, seas, rivers, lakes, bamboo, magic mushrooms, pine trees, plum trees, plum blossoms, peach trees, storks, deer and tortoises. At least ten of these symbols are present. (See Ten Long Life Symbols, also Mountains.)
2. **The Nine 'Ye'.** One mountain with nine peaks represents this picture. This picture is an illustration of the famous poem (천보) from the *Book of Odes* that is one of the Chinese Classics. In this poem the attributes of a King are described using nine symbols. The word 'ye' is used nine times in this poem. These nine symbols are drawn together to form a landscape (天保九如圖 = 천보구여도). (See Fish - Nine.)
3. **The Kunlun Mountains, or The Five Peaks.** The Kunlun Mountains were great mountains that were supposed to exist in the very centre of China. The Chinese king's power was at the centre of the Chinese world. This picture is drawn with five mountains. Usually all five are the same height, but occasionally the central one is slightly higher. The Kunlun Mountains became a symbol of the king. In Korea this picture was used as a backdrop to the king's throne. (See Mountains, also Kunlun Mountains.)
4. **Landscape with Nine Peaks.** These nine mountains, arranged in a mountain range with nine different peaks, refer to the famous poem in the *Book of Odes*, 'Tianbao', where the nine attributes of a great king are described. (See Ye - Nine; also Fish - Nine.)
5. **Landscapes with Immortals.** Usually, the people in these pictures are drawn fairly large and have Chinese-style upper-class clothing. These

are pictures of Immortals, either Old or New Immortals, gods of nature, characters from Chinese stories, myths or historical facts, poets, philosophers or sages. The landscape is only a backdrop, the Immortals are centre stage. (See Immortals.)

6. **Genre Pictures.** These pictures show Koreans in Korean dress against a typical Korean background. They are usually humorous pictures showing how the ordinary country folk (or sometimes the noblemen on a picnic when they thought there was nobody watching) enjoy themselves with the simple life in the country. (See Part I, Genre Pictures, Chapter 7.)
7. **The Pleasures of Fishing, or Water and Reed Pictures.** These pictures are common in China. Some people say they are a form of Mountains and Water pictures where the mountains are replaced by the reeds. Others say they are just landscapes with water and reed backgrounds and people fishing. Fishing and the joys of fishing are the real subjects of these pictures. The scenery seems to be only a backdrop to the activity of fishing. These pictures are seldom seen in Korea.

Lily (Day Lily), Butterflies and Rocks (See Rocks.)

Locusts (Grasshoppers), Cat, Butterfly, Chrysanthemum (See Chrysanthemums.)

Long Life Symbols – Ten (See Ten Long Life Symbols.)

Long Vertical Scroll (See Chrysanthemums.)

LOQUATS

These pictures give the message: 'Wishing you all the vitality of the four seasons.' Loquats are regarded as very strange things in the Orient. The flower buds in the autumn, it blooms in the winter; the fruit forms in the spring and it ripens in the summer. This is against all the rules. East Asians assigned to the Four Seasons a creative power or strength that was equal to the power of yin and yang and almost equal to the power of creation itself. In their philosophy everything created was made up of yin or yang or combinations of these two principles. Yin things were passive, cold, heavy and material and left to themselves would end up in a great frozen lump at the bottom of the universe. Yang things were active, hot, light and spiritual and if left alone would all float away to the top of the universe and get too hot in the process. The



PICTURE 65
Loquats

progression of the four seasons was necessary to keep the two sets of things stirred up and mixed. When it got too cold in winter, spring came along. When it got too hot in summer, autumn arrived. Spring brought life, autumn brought death. Because of the progression of the four seasons man could exist on earth. But man's life too is governed by the four seasons. In due season he is born, in due season he dies. All the generations before him and after him are subject to the four seasons.

So the four seasons have this awful power, this great vitality and this awesome authority to produce these effects. But the loquat is not tied into this cycle. It has its own cycle that is independent of the four seasons. So the only conclusion was that it had within itself the same power and vitality that the four seasons possessed. It could set its own time for blooming and producing fruit. So its power must be equal to the power of the four seasons. Otherwise, it could not exist outside the influence of the four seasons. As it possesses this great vitality it was regarded as a special plant and also a powerful source of medicines.

The loquat then is a symbol of great power and vitality. A picture of loquats expresses the wish 'that you always possess this vitality'. (Cho 127)

LOTUS – FRESH

The lotus is one of the Three Flowers of Ambition: peony rose for wealth and high position; chrysanthemum for the retired life in the country; and lotus for the life of the scholar. Only men and their sons were eligible for these kinds of life. So the lotus is a symbol of a son.

The lotus is a symbol of a scholar. The lotus grows in muddy waters with very little clay to nourish it, but eventually it reaches the top of the water where it blooms in brilliant sunlight. A student has to live in poverty and study hard for a long time, but eventually he passes his examinations and can bask in the sunshine of his achievements.

A picture of a fresh lotus expresses a wish 'that you have a healthy son' or 'that you have sons who in turn have sons and grandsons to the end of time.'

<A fresh lotus is *saengyŏn* (생연 生蓮). Reversed it gives *yŏnsaeng* (연생 蓮生), which means always alive. A special son is *kwija* (귀자 貴子). This can be read as an always-alive precious son (연이어 귀한 자식), that is one who will carry on the family name. So the lotus is read as a special son always alive who will carry on the family name.> (See Chrysanthemum, also Peony Rose, and also Lotus Plant with Withered Stalk.) (Cho 87)



PICTURE 66
Two Ducks and a Lotus Plant
in Full Bloom

LOTUS FRUIT

This fruit has many seeds so it is a symbol of many sons. (See Bottle Gourd; also Vines.)

LOTUS PLANT WITH FLOWERS, SEEDS AND TWO DUCKS

Message: 'May you have many illustrious sons who will pass both parts of the State Examinations in the same year and carry on your name forever.' (Cho 87)

Lotus and Mandarin Duck (See Phoenix and Lotus Plant.)



PICTURE 67

Two Storks and Withered Lotus

LOTUS PLANT WITH WITHERED STALKS

The withered stalks denote the hard hours one has to spend studying, the deprivations and suffering one has to endure as a student in order to pass the state examinations, which are represented by the lotus flower blooming on top of the water. The lotus stalks with the big roots emphasize that one did one's studies and laid down a solid foundation for further achievements.

The stalks and the roots can also symbolize the parents of the scholar, who because they were conscientious and honourable and ready to make sacrifices eventually produced an educated and illustrious son. (Cho 121)

LOTUS WITH TWO STORKS

The lotus, especially a withered lotus with two storks, is a popular picture in Korea. Actually, it does not read in Chinese so in effect it means nothing. It may have been meant to read: 'Success in the second part of your examinations,' but whoever invented this literati picture was not too good at his Chinese! Although it has no meaning as a literati picture it still makes a pleasing picture.

<The word for one stork is *ilbaengno* (일백로 一白露) which can be shortened to *illo* (일로). This *illo* (일로) can be read as *illoryŏn'gwa* (일로련과 一路連科) which means 'in one effort' pass all your exams. In Sino-Korean reading two storks as *iro* (이로) has no meaning. Substituting *i* (二) for *ir* (一) to get *iroyŏn'gwa* (이로) does not mean the second part of the examinations.> (Cho 43)

LOTUS FRUIT AND ONE STORK

Message: 'Be sure to pass your examinations in one attempt.'

<Stork = *paengno* (백로 白露). One stork = *illo* (일로 一白露), and this also means *illoryŏn'gwa* (일로련과 一路連科) 'in one effort'. Lotus = *yŏn* (연 蓮). Fruit = *kwa* (과 果). These two reversed read as *kuwayŏn* (과연) = truly, certainly.>

Lotus, Reeds, Water peppers, Minnows, Carp, Geese, Phoenix, etc. (See Carp.)

Lotus and Phoenix (See Phoenix.)

LOTUS SYMBOLISM

Message: 'Like father, like son. If the roots are hardy the branches will flourish, if parents make sacrifices the children will prosper.' The lotus is a rather versatile symbol and signifies several things. As a Buddhist symbol it illustrates man's struggle for perfection. A beautiful flower developing out of the dirty water can signify conversion, enlightenment and eternal life in nirvana.

If the roots are shown, these recall the old Buddhist saying: 'If the roots are hardy the branches will flourish.' Here the roots refer to the parents.

In the Confucian context a lotus flower with fresh leaves floating on the water is a symbol of the Confucian gentleman, a man whose learning and virtue make him stand out among other men. A lotus flower, drawn with withered leaves and with its sturdy roots shown clearly, is a picture in praise of ancestors and especially parents, who by their efforts, sacrifices and virtuous achievements produced and educated an illustrious son. The lotus with a fruit expresses a wish for many famous, illustrious and successful sons. In these pictures the lotus usually stands for a son, a male heir.

<The lotus = *yŏn* (연蓮). The water dropper that students used for wetting and mixing Chinese ink was called a *yŏnjŏk* (연적砚滴). Thus *yŏn* (연) besides meaning a lotus can also denote a scholar, that is, one who uses a water dropper. Only a son could become a scholar so 'yŏn' can only be applied to a son. The word for a water dropper *yŏnjŏk* (연적砚滴) can be divided and then the Chinese characters look like the Sino-Korean words *hyangshi* (향시) and *chŏnshi* (전시) which are the words for the first and second parts of the state examinations. Thus lotus *yŏn* (연) means a scholar bright enough to pass both parts of the state examinations at one sitting, that is, in the same year.> (Cho 86, 121, 122)

MAGIC JEWEL

When the carp rises up from the earth and becomes a dragon, it has to capture a magic jewel before it becomes immortal. If it fails to capture the jewel, it falls back down to earth and becomes a mean snake or river monster. This was also the fate of students who failed to pass their examinations. This jewel is called *yŏiŭju* (여의주如意珠) which means 'every wish granted'. Dragons are always drawn with this jewel in their mouths. The jewel is drawn as a ball of fire, or as a globe with a flame rising out of it. (See Part I, Chapter 6, Mythical Animals, Dragons.)



PICTURE 68

Lotus Plant with Roots

MAGIC MUSHROOM

The magic mushroom is often called by its Korean name *pulloch'o* – even in English books. This mushroom is said to grow wild in the mountains of Korea. If one could find this magic mushroom and eat it, one would get eternal life. This mushroom is also called *yōūi* <여의> which means 'every desire' or 'all you can wish'. This food has the magical power to grant perpetual youth.

<The Korean word for this mushroom is *pulloch'o* (불로초) which is really three words. *Pul* (불不) = does not; *lo* (로老) = old; *ch'o* (초草) = plant or grass. Another name used is *yōūi* (여의如意) = every desire. This 여의 (如意) means everything the heart desires.> (See Magic Jewel, and Magic Staff.) (Cho 107)

MAGIC STAFF

Famous Buddhist monks and teachers are drawn carrying a long staff or walking stick. This magic staff is called *yōūibong* (여의봉如意棒) and is a symbol of the power to teach Buddhist law and to give enlightenment. This staff has a crest on it shaped like the *pulloch'o* or magic mushroom. Some say that this crest is formed like a cloud to signify heaven, but then the *pulloch'o* is also drawn like a cloud to signify that it too has heavenly power.

MAGIC MUSHROOM AND PERSIMMONS

Message: 'May everything work out as you desire.'

<The explanation is a bit complicated. A persimmon is *kam* (감) in Korean, but in Sino-Korean it is *shi* (시柿). *Shi* sounds like *sa* (사事) which means 'thing'. If there is more than one persimmon, then the *sa* can be doubled to *sasa* (사사事事), which means 'things' or 'everything'. The magic mushroom is *yōūi* (여의如意), which means 'every desire', or 'your desires'. So the whole lot gives the message given above.> (See Fish and Persimmons.) (Cho 107)

MAGIC MUSHROOM AND PINE TREE

Message: 'May you fulfil all your wishes in the New Year.' The pine tree symbolizes the New Year, and the magic mushroom symbolizes every wish granted. So these two symbols together read: 'May you fulfil all your wishes in the New Year.' Both the pine tree and the magic mushroom are long life symbols so they form a charm to give long life.

<Pine = *song* (송백송白松). The pine tree is the king of the forest, it takes



PICTURE 69

Pine Tree and Magic Mushroom

precedence over all the other trees, Because of this the pine tree *song* (송) can be read as 'first' or 'start'. The start of the year is New Year's Day. The pine tree symbolizes the New Year. The magic mushroom is *yŏūi* (여의如意) every desire or every wish granted. These two symbols give the above message or greeting.> (See Magic Mushroom, and also Pine Tree.)

MAGIC MUSHROOM, THINGS, FLOWERS AND FRUITS

These denote many different blessings. (See Flowers – A Collection of Flowers and Things. Also Blessings – Five, and Blessings – One Hundred.)

MAGNOLIA

The Magnolia is a symbol of beauty, especially feminine beauty. Normally it is called *mongyŏnkkot* (목련꽃) in Korean, but it is also called *ognanwba* (옥란화 玉蘭花) in Sino-Korean. It is the *ok* (옥) part of this word that is most often used to carry the messages that the literati put into these pictures. *Ok* (옥玉) means 'jade'. In China jade was not only regarded as a precious stone, but it was also believed to have magical powers. Only the nobles who were very rich could afford it, and only they were allowed to wear it. Confucius said that the nobles had a right to rule because they were better, that is, better educated and more virtuous than the ordinary people. Their right to own jade was a symbol of their right to rule. So jade became a symbol of nobility, the noble virtues that they were supposed to practise and of course the wealth that they accumulated. In Korea, the magnolia, which can be read as jade, is used as a symbol of nobility, high position and wealth. (Cho 1, 73, 92)

Magnolia, Crow and Wild Rose (See Crow, Magnolia and Wild Rose.)

Magnolia, Peony Rose and Wild Rose (See Peony Rose, Magnolia and Wild Rose.)

MAGNOLIA AND ROCK

Message: 'May you certainly live for a long time' or 'You will certainly live long.'

<Magnolia in Sino-Korean is also called a *mokp'ilhwa* (목련화 木蘭花). The middle character *p'il* (필 必반드시필) if taken alone sounds the same as the word for 'certainly'. The word for rock is *sŏk* (석石) and it sounds like the word for long life = *su* (수壽). So the picture reads: 'You will certainly live long.'> (Cho 73)

MAGNOLIA, ROCK AND WILD ROSE

Message: 'May you certainly get wealth and live long.' Although this picture is often drawn, the purists say that it is wrong; strictly speaking, they say, it means nothing.

<Magnolia is *ognanwba* (옥란화 玉蘭花). *Ok* (옥玉) is the word for jade. This word for jade *ok* (옥玉) can also mean wealth. (See under Magnolia above.)

The word for a wild rose is *haedanghwa* (해당화 薔薇花), and from this word the *tang* (당) is taken, which sounds the same as the Chinese word *tang* (당 當 마땅할당) which means 'in due course', 'certainly' or 'it will surely happen'.



PICTURE 70

Magnolia, Rock and Wild Rose

The word for rock *sŏk* (석石) sounds like the word for life or long life *su* (수壽). These words give the message: 'May you certainly become wealthy and live to a great old age.'> (See Cricket.) (Cho 73)

MAGPIES

The Sino-Korean word for magpie sounds the same as the word for 'joy', so magpies can always be read as 'joy' or 'happiness'. Magpies are also a symbol of good news that brings joy.

<In Sino-Korean both magpies and sparrows are called *chak* (작 = 까치 작 鶯 참새 작 雀). This word *chak* (작) is always read as 'joy and happiness'. So magpies are read as 'joyful news' or 'good news'. See explanation for this reading given under Yellow Sparrows below.>

MAGPIES – A PAIR

Message: 'May you have a happy married life with more and more happiness.' Magpies are usually drawn in pairs. In Sino-Korean when the character is doubled it usually signifies the plural of the noun or a more emphatic form of the word. So a pair of magpies means 'many joys'. When there are two pairs of magpies 'many, many joys' are implied. In Korea a pair



PICTURE 71

**Two Magpies, and Again
Two Magpies**

of magpies is a symbol of a happy marriage, marital harmony and bliss. Pictures of magpies are also a charm that gives happiness to the married couple. Magpies can also express a wish that you get lots of 'good news' during the year, so a picture of magpies can be used as a New Year's greeting card.

Magpies, Cat, Kittens, Pine Tree, Sparrows (See Cat.)

MAGPIES AND PUMA

This picture is often drawn as magpies and a tiger. As there were no pumas in Korea tigers were drawn instead. The tiger is either drawn with spots or with a cat's face to make it look like a puma. This picture expresses New Year's Greetings.

<The puma, panther or leopard is called a *p' yobŏm* (표범豹). The *p' yo* (표) sounds like the Sino-Korean *po* (보報값을보) that means tell or announce. The magpies are read as 'good news'.> (See Puma. Also see Magpies.) (Cho 45)

MAGPIE, PLUM TREE AND PLUM BLOSSOMS

Message: 'Happy New Year's Greetings and may you only hear good news in the New Year.' This picture is drawn with one magpie sitting on the branch of a plum tree in bloom. The plum tree blooms first in the spring so it is a symbol of 'the very beginning of spring'. As spring is the beginning of the New Year, the plum blossoms are a symbol of the New Year or New Year's Day. The magpie is a messenger of joy. In folklore, the magpie is always regarded as a messenger of good news.

<Magpie = *chak* (작), (작鶻까지작). *Chak* (작) is as usual read as *hŭi* (희 흥) joy and happiness.> (See Magpies and Yellow Sparrow.) (Cho 102)

MAGPIE AND TIGER

Although these pictures are often drawn, they mean nothing unless the tiger is read as a 'puma'. (See Puma.)

MAGPIE – A PAIR, WILLOW TREE AND ROSES

Message: 'May every joy, youth and beauty stay with you both for ever.' The willow tree is read as 'stay' and the roses are read as 'ever young and beautiful'.

Roses and willow are both symbols of a long youth, beauty and virility. Oriental varieties of roses bloom the whole summer and well into the autumn until they are killed off by ice and snow. So they are a sign of beauty lasting for a long time. Willow trees are the first to send out their leaves in the spring, and the green leaves remain on the trees after all the other trees



PICTURE 72

One Magpie Sitting on a Plum Branch in Bloom

have turned to yellow and brown in the autumn, so the willow is a symbol of vitality, virility and of youth lasting a very long time.

<The Korean for rose is *changmi* (장미). A modern popular explanation of this symbolism is that this word for a rose is broken down into two parts so that it reads *chang* (장) = long or forever (as in *changsaeung* 장생 long life), and *mi* (미) = beauty. These words mean a long beauty or forever beautiful.

The literati artists never used such a crude explanation. They used the Sino-Korean word for a rose. The rose in Sino-Korean is (월계화 月季花) the flower that blooms every month. This word is seldom used in literati pictures; instead it is the Korean word for a rose *changmi* (장미) that is used but their explanation is more involved than the popular one. This *changmi* (장미) is written in Sino-Korean but the *chang* is changed to *changch'un* 長春 = long spring and is read as 유희장춘 留喜長春 = 기쁨과 젊음이 오래도록 머물다 which means happiness and youth remaining for a long time. The rose can therefore be read as 'ever young' = *changch'un* (장춘) = literally a long spring.

The willow tree is *yu* (유 柳 버들류). This is changed to *yu* (유, 留), which means 'stay' or 'remain'. A magpie is *chak* (작) but this is always read as *hüi* (희 喜) which means joy. The two magpies are read *chakchak* (작작) and this can be regarded as the plural form so it can be read as 'joys' or 'every joy'. Here, however, it seems to mean not so much every joy as joy to the husband and to the wife. So the message reads: 'May joy, youth, virility, vitality and beauty stay with you both for a very long time as you stay happily married forever.'

MAGPIES AND SPARROWS

Both birds are called *chak* (작), which is always read as the word for joy or happiness. These pictures express the wish that you have many joys and happiness during your married life, and they also act as magical charms to give you these joys and blessings. (See Yellow Sparrows.)

MAGPIES AND WILLOWS

Message: 'Wishing you eternal youth and happiness in marriage.' This is much like the two entries above but the emphasis is on staying sexually active for a long time, that is, up to old age. Willows are a symbol of a long youth and give the blessings to stay young, healthy and sexually active for the whole span of one's life. So, the message can also be read as: 'Enjoy a long youth in married bliss.'



PICTURE 73

Two Magpies and a Willow Tree

MENG ZONG (孟宗)

In Korea this Immortal is better known as Maeng Chong (맹종). (See Immortals, under Confucian Moral Stories, also Bamboo, Big and Small.)

MANDARIN DUCK

In literati pictures the mandarin duck (or to be more accurate the drake) is the same as the phoenix. (See Phoenix, also Kingfisher.)

MANDARIN DUCKS – A PAIR

This is a charm for a long and happy marriage. Mandarin ducks were supposed to mate only once in life. If either died, the other was supposed to die shortly afterwards from grief. So this picture is also a charm that gives love to a marriage and ensures marital fidelity.

MANDARIN DUCK AND LOTUS PLANT

In this picture the mandarin duck has to be read as a phoenix. (See Phoenix and Lotus Flower.)

MANDARIN FISH

This fish was a symbol of the king. It is a great fighter and protects its territory. It kills other male fish that enter its domain. A picture with two mandarin fish is a call to rebellion against the king. (See Fish – Mandarin Fish.) Mandarin Fish and Duck (See Duck – One, and Mandarin Fish.)

Millet (See Quails.)

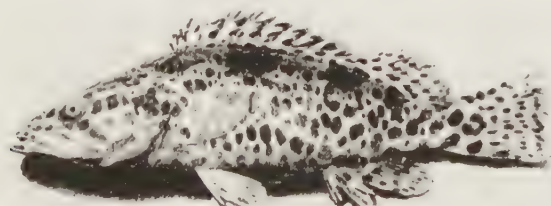
Minnows, Carp, Lotus, Geese, Water peppers, etc. (See Carp.)

MOON

This is the great yin principle called the *t'aeiŭm* (태음 太陰) principle in Sino-Korean. It is the opposite of the sun *t'ae yang* (태양 太陽), which is the great yang principle.

In olden days the turtle or tortoise represented the moon, and the three-legged crow or a red bird represented the sun. (See paintings from Koguryŏ tombs of about AD500.)

The phoenix, the three-legged crow or a red bird, and even the farmyard cock, represent the sun, but there does not seem to be any fixed symbol to represent the moon. In folklore, the hare or the rabbit is a symbol of the



PICTURE 74

Mandarin Fish (Korean Species)

moon. It pounds its herbs in a big stone pestle on the moon to make medicines for the gods. Although this picture is often drawn, literati painters never used this symbol.

<The Sino-Korean word for moon is *t'aeŭm* (태음 太陰). In many literati pictures *ŭm* (음) is taken separately and read as *ŭmak* (음악 or 음락 音樂), which means music. The *ŭm* (음 音) of this word means the sound of music and the *rak* (락 樂) is the joy that music gives. So the moon is read as music and then as merrymaking, partying, or just joy and happiness.>
Moon, Geese and Reeds (See Goose.)

MOON OVER PLUM BRANCH AND PLUM BLOSSOMS

This is one of the more complicated pictures; it can be read in many different ways. It can mean: 'Till your eyebrows turn white (from old age) may you have happiness,' or it can mean, 'May you have a long and happy life,' or it can simply mean, 'Wishing you a long life and happiness.'

<The moon is *t'al* (달) in Korean but *wŏl* (월) in Sino-Korean, but here it is read as the *yin* principle *ŭm* or *t'aeŭm* (태음). Then the *ŭm* (음) is read as *ŭmak* (음악 or *ŭmnak* 음락 音樂) which means music or a good time enjoyed with lively music. The *rak* (락 樂 즐길 락) (r changes to n after m) part of the word for music is 'joy' or 'happiness'. The moon being over the branch gives the word *sang* (상 上) = over. This *sang* can mean 'too' or 'also'. The plum blossom is *mae* (매 梅) but this sounds like *mi* (미 눈썹미 眉). The plum branch is *ch'o* (초 梢), but this sounds like *su* (수 壽) in Sino-Korean = long life. The four words we started out with were *mae-ch'o-sang-wŏl* (매초상월) but these are now changed to *mi-su-sang-nak* (미수상락 眉壽上樂). The meaning of the first two words together *misu* (미수) is 'Live a long life till your eyebrows turn white.' The meaning of the second two words *sangnak* (상락) is, 'May you also have a happy time,' that is, 'Even when you are growing old have a good time too.'>

MOON, MOUNTAINS, RIVER, SUN, HILLS, PINE TREE AND CEDAR TREE

This picture is a drawing based on the poem 'Tianbao' *ch'ŏn bo* (Eulogy to the King), (天保 禱 報) from the *Book of Odes* describing the nine attributes of a good king. In 'Eulogy to the King' the poet says that a good king is like



PICTURE 75

Mountains with Sun and Moon

the sun and the moon, the mountains and the hills, and the flowing river. He is immortal like the Great Southern Mountains. He is like the pine tree and the cedar tree and his work is without end. This picture symbolizes the king. In Korea, a folding screen with this picture was always placed behind the king's throne. (See Mountains, also Fish – Nine.)

MOUNTAINS

An old Chinese writer described mountains as being the backbone of the land, the place where all energy and vitality originated. The mountains caught the clouds and made them drop their rain, which flowed down the sides of the mountains into the valleys and made all things grow. Also land dragons lived in the mountains and under the mountains, which meant that these places were sacred, the home of powerful spirits.

In Korea, too, the mountains are regarded as being sacred and the source of all the energy in the country and in the people. Shamanists believe that the mountains are the home of the mountain spirit (*sansbin* = 산신) and that each mountain has its own mountain spirit who protects those living in the nearby valleys.

In East Asian pictures, the mountains are regarded as yin principles when compared to the sky and the heavens, which are the yang principles. But when the mountains are compared to the lowlands, the rivers, the lakes and the sea, they become yang principles, and the water and waterlogged rice paddies become yin.

The artist regards a blank sheet of paper as yin, which is passive, ready to receive the ink, yet the parts that he paints become yang, active, worked. As the sky and the heavens are left blank, they are yin; mountains that are drawn become yang, that is, the worked area, the areas that give vitality to the picture. So mountains can be either yin or yang depending on how you think of them. Normally they look pretty passive and dead, but in reality they are full of yang for there is activity in them and on them all the time. Waters are flowing on them; plants and trees are growing on them; big and small animals are moving on them; gods, goddesses, Immortals, spirits and demons are living there, moving through them and influencing what is happening all around them.

Mountains are the source of life, so in the Korean context they are used as symbols of life and especially long life. Mountains and rocks are two symbols used in the Ten Long Life Symbols. These pictures act as a charm to give a long life.

Mountains are drawn in Korean pictures in different ways to express different ideas:

1. *To depict Tao*

Mountains and Water Pictures (산수도 山水圖) are drawn to depict God, God the creator or Tao. (See Landscapes.)

2. *To symbolize the attributes of a good king*

A picture of a mountain with nine peaks or a picture with a ridge of nine mountains looks like a Mountains and Water picture, but it is really a

symbol of the nine attributes of a good king. These attributes are described in the *Book of Odes* in a poem entitled 'Tianbao' 'A Eulogy to the King' (*ch'ŏn bo* 天保 천보). In this poem the poet says that the good king is like the sun and the moon, the mountains and the hills and the flowing river. He is immortal like the Great Southern Mountains. He is like the pine tree and the cedar tree and his work is without end. In this poem words that sound like *yŏ* occur nine times, so this poem is known as the 'nine *yŏ* poem. Nine mountains or a mountain with nine peaks is enough to remind scholars of this poem. These pictures are reminders of the attributes of a good king. Often the sun and the moon are missing, but most of the other symbols are drawn. (See Fish – Nine.)

3. *To symbolize the power of the king*

These mountains are called the Kunlun Mountains (곤륜산맥 崑崙山脈). These mountains are also called the Five Peaks and the Nine Peaks. Kunlun Mountain is supposed to be in the centre of China while the other four great mountains are at the four corners of the kingdom. Although spread out in space they are drawn as one mountain range. These four represent the four cardinal points, north, south, east and west. Kunlun Mountain in the centre is the king of all the mountains. All the most powerful gods and spirits live there. This mountain represents the king who rules his kingdom from the centre and is the most powerful person in the world.

The Kunlun Mountains are drawn in two forms. Both forms can be used on a folding screen that acts as a backdrop to the king's throne. In the first form only five mountains are drawn. The mountains are drawn side by side with the central mountain drawn higher than the other four. The tall mountain is Kunlun, the others are the four cardinal points. This picture symbolizes the king, his power that extends from the centre to the farthest ends of the kingdom and his divine authority to rule. In the second form nine mountains are drawn side by side to form a mountain range. To the back are five mountains and in front are four lesser mountains looking like foothills. Two rivers like waterfalls tumble down the mountains into the sea in the foreground. Various trees grow on the mountains. Sometimes the sun and moon are added. The sun is on the right side because that is where the king sat, and the moon is on the left because that is where the queen sat following Eastern custom. This picture is really a combination of the Nine Peaks (see 2 above) and the Five Peaks of the Kunlun Mountains, yet it is still called a Kunlun Mountain Picture. It symbolizes both the nine attributes of a good king and his power and right to rule. As this form of the picture makes a more impressive picture than the five peaks version, it was used more often in the throne room.

4. *To act as a charm*

These pictures, although they look like landscapes or Mountains and Water Pictures, are really the Ten Long Life Symbols pictures (십장생 十長生). These pictures are special to Korea. They have their roots in the Shamanistic idea that spirits inhabit certain places, trees, animals

and birds. These spirits can be beneficial to man and give him special gifts and blessings. The greatest gift or blessing was a long life and happiness.

The final list of Ten Long Life Symbols finally worked out by the scholars at the end of the nineteenth century was 1. Sun, 2. Clouds (these replaced the moon), 3. Mountains and rocks (these two used to be separate), 4. Water (rivers, waterfalls, lakes or sea), 5. Pine tree, 6. Bamboo (a latecomer to the list), 7. Magic mushroom, 8. Storks, 9. Deer, 10. Tortoise. Older lists had the moon, plum blossoms, heavenly peaches, rocks and mountains but left out the clouds and bamboo.

Modern painters put more than ten symbols into this picture; they draw both the moon and clouds, they include peach trees, peach blossoms, peaches, plum trees and plum blossoms. The idea now seems to be to get in at least ten but the more the merrier. These Ten Long Life Pictures are drawn like landscapes with big mountains in the background. All other symbols are fitted in to make the picture look natural.

Ten Long Life Pictures were drawn to decorate the 'Royal Country Residence' of the Korean king. He left his luxurious palace every year for a week or two and lived as a 'farmer' in a very modest farm style house that was close to the palace in Seoul. This was done to bring the blessings of a good harvest to the country. The Ten Long Life Picture was used to protect the king, and to wish him good health while he was undergoing this ordeal. (See Ten Long Life Symbols.)

Often these four pictures of mountain ranges, rivers and pine trees are easily confused one with another, as they look very alike. However, the symbolism is different. The first, the Mountains and Water Pictures (*Sansudo* 산수도 山水圖) are a representation of Tao and his creation. The second, the Nine *yǒ* Pictures, a mountain with nine peaks or a range of nine mountains, is in praise of the king and recalls his attributes (천보구여도 天保九如圖). The third, the Kunlun Mountains (곤륜산맥 崑崙山脈) or the five peaks, show the king's power and authority. The fourth, the Ten Long Life Symbols pictures (십장생 十長生), wishes the beholder good health and a long life. (Cho 151-153)

Mountains – Five Peaks or Nine Peaks (See Landscapes.)

Nine Fish (See Fish – Nine.)

NINE QUAILS AND CHRYSANTHEMUMS

Message: 'May you have so many blessings that nine generations can live peacefully in your house.'



PICTURE 76
Nine Quails and
Chrysanthemums

Usually, only three generations, that is, grandfather, father and son, lived together in one house. But during the Golden Age of the Tang dynasty, things were so well ordered that nine generations were said to live together peacefully in the same house.

Quails are said to be the most peaceful of birds. They never fight among themselves, so they are a symbol of peace. The nine quails refer to the nine generations, and to the peace that a well-ordered family enjoys. The chrysanthemum in literati pictures is usually read as a quiet and peaceful retirement, but here it refers to the place to which one retires, a quiet and peaceful house in the country. It refers to the one household.

<Chrysanthemum = *kukhwa* (국화 菊花). *Kuk* sounds like the Sino-Korean word for retirement = *kŏ* (거처) or *ŭn'gŏ* (은거). Here it means the house where one lives in retirement.> (See Quails.) (Cho 154)

NINE STORKS

The nine storks refer to the Nine Teachings of Confucius. (See Storks – Nine.)

OLD AGE

To young students, living to sixty, seventy or eighty years of age seemed like living for an eternity. So, a wish that you live to these ages was the same as saying: 'May you live for ever.' These young men studying the classics for the state examinations seem to have invented many of the literati pictures.

For those who were older it was hard to find a reason to continue studying into their old age. Pictures of Immortals such as Jiang Taigong (姜太公), Kang Taegong (姜太公) in Korean, the famous fisherman; or the philosopher, Guo Yu (郭 馮), Kwak U (곽우) in Korean, who refused to be 'cooped up' as mentioned in the 6th Episode; Zhang Han (張 翰) Chang Han (장한), who escaped by boat from the corrupt court as told in the 4th Episode; or the Four Gentlemen of Shang Mountain (상산사호 商山四皓), reminded them that even in old age learned men were useful to the king and to the country. By becoming perfect gentlemen in the Confucian sense they acted as the conscience of the king and other statesmen and were an example to the people around them. (See Bamboo for sixtieth birthday, Cat and also Owl for seventieth birthday and Butterflies for eightieth birthday. Also see Celestial Stems.)

ONE HUNDRED CHILDREN

Message: 'May you have many sons.' This is a charm given to a newly-married woman to help her have many sons. Dreaming of a baby boy was supposed to bring about the



PICTURE 77

One Hundred Children

birth of a son. This picture was thought to help such dreams arise. Note that the hundred children are all boys. This picture is of Chinese origin; all the boys are drawn as Chinese children. One occasionally sees this type of picture in Korea, but it is not very popular.

ONION ROOT

An onion root is called a 'white head' and symbolizes old age. (See Pine Tree, Bamboo and Two White Headed Birds.)

ORCHIDS

The orchid is one of the Four Gentlemen. Orchids are also one of the flowers drawn in the pictures called 'Fragrances of the Four Seasons.' Often orchids are drawn as irises. (See Chrysanthemums, also Bamboo, also Plum Blossom, and also Iris. See Part I, Chapter 2, The Four Gentlemen.)

ORCHIDS AND ROCK

Message: 'May you live a long life and see your grandsons.'

<The usual word for an orchid is *nan* (난 蘭) but here the orchid is read as an iris, *son* (손 蓀). The word for an iris is *son* (손 蘭 蓀 란손) in Sino-Korean which sounds like *son* (손 孫) or *sonja* (손자 孫子) = grandson or progeny. Rock is *sŏk* (석 石) which sounds like the Sino-Korean word *su* (수 壽) = life.> (See Iris.)



PICTURE 78
**Orchids and
Rock**



PICTURE 79
Orchids and Cricket

ORCHID AND CRICKETS

Message: 'May you live to see your grandsons and see them rise to high positions in the government.'

<Orchids are read as iris = *son* (손) which sounds like *sonja* (손자) = grandson. See entry above. Cricket is *Kwig'a* (귀아 or 귀아蟋兒) which sounds like *kwana* (관아官衙) in Sino-Korean, which is an office where a high official works, so it can be read as a 'high position'.> (See Cricket; also Iris.)



PICTURE 80
An Owl

OWL

The owl has a face like a cat so the word for a cat *myo* <묘> is substituted. The word for a cat sounds like the word for seventy. So the picture reads: 'Congratulations to you on your seventieth birthday.' In China the owl is an evil bird associated with death and bad omens. There is no such symbolism attached to the owl in Korea.

<In Sino-Korean the owl is called 'the eagle with the face of a cat' = *myoduǔng* (묘두웅 貓頭鷹). The word for a cat is *myo* (묘 猫). This sounds like the word for seventy = *mo* (모 老). So the message is read as congratulations on the seventieth birthday which is *kobūi* (고희古稀).> (Cho 72.)

PAIR OF DUCKS

This is a charm for newly-weds. (See Ducks – A Pair, also Mandarin Ducks – A Pair.)

PEANUT

This is part of a collection of flowers and things that represent blessings needed to live well in this world. It is usually read as long life. (See Flowers – A Collection of Flowers and Things.)

PEACHES – THE HEAVENLY PEACHES

Message: 'Live for many years.' In the Taoist heaven, also called the Eastern Paradise, there is a peach tree that blooms every three thousand years. When the petals fall from the flowers, the peaches form that grow for 3,000 years. After another 3,000 years they are fully ripe and can be eaten. While the fruit is still on the trees the flowers bloom again. The gods and goddesses, as well as the other Immortals, ate these magic peaches, which made them immortal and kept them youthful, beautiful and vigorous until the peaches ripened again 3,000 years later. Some stories say the fruit ripens every 9,000 years, but either way it is a vast number of years. So the heavenly peaches symbolize a very long time. They are also a symbol of life because they give such a long life. Some Chinese stories say the peaches give eternal life, but the Korean scholars rejected this. They said eternal life can only be merited by a good and virtuous life and cannot be the result of eating magic food.

The most famous heavenly peaches story is the story of Dong Fangshuo (東方朔), Tong Pangsak (동방삭) in Korea. He was a simple fisherman who managed to steal one of the peaches and eat it.

Peach blossoms and peaches are used in some versions of the Ten Long Life Symbol Pictures. (See Dong Fangshuo; also Ten Long Life Symbols.) (Cho 115)

PEACHES – BASKET OF PEACHES

These peaches are heavenly peaches. The picture reads: 'Live a long life' or 'Live for many years.' (See Peaches – the Heavenly Peaches.) Peacock (See Phoenix.)

PERSIMMONS

Persimmons are different from pomegranates (*citrus medica*), which are called Buddha's hand oranges. But because of the similarity of their names in Korean, persimmons are often drawn instead of pomegranates. In literati pictures fruits of both of these trees should be read as Buddha's hand oranges and as such they represent good fortune or many blessings. The flowers of these trees represent the Five Blessings.



PICTURE 81
Peach Tree with
many Heavenly
Peaches



PICTURE 82
Basket of Heavenly Peaches

<Persimmon = *kam* (감). Pomegranate = *pulsugam* (불수감 佛手紺) so it too is a *kam* (감).> (See Buddha's Hand Orange; also Blessings – Five.)

PERSIMMONS AND FISH

Message: 'Hoping that your business prospers.' (See Fish and Persimmons.)



PICTURE 83
Peony Rose

PEONY ROSE

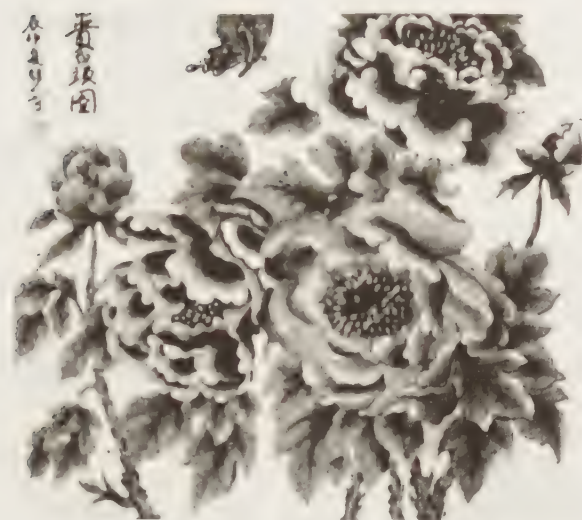
Message: 'May you have wealth and honours.' It can also mean: 'May your noble house become wealthy and illustrious.' This flower is a symbol of beauty, especially feminine beauty. In literati pictures, it is usually a symbol of wealth and high position. To quote an old Chinese text: 'It is called the king among flowers. If it is king, then it has power and wealth, and so it is called the flower of authority and wealth.' In Korea, it is used as a symbol of the ruling and wealthy classes.

<In Korean the peony rose is called the *moran* (모란). In Sino-Korean it is called *pugwibwa* (부귀화 富貴花). The peony rose can always be read as *Pugwi* (부귀), which means wealth and fame. The *hwa* (화) part means flower. (Another way of interpreting the *Pugwi* (부귀) was explained to me as follows. Alone *pu* (부 富) means wealth, the *gwi* (귀) can be read in Korean, then it means special, noble or highly esteemed.)> (Cho 92)

PEONY ROSE AND BUTTERFLIES

Message: 'Live well for a very long time' or 'May you live with wealth and fame for over eighty years.'

<The Sino-Korean word for a butterfly is *chöp* (蝶 蝶) which sounds like *chil* (壽 壽) which is the word for an old man of eighty years of age. Eighty years old means a very long life. A long life is *su* (壽 壽). So butterflies are often read as *chilsu* (蝶 壽) which means eighty years of age. The peony rose is *pugwi* (부귀 富貴) which means riches and honours, wealth and fame.>



PICTURE 84

Peony Rose and Butterflies

PEONY ROSE AND BUTTERFLY STORY

(신라 여왕 이야기)

There is an old story that a painter brought a picture of a peony rose to Queen Söndök (선덕여왕) the twenty-seventh ruler of Shilla. She ruled in Old Shilla (57BC-AD668) during the first half of the seventh Century AD. She wondered why there were no butterflies in the picture. The artist said nothing, so the Queen said: 'It must be because peony roses have no scent.' Nobody dared tell her she was wrong, so from that day on nobody drew peony roses with butterflies. Another reason butterflies are not drawn with peony roses is that they bloom in early summer when as yet there are not too many butterflies around.

Neither of these reasons has stopped modern Korean artists from drawing butterflies with peony roses. (Cho 93, 96)

PEONY ROSE, BUTTERFLIES AND CAT

Message: 'May you live, blessed with wealth and honour, for more than seventy or eighty years.' Or 'May you have wealth and fame and live to a ripe old age.'

<Cat = *myo* (묘猫) sounds like *mo* (모耄), which means seventy. Butterfly = *chöp* (蛸蝶), sounds like the Sino-Korean word *chil* (七集), which means eighty.



PICTURE 85

Peony Rose, Butterflies and Cat

Peony rose = *pugwi* (부귀화富貴花) The word *pugwi* (부귀富貴) means riches and honours, wealth and fame.> (Cho 95)

PEONY ROSE, COLLECTION OF FLOWERS AND THINGS

They are symbols of the things needed by a person to live well in this world. (See Flowers – Collection of Flowers and Things.)

PEONY ROSE AND COCK

This picture wishes the viewer wealth, success and fame. (See Cock Crowing and Peony Rose.)

PEONY ROSE AND CROWING COCK

This picture wishes the viewer wealth and virtue. (See Cock Crowing and Peony Rose.)

PEONY ROSES, COLOURS USED

Peony roses are sometimes drawn in three different colours: light red, dark red and white. These pictures refer to the three queens named Söndök (선덕) (ruled 632–646), Chindök (진덕) (ruled 647–653) and Chinsöng (진성) who feature in early Korean history. They lived during the Old Shilla dynasty (57BC–AD668). They eventually became queens in Shilla (신라국).

The story about the peony rose and the butterflies given above (Peony Rose and Butterfly Story (신라여왕 이야기)) was recorded about one of these queens, Söndök (선덕여왕), who built the famous Chömsöngdae observatory in Kyöngju in AD643. Both of her sisters later became ruling monarchs in the Old Shilla Kingdom (신라국). (According to the story the third sister Chinsöng also became queen, but the history books do not say that she ruled in her own right.) As their stories are not very happy ones, Koreans do not like this combination of three colours in their pictures of peony roses. All other combinations of colours are acceptable. (See *National Geographic*, Vol 174, No. 2 'Kyongju, Where Korea Began', Cathy Newman. Also *The History of Korea*, Han Woo Keun, Page 512.) (Cho 93,96)

PEONY ROSE AND GLASS CUP

Message: 'Live with wealth and peace' or 'Enjoy your wealth in peace.'

<The glass cup = *pyöng* (병瓶). This sounds like the word for peace = *pyöng* (평 of 평안平安). Peony rose = *pugwi* (부귀富貴). *Pu* (부富) = wealth. The verb, although not indicated, is understood to be either live or enjoy.> (Cho 98)

PEONY ROSE, MAGNOLIA AND WILD ROSE

All of these three flowers are symbols of beauty, especially feminine beauty. This picture could be used as a charm for a lady's bedroom to give her beauty and youth. It would at least remind her to take care of herself and to keep both herself and her house beautiful for her husband. This picture is also a wish 'that you may most certainly obtain a high position and get wealth and fame.' It also means: 'May your noble house become illustrious and wealthy.'

<Magnolia = *ongnanbwa* (옥란화 玉蘭花), *Ok* (옥 玉) = jade, which is a symbol of nobility or a high position held by a nobleman. Wild rose = *haedanghwa* (해당화 海棠花). The *tang* (*dang* 당 棠) in this word taken by itself sounds the same as the Sino-Korean word *tang* (당 當 마땅할 당) for ‘certainly’. The peony rose is *pugwibwa* (부귀화 富貴花), *pugwi* (부귀 富貴) meaning wealth and fame, or illustrious. The flower *bwa* (화 花) is ignored in the literati reading.> (See Cricket.)

PEONY ROSE AND PLUM BLOSSOMS

Message: ‘May you have wealth and hold a high position even up to your old age.’

<Peony rose = *pugwibwa* (부귀화 富貴花), *pugwi* (부귀 富貴) meaning wealth, and fame or honour. Wealth and fame came from holding a high position in the government. The plum blossoms are understood to be on branches. The plum blossom is *mae* (매 梅 매화), and the branch is *ch'o* (초 柏). *Mae* (매) sounds like *mi* (미, 眉 눈썹미) and *ch'o* (초) sounds like *su* (수 壽) in Sino-Korean. These two together give *misu* (미수 眉壽), which means, ‘Till your eyebrows turn white’ or ‘till your old age’.> (Cho 101)

PEONY ROSE, PLUM BLOSSOMS, BUTTERFLY AND ROCK

This picture can be read in two ways, both meaning about the same thing. The first reading is: ‘Wishing you health and honour until you are over eighty years old.’ To the young scholars living to eighty was the same as living forever! The second way is probably the more accurate: ‘May you live with wealth and honour until your eyebrows turn white.’

<(See entries above.) Peony rose = *pugwi* (부귀 富貴) = wealth and honour. Plum blossom = *mae* (매 梅), which sounds like *mi* (미 眉 눈썹미). Rock is *sök* (석 石), which sounds like *su* (수 壽). *Mi* and *su* combined give *misu* (미수 眉壽), which means: ‘until your eyebrows turn white’. Rock = *sök* (석 石); because it sounds like *su* (수 壽) it can also be read as ‘life’ or ‘live’. The whole lot reads *pugwi misu* (부귀미수 富貴眉壽).> (Cho 101,102.)

PEONY ROSE – BIG, AND ROCK

Message: ‘Wishing you great wealth and fame and a full span of life.’

<Big is *tae* (대 大). The peony rose is *pugwi* (부귀 富貴). This is split into two words and the word for big is put in front of them. *Taebu* (대부 大富) means big wealth. *Taegwi* (대귀 大貴) means great fame. The rock is *sök* (석 石), which sounds like the Sino-Korean word *su* (수 壽), which means life. Rock in this picture not only means life but the full span of life. (대부귀역수고 = 대富貴亦壽考)> (Cho 96)

PEONY ROSE, PLUM TREE AND ROCK

Message: ‘May you have wealth and honour until your eyebrows turn white with old age’ or ‘Live well even into your old age.’

<For the explanation of how this message is arrived at, see the entries above.>



PICTURE 86

Peony Rose and Rock

PICTURE 87

Peony Rose, Plum Tree and Rock**PEONY ROSE AND WHITE-HEADED BIRD**

A bird with a white head symbolizes old age. Orientals are all dark haired; anybody with white hair is old. The peony rose here represents wealth so this picture reads: 'May you remain rich to your old age' or 'May you enjoy old age in prosperity.' The meaning depends on who receives the picture. A young person reads the first meaning; an older person reads the second meaning.

<A white-headed bird is a *paektujo* (백두조白頭鳥), (*Cho* or *jo* 조鳥 means a bird.) White head = *paektu* (백두白頭) can also mean a white-haired person, that is, an old person. The peony rose is *pugwi* (부귀富貴). Only the first part of this word is used. *Pu* (부富). Taken alone it means wealth.> (Cho 99)

PEONY ROSE AND TWO WHITE-HEADED BIRDS

This is like the entry above, and it is arrived at in the same manner, but it reads: 'May you both, as man and wife, live in prosperity even to your old age.' (Cho 99)

PEONY ROSE AND WILD ROSES

Message: 'Stay ever young and beautiful and may your noble house become wealthy and illustrious.' Both of these flowers are symbols of beauty. Together they read: 'Wealth and beauty' or 'Stay young and vital, and enjoy wealth and high position.' (See Peony Rose, Magnolia and Wild Rose; also Roses.)

People with Landscapes (See Immortals, also Landscapes That Are Not Mountain/Water Pictures.)

PHOENIX

This is one of the mythical animals that symbolize the four cardinal points.

Listing them in their proper East Asian order they are:

1. Phoenix = south = summer.
2. Black Turtle = north = winter.
3. Blue Dragon = east = spring.
4. White Tiger = west = autumn.

The phoenix is regarded as the most blessed of these four as it heralds summer and all the wealth that summer brings. It is a symbol of the sun. (These four can be found in Part I, Chapter 6, Mythical Animals.)

The Phoenix is a Chinese symbol. It seems to have supplanted an older Korean symbol of the sun that is found on paintings in ancient tombs. This old symbol was a three-legged crow that later seems to have become a red bird. The phoenix came to Korea when Chinese learning came, but the Koreans were never really satisfied with its description so they drew red birds or multicoloured birds instead of the imaginary shapes that the Chinese drew. In Korean pictures, the phoenix is drawn as a pheasant, a peacock and even as a farmyard cock. Although the Chinese described it as a land bird, Korean artists used kingfishers and mandarin ducks and called them phoenixes. Any beautiful multicoloured bird can be called a phoenix.



PICTURE 88

Peony Rose and Two White-headed Birds



PICTURE 89

Peony Rose and Wild Rose

Literati painters used the phoenix to symbolize a special son, one who could study well and pass the state examinations. Any son who got a commission from the king and held it long enough to become wealthy was regarded as a phoenix.

The phoenix is called the royal bird because it is the king of all the birds. As king, it symbolizes peace and prosperity. As stated earlier, the cock is called the noble bird, one that holds high office.

The phoenix symbol is used in at least four different ways. It can mean a special son, a bright son or a successful son. It can be read as fame, high position or wealth. It can also be read as a nobleman, or even one related to the royal family. In literati pictures it is sometimes read as 'life' or 'a long life'.

<The phoenix in Sino-Korean is *kwija* (귀자貴人). The *kwi* (귀貴 as in 귀인貴人) = noble, special; and *cha* (자 between vowels) (자子) = son. So the phoenix can be read as a special son. Sometimes, only the first part of the word is read, *kwi* (귀貴); used alone this means fame or high position. The phoenix is also called *kongjaksae* (공각새孔雀), but this word is seldom used by literati painters. (However the *jak* part of this word is often read as joy and happiness. (See Yellow Sparrow.) Another word for the phoenix is *sudaejo* (수대조綬帶鳥). (This word is also used for a peacock.) This word is broken up and sometimes only the first part *su* (수) is used. This sounds the same as the word for life *su* (수壽), so the phoenix can be read as 'life'. Sometimes the first two syllables are used, *sudae* (수대綬帶), which means a girdle, a chain, or a cincture plaited or made up of a series of knots like a chain. Maybe the 'eyes' on the tail of a peacock looked like the links of a chain and that is why this knotted belt is called a chain, *sudae* (수대). Anyway, a chain is long and made up of many links, just as a man's life should be long and made up of many years. By using this word for phoenix the phoenix symbol can be used to mean 'a long life'.> (See Cock; also Kingfisher; and also Mandarin Duck.) (Cho 86, 112)

PHOENIX, GOOSE, LOTUS, REEDS, CARP, WATER PEPPERS, ETC.

This is a wish that you survive the rigours of studying in China and pass all your examinations. (See under each of the following: Carp, Phoenixes, Geese, Lotus Flowers, Reeds, Water peppers, etc.)

PHOENIX AND LOTUS PLANTS

Message: 'May you have many sons who will be smart and able to study well.' In this picture the mandarin duck has to be read as a phoenix. This picture is really the same as the Phoenix and the Lotus Flower explained in the next entry.



PICTURE 90
Mandarin Duck and
Lotus Plant

PHOENIX AND LOTUS FLOWER

Message: 'May you always have many sons (and descendants) who will be always alive and who will be clever and study well.' The 'always alive' in this message means that your sons will have sons and grandsons who will exist down through the ages to the end of time. These descendants will offer sacrifices for you and remember you after you are dead. Offering sacrifices for ancestors was one of the principle duties of sons.

<A fresh lotus is *saeng'yŏn* (생연生蓮). This is reversed to give *yŏnsaeng* (연생). The first syllable *yŏn* (연), besides meaning a lotus, also means 'continuously' or 'always', and the second syllable *saeng* (생) means 'nimble' or 'alive'. 'Always alive' refers to descendants. Phoenix = *kwija* (귀자). The first syllable *kwi* (귀) means special or clever, and the second syllable *cha* (*ja* between vowels) (자) a son. So *kwija* (귀자) means a special son. So the message is *yŏnsaeng kwija* (연생귀자蓮生貴子) = clever sons who will carry your line down through the ages.> (Cho 86)

PHOENIX, PINE TREE AND ROSES

This is one of the more complicated pictures. It can be read in at least three different ways. First: 'Until your heads turn white, may you both live together, with long lasting youth, beauty and joy.' Second: 'May you always have joy and happiness, and always possess the vigour of youth over a very long time.' The vigour of youth refers to sexual vigour. Third: 'May you live long like the Immortal (Chŏksongja 적송자赤松子) and like him retain the vigour of youth (into your old age).'

Chŏksongja (적송자赤松子) was one of the old immortals (I have not been able to track down his history). The Immortals, although they had everlasting life, still grew old in years. Because they grew old they were always drawn as old people. Nevertheless, they had the gift of perpetual youth, so they retained all their faculties including their sexual vigour.

<These readings are obtained by juggling the following words. The word for a phoenix is *sudaejo* (수대조). The *sudae* (수대) part can be read as a girdle or belt *sudae* (수대帶), which was made up of a series of knots that looked like a chain. This chain could be read as 'long life'. (See Phoenix.) The pine tree is *chŏksong* (적송赤松) but can be read as just *song* (송) in Sino-Korean. This sounds like the word 'to keep', 'to possess for a long time' or 'always keep'.

The rose in Sino-Korean is (월계화月季花) the flower that blooms every month. This word is seldom used in literati pictures; instead it is the Korean word for a rose *changmi* (장미) that is used. This *changmi* (장미) is written as 長春 = long spring and is read as 유희장춘 留喜長春 = 기쁨과 젊음이 오래도록 머물다, which means happiness and youth remaining for a long time.

The phoenix called a *kongjaksae* (공작새孔雀) or a *sudaejo* (수대조縫帶鳥) is a bird (새鳥), so it is called *chak* (작). *Chak* (작) is like the word for a sparrow and so it is read as the word for joy or happiness *hŭi* (희). The bird and the pine tree together read *chaksong* (작송) which sounds the same as the word for the old Immortal Chŏksongja (적송자赤松子). *Cha* (*ja*) (자) at the end of his name means a 'person', so Chŏk Song Ja (적송자) means the person



PICTURE 91
Red Pigweed

Chöksong (적송 赤松). Chöksongja also means 'Red pine man'. By combining these meanings and symbols many forms of the message can be made, but they all mean more or less the same thing: 'May you both enjoy a long life together and have a good sex life even into old age.'> (Cho 112)

PIGWEEED – RED

Message: 'Stay young forever.' Pigweed, also called amaranth, has a red leaf that stays red from early spring till late in autumn. It is a symbol of eternal youth. The message this picture conveys is: 'May you remain perpetually young.' This picture is also a charm to give this blessing. (Cho 113)

PINE TREE

Message: 'Live to be a hundred years old.' Artists distinguish between two kinds of pine tree, the white pine and the red pine. The white pine appears more often in Korean pictures. It has long needles, a big cone, which produces edible seeds, and grows wild on the mountains. The white pine lives to a very old age so it represents 'life' or a 'very long life'. The white pine is called *paengnamu* (백나무 or 백송 白松), which means white tree, white timber or white deal. *Paek* means white (백 白) but



PICTURE 92
Pine Tree

it also means 'a hundred' (백百). A hundred years is a very long time so the pine tree is a symbol of a very long life.

The red pine is thought to live longer than the white pine. It has short needles; its seeds are bitter and inedible and though it grows on the mountains it is rarely seen nowadays. It produces a red wood, a red deal, which is scented. Because its timber has a nice scent it is often called cedar, *byangnamu* (향나무) a scented tree. It is also called *chöksong* (적송) which is the name of Chöksongja (적송자 赤松子) one of the old Chinese Immortals. This red pine is a symbol of a very long life. A picture of a pine tree, whether it is a white pine or a red pine, is used as a charm to give a long life.

The pine tree is regarded as the king of the forest, the king of all trees. As such it takes precedence; it comes first. Because it is first, it is a symbol of the first day of the year, New Year's Day, and the first season of the year, namely spring.

The pine tree is seen in many different types of Korean pictures. In pictures of The Nine Attributes of a King both the white pine and the red pine are drawn. The pine tree is often seen in pictures of The Three Friends of the Cold, and of the Four Friends. In pictures showing three friends who grow old together the friends are represented by Three Pine Trees. When the Four Gentlemen Pictures are drawn together, the pine tree is drawn as a fifth symbol. The pine tree is one of the Ten Long Life Symbols. In pictures of Immortals the old men sit, drink and play under an old pine tree.

Up until recently, Korean houses were made of wood. Wooden pillars in the walls, wooden roof holding up thatch or tiles. This wood was cut from pine, so it used to be said that Koreans were born under the pine, lived in the pine and were buried in pine boxes under the pine trees growing on the mountains. The guardian spirit of their houses dwelt among the timbers of the roof; the guardian spirit of the village dwelt in an old tree in the village; the guardian spirit of their fields dwelt among the pine trees on the nearest mountain. Some say that these spirits were just three manifestations of *sanshin* (산신) the mountain god who ruled the whole country. Maybe this explains why many Korean artists love to draw pine trees.

<The normal word for a pine tree is *sonamu* (소나무), *solnamu* (솔나무), or just *sol* (솔). The Sino-Korean word for a pine tree is *song* (松). Words sounding like *song* are often used to give different meanings. *Song* (松) can be read as 'keep', 'keep always' and 'remember for a long time'. It can also be read as 'start', as the pine tree symbolizes the start of spring or the first day of the New Year. The pine tree is also a *paek song* (백송 白松) and the *paek* in this can also be read as *nobaek* (노백). *No* (노) = old, and the *paek* (*baek* between vowels) (백) = white, and also means one hundred (백百). So it means one hundred years, or a very long life. The pine tree can also be read as *paeksu* (백수), a life of a hundred years. The *paek* (백) of this word can again be read as a hundred *paek* (백百), which means a long life. Another name for a tree is *su* (수 樹) and this is changed to *su* (수 壽) meaning life. So these two can be read either as 'one hundred lives', 'a life of a hundred years', 'live a long time and then live again' or 'live to a very old age'.>

PINE TREE, CAMELLIA, PLUM BLOSSOM AND
DAFFODIL

These four were the best known symbols of spring. Among them the pine tree was the most common in Korea as it was regarded as the king, the king of all the trees and plants. As king of the spring symbol, it demanded precedence over all the other symbols of the seasons, so it is the symbol of the New Year and a symbol of New Year's Day. The daffodil here can be any bell-shaped or trumpet-shaped flower.

<Daffodil is *susŏnbwa* (수선화).> (See Camellia, also Daffodil, also Plum Tree, and Plum Blossom.) (Cho 106)

PINE TREE, BAMBOO AND TWO WHITE-HEADED
BIRDS

Message: 'High praise and congratulations to you both (spouses) who have lived happily together till your old age, until your black hair turns long and white like the root of an onion, and may you both continue to live together for a very long time.' This is one of the very complicated messages put into picture form. The message is correct but I am a bit hazy about how it is arrived at.

<The message is *songch'ukpaektu* (송축백두). Bamboo is *chuk* (죽), this changed to *ch'uk* (축祝) = congratulations. The white headed bird is *paektu-jujo* (백두조白头鳥). *Paik* (백白) = white. *Tu* (두頭) = head. White head, *paektu* (백두白頭) can also mean an old person, a white-haired person. Pine tree is read as a tree *su* (수樹) and this sounds like the word for life *su* (수壽) and a long life. The pine tree is again read as *song* (송송白松) and this is changed into *ch'ingsong* (송頌 칭송할 송), which means 'praise highly'.

The two white-headed birds symbolize a husband and wife (spouses) living together. Sometimes, only one white-headed bird is drawn but this doesn't change the message as the white-headed bird is still read as a great old age. The white head can also refer to the 'root of an onion', which grows long white roots and so is also a symbol of great old age. The bird can be called a sparrow = *chak* (작), which is read as the word for 'joy' or 'happiness', *hŭi* (희喜).> (See Yellow Sparrows.) (Cho 100)

PINE TREE, CAT, KITTENS, MAGPIES AND SPARROWS

Message: 'On your seventieth birthday we wish you a long life with peace and joy as you live with your grandchildren.' (See Cat, Kittens, Magpies, Pine Tree and Sparrows.)

Pine Tree, Deer – One Hundred, or Deer – White (See Deer.)



PICTURE 93
Pine Tree, Bamboo and
White-headed Birds

PINE TREE AND FOUR GENTLEMEN

The pine tree is not one of the Four Gentlemen, but as the Koreans do not like the word for four *sa* <사 四>, which is the same as the word for death *sa* <사 死>, they add a fifth picture to the set. The fifth picture is usually a pine tree. (See Four Gentlemen.)

Pine Tree and Magic Mushroom (See Magic Mushrooms.)

PINE TREE, MOUNTAINS, SUN, MOON, RIVERS, HILLS AND WAVES

This is from the poem in the *Book of Odes* called 'Tianbao' *ch'ŏn bo* (天保頌) 'Eulogy to a King' describing the nine attributes of a good king. (See Mountains.)

PINE TREE, PLUM TREE, PLUM BLOSSOMS, BAMBOO AND ROCK

These are the Three Friends of the Cold. (See Friends – Three.)

PINE TREE AND ONE STORK

This is a charm for a long life. It recalls the old Immortal Chöksongja (積壽者 赤松子). (See Stork and One Pine Tree.)

PINE TREE, STORK AND BAMBOO

Message: 'Congratulations on a long life' or 'Congratulations and may you live for a long time.' (See Stork, Bamboo and Pine Tree.)

PINE TREES – THREE

This represents three friends who grow old together. (See Friends – Three.)

PLANTS OF THE FOUR SEASONS

Plants, trees and flowers represent the four seasons. When they are all drawn together in one picture, they are usually called 'The Scents of the Four Seasons,' or 'The Fragrances of the Four Seasons.' This picture is a wish to have the vitality and strength of the Four Seasons. (See Loquats, also Four Seasons – Flowers of.) (Cho 138, 139)

PLUM BLOSSOMS

Plum blossoms are a symbol of spring. Any flowers of the *prunus* family of trees can be drawn in pictures of plum blossoms. The wild plum, the cultivated plum, even the cherry and the apricot can all be drawn and called plum blossoms. The colours of the plum blossoms range from pale pink to a dark pinkish red. If two colours are used then the paler flowers are regarded as plum blossoms and the darker flowers are regarded as peaches.

Plum blossoms, camellias, daffodils and pine trees are the four main symbols of spring used by literati painters.

Plum blossoms are one of the Four Gentlemen (plum blossom, orchid, chrysanthemum and bamboo).

The plum blossoms bloom very early in the spring. Often the frost kills them, yet they are not afraid to bloom even though they may get killed. The

Confucian gentleman, too, must do what is right and not count the consequences. Better to do what is right and only live for a day than to spend one's life in shame.

The orchid blooms in the summer. It blooms alone on the hillside hidden by other vegetation. Yet its scent is borne on the winds and scents the whole valley. The Confucian gentleman may live alone, but his good example influences everybody around him.

The chrysanthemum blooms in the autumn. It blooms for a long time even in the cold weather and stays blooming until finally cut down by the winter snows. While it is alive, it gives joy and pleasure to all who behold it. In the same way a Confucian gentleman should always do good and give joy to all who come in contact with him. He should always keep perfecting himself even to the end of his life so that he can teach others and set a good example.

The bamboo remains green and keeps its leaves even during the winter. It never changes its nature. It bends under the storms but never breaks. The Confucian gentleman should be like the bamboo. He should always act like a gentleman, always act virtuously. He should be able to endure hardship and not break under it. He should be resilient and pick up the pieces and start again to bring harmony to the world.

These four plants and flowers symbolize the virtues that a true gentleman should possess. That is why they are called the Four Gentlemen Pictures. (See Four Gentlemen.)

Plum Blossom – Fragrances of the Four Seasons (See Bamboo – Fragrances of the Four Seasons, also Loquats.)

PLUM TREE

Often the plum tree can be read where only plum blossoms are shown. These symbols are often interchangeable.

PLUM BRANCHES, PLUM BLOSSOMS AND MOON

Message: 'Wishing you a long life and happiness.' (See Moon Over Plum Branch, and Plum Blossoms.)

PLUM TREE BRANCH, MAGPIE AND PLUM BLOSSOM

Message: 'May you only hear good news in the New Year.' (See Magpie, Plum Tree and Plum Blossoms.)

POLLOCHO

This is an English word given to the magic mushroom. This spelling is often used in English books. The alternative spelling *pulloch'o* is closer to the Korean.



PICTURE 94

**Plum Branch, Plum Blossoms
and Moon**

<Pulloch'o (불로초) = 'never grow old flower'.>
(See Magic Mushrooms.)

POMEGRANATES

Pomegranates are called Buddha's hand oranges. The Buddha's hand orange symbolizes many blessings, all the blessings that Buddha can grant. But in this picture the seeds of the fruit are shown. Seeds usually represent children, especially sons, and descendants. So as the symbol is different, the message is different. The message here is: 'May you have many sons and descendants.' (See Buddha's Hand Orange, and also Vines.)

PUMA

Pumas are often drawn as tigers in Korea. There are no pumas in Korea so Korean artists did not know how to draw them. Is the puma a tiger with spots or a tiger with the face of a cat? Often the results are amusing. Anywhere a tiger appears in a literati picture it should be read as a puma. (See Tiger.) (Cho 144)

PUMA, MAGPIE AND PINE TREE

Message: None if read as a tiger, but if it is read as a puma then the message is: 'May you get good news during the New Year.' This picture can also mean 'New Year's greetings' or 'Best wishes for the New Year.'

<The pine tree is the king of all the trees so it has precedence, it is first. It therefore is a symbol of the First Month (정월) and especially the first day of this month and of the New Year. In the lunar calendar the first month is always the tiger month but the tiger is not the symbol of the first month in this picture because this function has been given to the pine tree. Here the tiger has to be read as a puma. The word for a puma is *pyobŏm* (표범豹). *Pyo* (표) sounds like the word *po* (보報 고할 보, or 여쭙 보), which means 'announcing'. The magpie is *chak* (작鵲), which is read as the word for 'joy' and 'happiness' *hŭi* (희喜) literally, 'announcing to you happy news in the New Year'.> (See Pine Tree, and also Yellow Sparrow.) (Cho 45)
Pumpkins (See Vines.)



PICTURE 95
Pomegranate Fruit and
Seeds



PICTURE 96
A Tiger, Magpie and Pine Tree

QUAILS

These birds, which have rather drab plumage, were not drawn for their beauty but because they were used as symbols. Quails are very prolific so they were used as symbols of fertility. They were also used as symbols of the lower classes. They can survive on the lowest kind of food, namely millet. The poor too have to survive on very poor fare or on whatever is given to them. Quails, like the poor, are very obedient and easily satisfied. In the old days the farmers and workers were dependent on the nobility for their very existence. Usually the nobility just gave them enough to keep them alive and working.

QUAILS, HENS

The quail hens live together peacefully. A picture of two or more quail hens is a symbol of peace. As farmers reared quails for their eggs and for eating, pictures of quails have a pastoral symbolism. While the farmyard cock was the symbol of the successful scholar who becomes a royal official, the quail represents the ordinary people who are subject to the authority of the king and the whims of the nobility.

A Korean farmer who reared quails for eggs and meat told me that 'quails living together in peace' was a pure myth. He said that they were wicked fighters and keeping them from killing each other used up all his patience and ingenuity. It just shows that the scholars in their ivory towers knew very little about the real world.

QUAILS AND MILLET

Quails are very small birds, very small indeed when compared to the tall millet stalks and the big heads of grain on the top of the stalk. The food in one head of millet looks as if it could feed one of these small birds for a very long time. So a picture of a quail and a head of millet seeds is a symbol of plenty, a symbol of prosperity, peace and security. (Cho 1)

QUAILS – NINE

Nine quails are a symbol of prosperity and peace, and also of the Golden Age during the Tang dynasty when nine generations lived together in one house. (See Nine Quails and Chrysanthemums.)

Red Berries (See Chrysanthemums, Boxthorn with Red Berries and Scissors.)

Red Pigweed (See Pigweed – Red.)

REEDS

Reeds are normally seen around water. Reeds are not drawn alone; birds or animals



PICTURE 97
Quails and Millet

are drawn with them. Often it is difficult to distinguish between reeds and millet.

Reeds, Crabs, Millet (See Crab – One, with Reeds (or Millet).)

Reed and Goose or Reeds and Geese (See Goose.)

Reeds, Carp, Geese, Lotus, Phoenix, etc. (See Carp.)

Rising Sun, Storks, Sea (See Stork.)

Rivers, Mountains, Sun, Moon, Hills, Pines (See Mountains.)

ROCKS

Message: 'May you live a long life.' The word for a rock sounds like the Sino-Korean word for life. A rock usually symbolizes a 'long life', a life lived into ripe old age.

Rocks, which have been rolled in riverbeds or eroded by water action, often have fantastic shapes. These are called 'water rocks'. The words for these rocks give an even more emphatic reading of 'long life'. Sometimes we see rocks, odd-shaped rocks or water rocks in pictures that are not read as part of the message. They are just put there for ornamental purposes or to give weight or balance to the composition. For example, in a picture of a lotus and a phoenix which reads: 'May you always have sons who are clever,' adding a rock to this painting does not change the meaning.

<Rock = *sök* (석石). This sounds like the Chinese word for life = *su* (壽). Rocks do not change over the years so they symbolize a very long life. The rock symbol is often read as *iksu* (익수益壽), which means a 'ripe old age'. Water rocks are called *susök* (수석水石). *Su* (수水) means water, and *sök* (석石) means a rock. The *su* (수) of this word sounds the same as the Chinese word for 'life' *su* (壽). The *sök* (석) part of this word also sounds like the word for 'life'. So the two together are read as *susu* (수수壽壽) which is a 'very long life'.> (Cho 57, 86)

Rocks, Bamboo (See Bamboo.)

ROCK WITH BUTTERFLIES

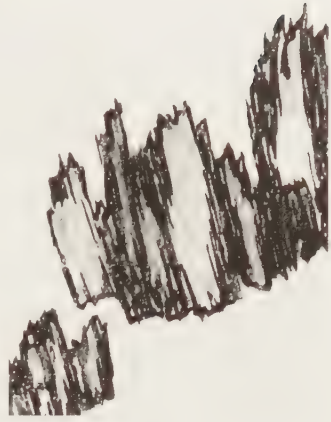
This means: 'Live to a ripe old age' or 'Live to be eighty years old.' Here the rock means a ripe old age, and the butterflies mean eighty years old, which is the same as a very long life.

<Rock *sök* (석石) sounds like *su* (壽). The butterfly is *chöp* (접蝶), which sounds like *chil* (칠耄) eighty years or older.> (Cho 125)

Rock, Chrysanthemum (See Chrysanthemum and Rock.)

ROCK, DAY LILY AND BUTTERFLIES

This picture is given to a mother who has many sons. It reads: 'To the mother of many sons, a long life.' The buds of a day lily look like a child's



PICTURE 98
Rocks

penis, and the word for a day lily sounds like the word for 'your honoured mother', so the buds and the flowers are read as 'the mother of many sons'. The rock is read as a 'long life' or a 'ripe old age'.

<The word for a day lily is *wŏnch'uri* (원추리). This sounds like *hwŏndang* (원당萱堂) = honoured mother. Rock = *sŏk* (석石) which sounds like *su* (수壽) = a long life. The butterflies are *chŏp* (접蝶) which sounds like *chil* (칠칠) which means eighty, or eighty years of age, which is a great old age.> (Cho 125)

Rocks, Iris (See Iris and Rocks.)

Rocks, Magnolia, Wild Rose (See Magnolia, Rocks and Wild Rose.)

Rocks, Orchids (See Orchids and Rocks.)

Rocks, Peony Rose, Plum Blossoms (See Peony Rose.)

ROSES

Oriental roses bloom for a very long time from spring to late autumn. The rose is said to have a long spring, (장춘) so it is a symbol of a long youth lived with virility, a long life blessed with beauty and vitality.

<The rose in Sino-Korean is (월계화月季花) the flower that blooms every month. This word is seldom used in literati pictures; instead it is the Korean word for a rose *changmi* (장미) that is used. The *chang* of this *changmi* (장미) is changed to *changch'un* 長春 = long spring and is read as 유희장춘 留喜長春 = 기쁨과 젊음이 오래도록 머물다 which means happiness and youth remaining for a long time.

A popular explanation, not a literati explanation, is that *changmi* (장미 a rose) can be read as *chang* (장 long) and *mi* (미 beauty). This is like the reading given to peanut = long life (장생 long life).> (See Flowers – Collection of Flowers and Things.) (Cho 112)

ROSES – WHITE

White is the colour of spiritual things, of heaven, of the yang principle, of the Blessed. White roses can be a symbol of divine power, eternal life, eternal youth and beauty.

ROSE – WILD, PEONY ROSE AND MAGNOLIA

These three flowers are symbols of beauty, especially feminine beauty. But this picture is read in two different ways: 'Certainly have beauty, riches and health all through your life' or, and this is the most probable meaning, 'May your noble house become illustrious and wealthy.' (See Peony Rose, Magnolia and Wild Rose.)

Roses, Magpies, Willows (See Magpies – A Pair, Willow Tree and Roses.)

Roses, Phoenix, Pine Tree (See Phoenix, Pine Tree and Roses.)



PICTURE 99
Rock, Day
Lily and
Butterflies

ROSES, WILLOWS

Willows form their leaves very early in the spring; they stay green until very late in the autumn. So, willow trees are a symbol of a long youth and virility. Roses bloom all summer long and into the autumn. So, they, too, are symbols of a long-lasting beauty. These two together symbolize a long youth, virility, health and a long-lasting beauty.

ROOT OF ONION

This is a symbol for a very old age. (See Onion Root.)

SACRIFICES

In Confucian society offering sacrifices for dead ancestors was very important. It kept the ancestral spirits happy so they gave blessings to their descendants. The sacrifices in some way raised the status of the dead persons and helped maintain the vigor of their souls. Only sons could offer the sacrifices, so having sons and an unending line of descendants ensured that the sacrifices for the ancestors would continue forever. Having sons and grandsons who would look after you in your old age was important, but having sons and descendants who would look after you when you went to the next world was probably more important. (Cho 89, 90)

SACRIFICES, THE FOUR FRUITS

The Koreans put four fruits on the table they prepare for the sacrificial rites they offer to the spirits of the ancestors. They are shown in the following table.

English	Korean	Chinese	Symbol
Chinese dates	대추	조 照	Many sons.
Chestnuts	밤	올 栗	Many daughters. Also original root always alive.
Persimmons	감	시 柿	Improvement by marriage and education.
Pears	배	이 梨	Planning for the future. Wise administration.

These are called in Korean *choyulshii* (조율시이), or in some dictionaries *choyulisbi* (조율이시 = 照栗梨柿).

Chinese dates produce many fruits with many seeds. They are a symbol of many sons who in turn produce many descendants that last down the ages to offer sacrifices for the ancestors.

Chestnuts grow from a root that never dies. The branches may die but the root stays alive and sends out new branches. The chestnut represents the original ancestor, the bloodlines of the family. The chestnuts symbolize many sons, as these were the only ones who could carry on the family name. They also symbolize many daughters.

After the Korean marriage ceremony is finished, the new mother-in-law throws Chinese dates and chestnuts onto the lap of her new daughter-in-law.

These symbolize many children and express a wish that the new bride have many sons and daughters.

When the sacrifice is offered for one individual his name is written on paper, but when the sacrifice is being offered for all the ancestors, the family name is written on a tablet made from the wood taken from a chestnut tree.

Persimmons that grow on wild trees are small and tasteless. The tree has to be grafted to produce big and tasty fruit, so it is a symbol of improving the family by marriage and education.

Pears can be made available all the year round if properly managed. This calls for good planning and foresight. Each generation has to plan for its own survival and for the future good of the descendants who are needed to continue the offering of the ancestral rites.

In China, Kiangsi, the Duke of Shan, who lived about BC1053, is recorded as having dispensed impartial justice under a pear tree. So the pear tree is the emblem of good government and wise and benevolent administration; it is a symbol of justice and purity. Also, in China, the pear tree is supposed to live for a very long time and is said to be able to bear fruit when three hundred years old, so it is used as a symbol of longevity. Naturally this symbolism was well known to Korean scholars. Still, they did not insist on using pears at the sacrifices. They said pears could be replaced by any other fruit, but the other three, namely, dates, chestnuts and persimmons, had to be present to offer a proper sacrifice.

Salt Sea Shrimp (See Shrimp.)

Seasons – Four, Flowers (See Four Seasons – Flowers of.)

Seasons – Plants of the Four Seasons (See Four Seasons – Fragrances of.)

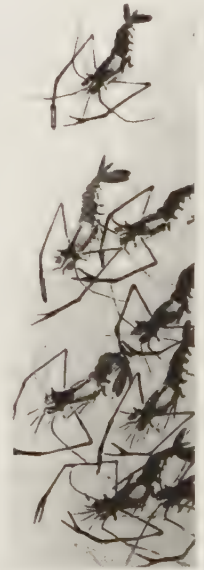
SHRIMP

Message: 'May your business prosper,' or 'May you live a long and happy life and grow old together as man and wife.'

Shrimp are drawn in two different ways, as fresh water shrimp and as saltwater shrimp. The freshwater shrimp have big long claws; plentiful in the rivers of China; they are a symbol of plenty and good living. Saltwater shrimp are more lightly formed and their claws are smaller. Both are bent and so are used as symbols of old age.

Freshwater shrimp symbolize prosperous living. Although their bodies are heavily armed they can still move all their parts well. Pictures of these shrimp are called *manmansu* (만만수 彎彎順) which means 'can move its body easily'. These pictures can be read: 'May all your ventures move as you desire,' or 'May your business prosper.'

Pictures of saltwater shrimp are more common in Korea. These shrimp are more bent than the freshwater shrimp so they are regarded as very old. They are called *haero* (해로) which means 'the old man of the sea'. This



PICTURE 100
Shrimp

word, *baero*, is used as a verb in Korean <해로하다> to denote that a man and his wife grow old happily together. So, pictures of saltwater shrimp are symbols of a long and happy marriage. Saltwater shrimp don't swim so much as move by jumps. These jumps look like dancing. Shrimp, although they look old, move as they wish, always seem happy and young; they dance all over the place. So, these pictures are a charm giving the blessing of a long vigorous life to a husband and wife.

In Korea, spouses who live long together, who enjoy life together and who die close to each other both in time and place, are regarded as having received a special blessing from heaven. To be a widow or widower for a long time is regarded as one of the Four Losses.

<Old man of the sea = *baero* 해로海老. *Hae* 海海 = sea, and *ro* (로老) = old man. This sounds the same as the verb *baerobada* (해로하다) = to grow old together in wedded life. The four losses = *sagung* (사궁).> (Cho 106, 109)

SONS

In Confucian society, it was very important to have a son to offer the ancestral sacrifices. If there was no son, the family name died out, and if there was no one to offer the sacrifices, the souls of the ancestors could not rest in peace. In some way the souls of the dead lost vitality and became sad. A clever son who was able to pass the state examinations brought honour to his parents. A commission from the king meant a good job and financial security for parents and relatives. (See Sacrifices.)

SOUTHERN STAR

In China, the Southern Star is regarded as one of the gods of heaven. Koreans do not believe in these gods. Yet educated people knew there was a Southern Star that corresponded to the North Pole Star. The Southern Star (or the Southern Cross) cannot be seen from Korea. Only those who travelled to south China or who were able to read Chinese books knew about it. To draw the South Pole Star was a way of showing off one's education.

The Southern Star was drawn as a very old man. In Korea he is sometimes called *nam-gungnoin* (남국노인) literally the south-country-old-man. This ancient grandfather is a symbol of a very long life. The old man of the Southern Star was often drawn with the other Immortals, especially the Eight Old Immortals. All pictures of Immortals are charm pictures that give the blessing of long life and express the wish that you live to a great old age. Japanese artists depict him as having a conical



PICTURE 101
Southern Star

head, Chinese artists show him with a high-domed head. Korean artists try to draw him as a normal person with a rather high forehead.

<The South Pole star is *susǒng* (수성) or the Old Man of the South Pole (수성노인) in Korean. It is called Shou Xing (壽星) in Chinese which means the long-life star.> (See Immortals.)

SPARROWS

Sparrows and magpies, and even the phoenix, are called *chak* (작) in Sino-Korean. This is read as the word for 'joy' or 'happiness'. Doubling the character gives a plural or emphatic form *chak chak* (작작), which is read as joys and happiness. In literati pictures all small birds can be read as sparrows. (See Yellow Sparrows.)

SPARROWS – YELLOW

Yellow sparrows, or any small yellow birds, are called *hwangjak* (황작) which sounds like *hwanjak* (환작). This can be read as great pleasure and happiness. Pictures of sparrows and yellow sparrows or any small yellow birds are good luck charms.

<A yellow sparrow is 노란 참새 = 황작 = 黃雀 = *hwangjak*. This new word 황작 黃雀 sounds like the two words 환 歡 and 작 樂 giving 환 작, 歡 樂. These words mean pleasure unrestrained and are read as 희 (흥 기쁨 희), = intense enjoyment.

The 환 = 歡 is the same 환 歡 that is in 환락 歡樂 = pleasure, enjoyment, merrymaking. The 락 or 악 = 樂 = in this word 환락 also means pleasure. (This is the same character used in *umak* 음락 音樂 = music. The word for music *umak* 음악 is made up of two parts, *um* 音 = sound, and *ak* 樂 = sensual pleasure, pleasure from listening to the sounds of music.)

The *chak* (*jak* after g) 작 part comes from the character *chak* 作 = 縛 = 너그러운 작 = indulgent or *chakchak* 綽綽 = 작작 (하다) = unrestrained, or, with largeness.> (See Magpies, also Charms.)

Sparrows, Cat, Kittens, Magpies, Pine Tree (See Cat.)

Sprout of Bamboo – One (or Two) (See Bamboo.)

STAFF

A staff or walking stick was a sign of authority, especially teaching authority. (See Magic Mushrooms.)

STORK

A stork is supposed to live for at least a thousand years. So a picture of a stork is read: 'Wishing you a long life.' This picture is also a charm giving the blessing of long life. Any big white bird, even a swan, crane or goose, can be read as a stork. (See Charms.) (Cho 102)

STORK, BAMBOO AND PINE TREE

Message: 'Congratulations on a long life,' or 'Congratulations and may you live for a long time.'

<The stork and the pine tree were supposed to live for a very long time, so they are both symbols of long life. The bamboo is *chuk* (죽 竹) which sounds

like the word for 'congratulations' *ch'uk* (축祝).> (See: Pine Tree.) (Cho 103)

STORK – ONE, AND LOTUS FRUIT

Message: 'Pass your examinations in one attempt.'

<Stork = *paengno* (백로白鷺). One stork is *ilpaengno* (일백로一白鷺) This is shortened to *illo* (일로). This, using different characters, means *illoryŏn'gwa* (일로련과一路連科) one effort, or in one effort pass your examinations. Lotus fruit is *yŏn'gwa* (연과). This is reversed to *kwayŏn* (과연). Lotus = *yŏn* (연蓮) Fruit = *kwa* (과果). This new word *kwayŏn* (과연) means truly or certainly.>

(See Lotus Fruit and One Stork, also Lotus Symbolism.)

STORKS – TWO, AND WITHERED LOTUS

This picture has no meaning in the literati sense. Perhaps it was meant to say: 'Pass both parts of your examinations' or 'Pass the second part of your examination.' But there is no such word as *iro* (이로) meaning 'two efforts' in either Chinese or Korean. (See Lotus With Two Storks.)

STORK AND PINE TREE

A stork was said to live for a thousand years. A pine tree lives for at least a hundred years. So, two things of very great age drawn together make a charm that gives long life, or at least expresses a wish that you live a long life. It carries the message: 'Wishing you a very long life.' (See Pine Tree, also Stork, and also Charms.) (Cho 103)

STORKS – ONE, AND ONE RED PINE TREE (CEDAR)

The red pine tree lives longer than the ordinary white pine tree. A picture of this tree is a charm that gives long life and expresses a wish that you live as long as the old Immortal, Chŏksongja (적송자赤松子).

<The red pine is called *chŏksong* (적송赤松). This sounds the same as the Immortal Chŏksongja (적송자赤松子). He was one of the Immortals of early China.>



PICTURE 102
One Stork and Lotus
Fruit



PICTURE 103
A Stork and a Pine Tree

STORKS – NINE

This picture represents the nine most important teachings of Confucius. There are many words that can be used for a stork (*paengno* 백로 白露 or *paekjo* 백조 白鷺) but here the word that is used is *sa* (사 仕 벼슬사) one who holds a high position. It is said that the stork held the position of first minister during Tang times, and as the stork lives for over a thousand years he still holds this title today. This *sa* sounds the same as the word *sa* (사 思) for 'thought' or 'teaching'. The nine storks symbolize the nine teachings. These pictures are called The Nine Teachings Pictures (구사도 九思 圖).

THE NINE MOST IMPORTANT TEACHINGS
(구사도 九思 圖) OF CONFUCIUS ARE:

1. Always look for good. (Do not look for the bad in people or situations.)
2. Listen carefully and remember.
3. When talking, speak with sincerity and truth.
4. Always have a benign visage.
5. Assume a humble posture.
6. Work with a will and with confidence.
7. Don't guess. Always ask and find the facts.
8. When angry don't hurt others.
9. When profits or rewards come, make sure they come in justice.

STORK BY THE SEA

Message: 'May you be called very soon by the king to the highest position.' The stork is the biggest and most beautiful of birds. This is especially true



PICTURE 104
A Stork and a Red Pine Tree



PICTURE 105
Nine Storks

of the Manchurian crane with its flash of red and its white and black plumage. It was natural to think that such a noble bird held a high position in the feathered kingdom.

The Golden Age in China was the Tang dynasty. Because the stork lives so long, at least a thousand years, he must hold this high position even today. Here the stork is 'The bird who is First Minister during the Tang dynasty.' (For stories about the stork and its great age see Part I, Chapter 5, Storks.)

<As mentioned above under Nine Storks the word for stork is *sa* <사 산 벼슬 사> one who holds a high position. In this picture a different word is used. It is called the bird that was the first minister during the Tang Dynasty. Here it is *ilp'um tangjo* (일품당조 - 一品當朝). *Il* (일) = one or first. *P'um* (품) = a grade of office, a degree of official rank. *Tang* (당) = the name of the Chinese rulers. *Cho* (조) = dynasty. *Tangjo* (당조當朝) = Tang dynasty. *Cho (jo)* (조鳥) also means a bird. Reading the two words *ilp'um* (일품 as 逸品) we get 'highest position'. Reading *tangjo* (당조當朝) we get 'in these times' or 'very soon' (as this is the same as 'now' 현재 現在). Reading *cho* (조鳥) by itself we get bird, or 'all the feathered tribe'. *Cho* (조) can also mean 'tide' *chosu* (조수潮水) or *choryu* (조류潮流). Because *cho* (조) means both bird and tide, the stork is drawn beside the sea. Storks are birds that live by freshwater, not beside the sea, but this picture is drawn to give a message, not to teach ornithology.> (Cho 105)



PICTURE 106
Stork by the Sea

STORK BY THE SEA WITH THE RISING SUN

This is a very popular picture that looks very nice but it has no hidden meaning.

<Some people say it has the same meaning as the Stork by the Sea Picture above, but the purists say it cannot be read to give the same meaning. The Stork is *cho* or *paekjo* (백조白鷺). The morning is *cho (jo)* (조朝). The sea can be read as *cho* (조潮水) = a tide. Doubling or trebling the *cho* (조) still means nothing. This may be a popular picture, but it is not a literati picture.> (Cho 106)

Sun, Moon, Mountains, Rivers, Animals, Storks (See Mountains, also Ten Long Life Symbols.)

SWAN

Any big bird can be drawn instead of a stork, so swans should be read as storks and given the same symbolism. Only in the Sixth Episode Picture should it be read as a swan. <Swan = *hong* (鴻, 鴻 = 큰기러기鴻)> (See Stork, also Eight Episode Pictures.)



PICTURE 107

Stork by the Sea with the Rising Sun

TAO YUANMING (陶淵明)

Tao Yuanming (陶淵明) was known in Korea as To Yŏnmyŏng (도연명). He was a famous Chinese poet who retired from his position at the royal courts to lead a simple life in the country. His poems about retirement include 'Going Home Song' (고향으로 돌아오는 노래 歸去來辭 귀거래사) and 'The Pine Tree of Chestnut Village' (홍리의송 栗里吟). These poems describe the simple joys of living in the country. His poems were instrumental in making retirement acceptable to other high officials. (See Eight Episode Pictures, Fifth Episode.)

Teachings of Confucius – Nine (See Storks – Nine.)

TEN LONG LIFE SYMBOLS

Many lists of the Ten Long Life Symbols were made and scholars argued for years about the correct list. As this picture was hung in the Korean king's 'farmhouse', it was very important to get it right. The king's 'farmhouse' was built in a quiet corner of the palace grounds. Every year the king went there for a few days and lived as a farmer. After a set number of days he emerged for the ritual planting of the rice in a small group of paddy-fields, each of which represented a province of Korea. This ritual planting of the rice was a ceremony to bring the blessings of a good harvest to all his subjects. A Ten Long Life Picture was hung on the wall of the 'farmhouse' to protect the king while he went through the rigors of living like a farmer.

The final list that the scholars agreed on (at the end of the nineteenth century) was:

1. Sun
2. Clouds (these replaced the moon.)

3. Rocks or Mountains (these used to be two separate symbols.)
4. Sea or Water
5. Pine Trees
6. Bamboo
7. Magic Mushroom
8. Stork
9. Deer
10. Tortoise or Turtle.

Other lists had the moon instead of clouds. The moon was a yin principle so the scholars did not like it. They used the clouds symbol to represent the sky. Also in the older lists the bamboo was omitted and the magic peach was used. But the magic peach had its origin in a Taoist Chinese myth. The Koreans did not believe in the Taoist gods so they did not like to use this magic peach symbol.

The Ten Long Life Symbols have their origin in Shamanism. Five of the symbols are the dwelling places of the most powerful spirits. 1. Sun, 2. Moon, 3. Mountains and rocks, 4. Sea and great rivers, 5. The pine, which was the king of the trees and the dwelling place of the mountain spirit *sansbin* (산신).

Three of the ten symbols were messengers of the gods. 1. The stork, the messenger of the sky god. 2. The deer, the messenger of the mountain spirit, 3. The tortoise or turtle, the messenger of the sea or water spirit.

The magic mushroom gave immortality to the deer, which were the messengers of the mountain spirit. If man could find this food and eat it, he, too, would become immortal. So the magic mushroom was a natural symbol for long life.

The bamboo is the odd man out. It really has no connection with either the spirit world or a long life. The bamboo is not found in the earlier lists. Still the bamboo was a symbol very often used for vitality as it stays green all the year round, and I suppose it would not be much fun living forever if one had no vitality. So, as a symbol of vitality in a long life it took its place in the Ten Long-Life Symbols list.

Because the scholars did not like to use the moon, which was the yin principle (태음 太陰), they replaced it with clouds. Clouds are neither the home of a spirit, nor are they really a long-life symbol as they are rather transitory. Yet, without clouds, and the rain they brought, everything would die, so in this sense they are life giving.

Artists found it hard to make a realistic picture with both the sun and the moon. For this reason many preferred to draw clouds instead of the moon. Modern artists prefer to use the older list of sun and moon as it makes more sense to them, but they end up with a rather stupid and unrealistic picture. But they say it looks surrealistic and they like it! (See Mountains, and also Landscapes.)

Three Bonds (See Friends.)

Three Fish Or More of the Same Species (See Fish.)

Three Good Friends (See Friends – Three, also Pine Trees – Three.)

TIGER

Tiger pictures are common in Korea. They are used as charms to keep evil spirits away from the house. In literati pictures they are drawn to represent pumas. There are no pumas, leopards or panthers in Korea, so Korean artists did not know how to draw them. They drew them as tigers with spots rather than stripes. Sometimes, they drew them as tigers with faces like a cat. Many of these tiger pictures are amusing because the artist was drawing something he never saw.

<In Sino-Korean the puma is called a *p'yo* (표豹) but in Korean it is called *p'yobŏm* (표범). Often it is just called *pŏm* (범). Strictly speaking *pŏm* (범) is a tiger or any of the big-cat animals that are of the tiger family. The Korean word for a tiger is *borangi* (호랑이). In Sino-Korean it is called *ho* (豸狼 = wild tiger), *pŏmbo* (범호虎狼), and sometimes, less correctly, just *pŏm* (범虎). In Chinese it is *in* (寅寅) which is translated into Korean as *ho* (호).> (See Celestial Stems, the Twelve Animals of the Zodiac.)

TIGER AND MAGPIES

One sees many of these pictures. Actually, the tiger should be a puma. It can be read as: 'Announcing good news' or 'Best wishes.'

<The first syllable of the word for puma *p'yobŏm* (표범) is used alone. This *p'yo* (표豹) sounds like *po* (보報 고할보, or 여잘보) = 'announcing.' The magpie is *chak* (작鵲 까치 작), which is read as *hŭi* (희喜) joy or happiness, but in this picture it means joyful or good news.> (See Puma, Magpie and Pine Tree, and also Yellow Sparrow.)

TONGPANGSAK

Dong Fangshuo (東方朔) is his Chinese name but he is better known in Korea as Tong Pangsak (동방삭). He was a young man who while fishing one day noticed peach blossoms floating on the sea. He realized it was not the time for peach trees to be in bloom, so he searched until he found the river which was carrying these petals down to the sea. He went up this river by boat as far as he could, and then followed the river on foot right up to the top of a very high mountain where the river issued from a great well. Around this well was a beautiful garden. He had found the Eastern Paradise where the Taoist gods and the Immortals lived. Beside the well was a peach tree bearing both peach blossoms and fully-ripened peaches at the same time. He stole one of the peaches and ate it before anybody could stop him. This was one of the heavenly peaches, so having eaten it he could not die until the magic peaches ripened again



PICTURE 108
Dong Fangshuo

three thousand years later, or nine thousand years later by other accounts. The gods threw him out of the garden. Because he had eaten their magic fruit, without earning immortality or getting their permission, they made him forget the way back. Dong Fangshuo did not become an Immortal; he only got life for three thousand years. After that he dies unless he can find the Heavenly Garden again and eat another peach. So he keeps looking for the river that will bring him back to the garden. He is drawn as a young man in a boat sailing on an island studded sea searching for this river. Sometimes he is shown as a young man with a peach. Sometimes, he is shown as a young man with some characteristics of an old man, that is, with bent neck and head sunk into his shoulders ('big shoulders up to his ears').

Dong Fangshuo is a symbol of 'long life' or 'perpetual youth'. A picture of him is a wish for, or a charm that gives, long life. Because the magic peach gives long life, youth and vigour, Dong Fangshuo does not grow old; he is still a young man, his hair is still black but he is going bald. (See Peaches – The Heavenly Peaches.)

TO YŌNMYŌNG

To Yōnmyōng (陶淵明), poet, is known in China as Tao Yuanming (陶淵明). (See under Tao Yuanming.)

Tree and Dog (See Dog.)

TWELVE ORNAMENTS

These were twelve designs used from the earliest time by the Chinese to decorate their textile fabrics. According to the The Book of History (Shu Jing) they were referred to by the Emperor Shun as being ancient even when he made this declaration in 2000BC: 'I wish to see the emblematic figures of the ancients, the sun, the moon, the stars, the mountains, the dragon and the flowery fowl, which are depicted on the upper garment; and the temple cup, aquatic grass, the flames, the grains of rice, the hatchet and the symbol of distinction, which are embroidered on the lower garment.' Only the Emperor could wear the complete set of twelve ornaments on his robes, while the nobles were restricted to certain symbols according to their rank. (Quoted from *Things Chinese* by Rita Aero under the heading 'Twelve Ornaments', page 236.)

In China, these Twelve Ornaments signified authority and power and were embroidered on vestments of state. They are described as follows:

- **Sun.** This was a picture of the sun with a three-legged raven drawn within the circle.
- **Moon.** This was drawn with a hare, which is pounding different ingredients in a stone mortar with a pestle to make the drug of immortality.
- **Stars.** This consists of three stars forming a triangle.
- **Mountains.** The mountains were highly appreciated by the Chinese as some of them were the homes of gods.
- **Dragon.** This was the productive force in nature as it brought the spring rains. It was a symbol of power, wealth and blessings.

- **Flowery Bird.** This was drawn as a pheasant with the same symbolism as the phoenix. It is a symbol of summer, peace and prosperity. Because it has the five colours it is a symbol of beauty, love and joy. It is a symbol of sun and fire. It is also a symbol of the yang principle and so has great influence in the begetting of children, especially sons.
- **Two Goblets.** These were cups with pictures of animals drawn on them. The Chinese word for a rare old vase has the same sound as the Chinese greeting 'Peace with you', so they are a symbol of peace.
- **Aquatic Grass.** This was drawn as a spray of pondweed. No explanation is given in my Chinese reference books. However, Korean sources say it is a symbol of purity because it is always being washed clean by the flowing river.
- **Flames of Fire.** Fire is one of the Five Elements (fire, water, wood, metal and earth). Normally, fire is emblematic of danger, speed, anger, ferocity and lust, but here its light-giving qualities, its purifying power and its religious symbolism in burning candles and incense are stressed.
- **Grains of Rice.** Rice is a symbol of plenty, joy and peace. Good crops came as a result of good government.
- **Axe.** To make anything it is necessary to have an axe to cut down a tree or to form another tool. The axe is a symbol of starting or beginning.
- **Symbol of Distinction.** This was a symbol done in embroidery. Its shape and meaning is lost. Some think it was an article of clothing, others say it was a 'key pattern' or a design like a magic knot.

The next lines in the Quotation from Emperor Shun are: 'I wish to see all these (twelve symbols) displayed in the five colours so as to form the official robes. It is yours to adjust them clearly.' (Legge, *Chinese Classics*, Vol. III, Pt.1, page 80.) He then goes on to explain the symbolism. Sun, moon and stars point out the knowledge the rulers ought to have in order to rule well. The mountains indicate the constancy and firmness which rulers stand in need of. The dragon shows that they should use every means to inspire the people with virtue. The beauty and majesty of the colours of the pheasant remind officials that they should give good example by practising the various virtues. The vases or goblets, which are seen in the halls or temples of the ancestors, are symbols of beauty and disinterestedness. The fire is a symbol of zeal and love of virtue. The rice is a symbol of the plenty that all officials should work to procure for the people. The axe (or the hatchet) is a symbol of justice in the punishment of vice. The embroidery, or the embroidery pattern or knot, which presumably showed an entwining of two threads or patterns, shows that officials should always be able to discern between right and wrong. (This information is taken from *Outlines of Chinese Symbolism and Art Motives* by C.A.S. Williams, page 410.)

It is interesting to see how Korean scholars took these Twelve Ornaments and changed them into Nine Symbols of the King and the Twelve Symbols of the Emperor.

NINE SYMBOLS OF THE KING

There were nine symbols used on the Korean king's ceremonial robes that he wore on his wedding day, his coronation and on special state occasions. These were:

- **Dragon:** traditional symbol of the king.
- **Mountain:** symbol of the earth and the kingdom.
- **Pheasant:** symbol of chastity.
- **Two Cups:** symbol of the distilled rice wine and the brewed wine offered to heaven, earth and to the spirits of the ancestors. The king offered these at the annual sacrificial rites.
- **Water Plant:** symbol of purity.
- **Fire:** symbol of virtue.
- **Rice:** symbol of a good harvest.
- **Blade or sword:** symbol of decisiveness.
- **Symmetrical Stitching Pattern:** symbol of good and evil. This symbol recognizes that although good and evil are always in contention, evil can never win.

TWELVE SYMBOLS OF THE EMPEROR

Korean kings up to 1897 used the Nine Symbols. King Kojong declared himself Emperor of the 'Great Han Empire' or 'Taehan cheguk'. From that year the number of symbols was increased to twelve. The three extra symbols are:

- **Three-footed Crow on the Sun.**
The three-footed crow, the forerunner of the phoenix, and the sun are yang symbols.
- **Tortoise, Bullfrog, or Rabbit, on the Moon.**
Since Koguryŏ (c. AD50–668) the tortoise was the symbol of the moon, but Confucian scholars did not like to use this symbol because in China the tortoise had become a symbol of an illegitimate child. 'The tortoise never knows who his father is' had become a well-known Chinese saying. The scholars at first picked the bullfrog instead of the tortoise as the moon symbol, but as the same thing could be said about it as was said about the tortoise, they changed the symbol a second time to a rabbit. The rabbit is taken from an old Korean folk tale. This symbol was eventually selected to represent the moon, the yin principle.
- **Three Stars.**
The Sino-Korean for Three Stars is *samsŏng* (삼성). This word has several different meanings in Korean and Chinese, all of which would be a fitting symbol for the Korean Emperor's robe.
The Three Stars, *samsŏng* (삼성) in Korean, can symbolize the Three Spirits: the god of the sun, the god of the moon and the god of the stars. These are called *ilwŏl sŏngsŏn* (일월성신 日月星辰) in Sino-Korean.

The Three Stars also mean the Plough Constellation, which is better known in Korea as the Seven Stars, *ch'ilsǒng* (칠성). The Lord of the Heavens, *hanūnim* (하느님), is the most powerful spirit. The Seven Stars, *chilsǒng* (칠성) is the second most powerful. The Mountain Spirit, *sanshin* (산신) is the third most powerful. These three spirits rule the Korean cosmology.

The Three Stars, *samsǒng* <삼성>, can also refer to the three legendary founders of Korea.

The word *samsǒng* can also refer to the three people who shaped Chinese and Korean philosophy, religion and art: Lao, Confucius and Buddha. <노자, 공자, 석가>.

Korean scholars attached another meaning to *samsǒng*: the Three Bonds, *samgang* <삼강>, which are the basic principles on which Confucianism is built. (See Friends.)

VINES

Pomegranates, pumpkins, watermelons and grapes are all vine-like or creeping plants. They all produce many seeds so they are used by the literati painters to represent 'many sons'. These kinds of plants are called *mandae* (만대) and any (or all) of them also give the reading: 'May you have many sons and grandsons to offer sacrifices for you through the ages.' They are a symbol of fertility and many descendants.

<Vines or vine-like plants = *mandae* (만대蔓帶). This sounds the same as *mandae* (만대, 萬代), meaning all generations, all ages until the end of time. The Chinese characters are different.> (See Bottle Gourd; also Vines.) (Cho 89)

Virtues (See Crow; also Four Gentlemen; also Friends – Three; also Nine Teachings of Confucius; and especially Friends.)

Water Chestnuts (See Carp.)

Watermelons (See Vines.)

Water Shaped Rocks (See Rocks.)

Wealth (See Fish; Goldfish; Magnolia; Peony Rose; Shrimp; and Sons.)

White Deer (See Deer.)

White-headed Birds (See Pine Tree, Bamboo and Two White-headed Birds; also Peony Rose and White-headed Birds.)

White Lilly (See Flowers, and Collection of Flowers and Things.)

White Pine (See Pine Tree.)

White Rose (See Roses.)

Withered Lotus Stalk (See Lotus Plant with Withered Stalks.)



PICTURE 109
Vines and Grapes

WILD ROSE

This is often read as a house, household or family. It is only found in combination with other symbols.

<The wild rose is *baedangbwa* (해당화海棠花). The *tang (dang)* (당棠) of this word can be changed to *tang* (당棠) which is read as *okdang* (옥당玉堂) a court house where a high official works, or a noble house. Often it is just read as house, or the noble family that lives in such a house.> (Cho 92)

WILD ROSE, MAGNOLIA AND PEONY ROSE

Message: 'May your noble house become illustrious and famous.'

<The message is *pu'gwiokdang* (부귀옥당). The peony rose is *pu'gwibwa* (부귀화富貴花). *Pu'gwi* (부귀富貴) means wealth and fame, but *kwi* (귀貴) alone means special, illustrious or famous. The magnolia is *ongnanbwa* (옥란화玉蘭花). The *Ok (ong)* (옥玉) means jade so it can be read as wealth. The wild rose is *baedangbwa* (해당화海棠花). The *Tang* (당) of this word is changed to a noble house (see entry above).>

Wild Rose, Magnolia and Rock (See Magnolia.)

WILLOW TREE

The willow tree is one of the first trees to put out leaves in the springtime and it is one of the last to shed its leaves in the late autumn. It is green for a very long time so it is a symbol of long-lasting youth, vitality and beauty.

<The word for willow tree in Korean is *pōdinamu* (버드나무) but in Sino-Korean it is *yu* (유柳버들류). This *yu* (류柳) sounds the same as the Sino-Korean word *yu* (유描머물류) to stay in one place. So a picture of a willow tree reads: 'May a long youth stay with you.'>

WILLOW TREE AND DUCKS

This is a literati picture with the message: 'Pass both parts of your examinations, get a good job from the king, hold that position for a long time and have many clever sons.' This picture has been explained above under Ducks – Two, and A Willow Tree.

It is also a very popular charm picture given to newly-weds wishing that they remain young, beautiful and fertile for a long time. This picture carries the message: 'Remain always young in your married life.'

The willow tree puts out its leaves early in the spring, so it is a sign of spring when the virility and fertility of nature take over after the winter rest. The willow tree is the last to lose its leaves in the autumn, so its virility lasts a long time. Willow trees grow best in deep soil down in the valleys close to water. During the heat of



PICTURE 110
A Willow Tree and Two
Ducks

summer a willow gives shade to the ducks swimming under its overhanging branches. A pair of ducks in the picture represents a married couple. Ducks have many ducklings so they are fertile birds. So the whole picture tells of married bliss, fertility and remaining young. This is not a literati explanation of the picture as there is no play on words or Chinese characters. It is just a charm picture with some symbolism borrowed from the literati painters. (See: Ducks – Two, and A Willow Tree.)

Willow Tree, Magpies, Roses (See Magpies.)

Willow Tree and Roses (See Roses.)

Woodcutter and Immortals (See Immortals.)

Ye – Nine. These pictures are drawn to symbolize the attributes of a good king.

<These pictures are called *ch'ŏnboguyŏdo* 天保九如圖 천보구여도. The nine attributes are mentioned in the poem 'Tianbao' *ch'ŏnbo* 天保 천보 in the *Book of Odes*.> (See Fish – Nine, also Mountains.)

YŎBAEK

When looking at a Korean painting one should first consider whether there is *yŏbaek* (여백 餘白) present. This word is made up of two Sino-Korean words *yŏ* (여 = 餘 = 남을 여) = a surplus, and *baek* (백 = 白) = white. There should be enough white, or space, around the things drawn so that they can breathe and move. If this space is missing the objects drawn seem to be cramped and lack the *ki* or vitality that dwells in all creation. This idea of open space is akin to the balance of yin and yang, the worked and unworked areas of a painting. Many Koreans say that this *yŏbaek* is the quality that distinguishes Korean art from all other East Asian paintings.

YŎ'ŬI

This is a pearl that gives immortality and power to newly-formed dragons.

<Magic Jewel = *yŏ'ŭiju* (여의주 如意珠). The word *yŏ'ŭi* (여의 如意) means every desire, every wish granted. The *ju* (주 珠) is a jewel or precious stone. The *pulloch'o* or magic mushroom is also called *yŏ'ŭi* (여의) because it too grants every wish.>

YELLOW SPARROWS

Message: 'May you enjoy very great pleasure and happiness.'

<A yellow sparrow in Korean is *noran ch'amsae* (노란 참새) but in Sino-Korean it is *hwangjak* (황작 = 黃雀). This Sino-Korean word *hwangjak* (황작 黃雀) sounds like the two words *hwan* (환 歡) and *chak* (작 樂) combined to give *hwanjak* (환작 歡樂). This word *hwanjak* (환작 歡樂), means pleasure unrestrained, and is read as *hŭi* (희 喜 喜 喜 喜) = intense enjoyment.

The *hwan* (환 = 歡) is the same as the *hwan* (환 歡) that is used in *hwanak* (환락 歡樂) = pleasure, enjoyment, merrymaking. The *rak* (락) or *ak* (악 樂) in this word *hwanak* (환락) also means pleasure. (This is the same character used in *ŭmak* 음악 音樂 = music. The word for music *ŭmak* 음악 is made up of two parts, *ŭm* 음 音 = the sound that music makes, and *ak* 락 樂 = sensual pleasure, the pleasure derived from listening to the sounds of music.)

The *chak* (작) (작) part comes from the character *chak* (작 = 縛 = 너그러운 작) = indulgent or with largess. *Chakchak* (작작 縛縛 작작 하다) = unrestrained.

All birds with *chak* 작 in their names, such as sparrows, magpies, and phoenixes, have to be read as yellow sparrows to get the full meaning of joy *hii* 희 흥 기쁠 희.>

ZODIAC

The Twelve Animals of the Zodiac are:

1. Rat
2. Ox or Cow
3. Tiger
4. Rabbit or Hare
5. Dragon
6. Snake
7. Horse
8. Sheep or Goat
9. Monkey
10. Cock
11. Dog
12. Pig

This series of twelve animals starts with the rat and ends twelve years later with the pig; then the series starts again.

These twelve animals combine with the Ten Celestial Stems to give the name of the years in the oriental calendar. (See Celestial Stems.)

It is more accurate to refer to these twelve animals as the Twelve Branches, the Twelve Terrestrial Branches or even the Twelve Earth Branches. The word zodiac is a rather technical word used in the Occident that doesn't help in the understanding of the significance of the animals. However the term Twelve Animals of the Zodiac has been used so often that it has become standard English. Attempts have been made to combine these Twelve Animals of the Zodiac with the Twelve Signs of the Zodiac. The amusing results are given in Part I, Chapter 6, Mythical Animals.

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Every effort has been made to identify the artists properly. Reading 'personal seals' is very difficult and errors are easily made. Apologies to the artists whose names have been misspelled or written incorrectly. F.M.

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Born in Dublin, Ireland in 1931, Francis Mullany was ordained a priest with the Columban Fathers in 1955 and assigned to Korea, where he lived and worked until 1999, mostly as a parish priest in Cholla Province, the homeland of the Korean ink brush painting tradition. Subsequently, he returned to Columban Headquarters at Dalgan Park in Ireland. Throughout his time in Korea, Francis Mullany pursued his keen interest in Korean art and culture and in particular the symbolism in ink brush painting.

院滿花荷

白雲山房主人山亭



Rose of Sharon. Artist's name: Chŏn Kongju. Pen-name: Ilshik. [See page 34]

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