

KOREA TODAY

George M. McCune

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GEORGE M. MCCUNE

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KOREA TODAY

BY

George M. McCune

WITH THE COLLABORATION OF

Arthur L. Grey, Jr.

ISSUED UNDER THE AUSPICES OF
THE INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT
INSTITUTE OF PACIFIC RELATIONS

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To
Robert J. Kerner



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Foreword

THE present volume is the outgrowth of a research project initiated by the International Research Committee of the Institute of Pacific Relations in 1947. Because of his long personal knowledge of Korea and his work on Korean problems for the U.S. Government during the war, Professor George McCune was selected as the most qualified scholar to write this general survey of postwar Korea. A short preliminary report of the project was made available as a document at the Tenth Conference of the Institute in 1947 and plans were subsequently made to revise and expand this into the present book. Despite repeated interruptions due to illness, Professor McCune succeeded in completing about nine-tenths of the study before his death in 1948 deprived the world of a devoted scholar.

The manuscript was completed during 1949 and 1950 by his wife, Mrs. Evelyn McCune, and Mr. Arthur L. Grey, who have made some additions to bring the study up-to-date, especially in regard to economic developments in Korea. I wish to express my deepest thanks to them for their assistance in completing the manuscript and to Miss Mary F. Healy for taking charge of publication arrangements.

Readers may be interested to know that Professor McCune was working on another study for the Institute of Pacific Relations, namely, *A Short History of Korea*. Only about four chap-

ters of this study had been completed in first draft at the time of his death but it is still hoped that arrangements can be made for Mrs. McCune to complete this book.

The present study serves in part to supplement the earlier Institute study, *Modern Korea* (1942) by Dr. A. J. Grajdanzev. It is to be followed by a companion volume, a *Geography of Korea*, by Professor Shannon McCune of Colgate University.

Although this study is issued under the auspices of the International Secretariat of the Institute of Pacific Relations, it should be noted that the authors are responsible for all statements of fact or opinion expressed in the book.

New York, May 1950

WILLIAM L. HOLLAND,
Secretary General

Author's Preface

FOR some two thousand years of recorded history and another two thousand of legendary background the Korean people have developed a national character with all the accomplishments of a common cultural heritage, language, and way of life. The past few decades of their history have included first the twenty-year effort to play a part as a modern independent nation, then a forty-year period of colonial rule by the hated Japanese neighbors, ending with the so-called liberation of the country in 1945. Since then the new nation has been struggling against great odds to assume its rightful place as one of the larger small-nations of the world and to overcome the disintegrating effects of past history and of international rivalries which have divided the country in military occupation, in ideology, and now even in autonomous government.

In examining the situation in the new Korea, the historian faces a formidable task in obtaining accurate information and unbiased interpretation. In many instances he has no access whatsoever to sources necessary for a true picture of even the major facts involved. Furthermore, the highly controversial nature of the contrasting ideologies and nationalisms in the two halves of the country makes extremely difficult an objective analysis of events. It is a perplexing task to give the Koreans their proper place in a drama which has been so dominated by

the policies, personalities, and rivalries of the occupying authorities. Nevertheless, it has been my primary purpose in this volume to go beyond a mere description of the American and Soviet activities in Korea, and to present as clearly as possible the development of the Korean people during this period of transition.

The disparity between the amount of detailed material concerning the two areas will be immediately obvious to the reader. The southern zone occupied by the United States has naturally provided more information than the northern (Soviet) zone. However, as anyone who has used government reports is well aware, the information must be carefully used. This is also true of the opinions of the officials connected with the administration, as these men have been dealing with the highly explosive problem requiring considerable caution in reporting. The U.S. Military Government in Korea for a considerable period supplied monthly reports averaging over a hundred pages per issue, and later the South Korea Interim Government issued similar reports called the *SKIG Activities*. These reports form the most substantial body of source material, together with other official U.S. Army reports and subsequent reports issued by the U.S. Department of State.¹ Many journalists have visited the country and have written with varying degrees of bias on the ideological problem and on the American administration. Most of the reports for the northern zone have come either by way of Moscow or through refugees fleeing southward. Scattered published accounts concerning the administration and the various activities of the Soviet authorities and the subsequent Korean regime in the north have also been issued (mostly in Russian publications).

The book has been divided for convenience into two major sections on politics and economics and subdivided by presenting northern and southern zones in separate chapters. An ap-

¹ More recently, the Economic Cooperation Administration has provided fuller information on economic problems.—*Editor*.

pendix includes a selection of the major documents concerning international relations and economic statistics.

I am greatly indebted to many Korean and American friends who have supplied me with documentary material and with their own observations and opinions after service in Korea. Most of these friends I have been unable to cite in the following pages. A large proportion of Americans who have been associated with the American government in Korea are intensely concerned over the situation there and are deeply interested in the welfare of the Korean people.

I wish to make special acknowledgment of the help given me by Mr. Arthur Grey, a graduate economics student at the University of California who is named as my assistant in the preparation of this book. Mr. Grey entered Korea at the beginning of the occupation and saw much of the early economic developments in the transition from Japanese to "occupied" economy. He drafted in large measure the sections dealing with the economy of the country. However, the results and conclusions as presented herewith are entirely my responsibility, representing as they do my own opinions and point of view.

My wife has been of constant aid in all steps of writing this volume. It would have been impossible to complete it without her assistance. Because of my continued ill health during the preparation of this book, there have been many others who have provided material aid. I am particularly grateful for the friendly cooperation of my colleagues in the Department of History, particularly the Chairman, Professor John D. Hicks, and Professor Robert J. Kerner who arranged in various ways to provide me the time for this work as part of my University duties.

Though the study has been prepared for the International Secretariat of the Institute of Pacific Relations, at the request of its Secretary General, Mr. W. L. Holland, it should be noted that the Institute is not to be considered responsible for statements of fact or opinion in the book.

G. McCUNE

Note

THE reader who is unfamiliar with spoken Korean may be confused by the wide variations in the Romanized spellings of Korean words encountered in Western language materials. In general, the transliteration of Korean words and names occurring in the present study conforms to the McCune-Reischauer System for the Romanization of the Korean Language (as set forth in the *Transactions of the Royal Asiatic Society, Korea Branch*, Vol. XXIX, 1939) which resembles the Hepburn and Wade-Giles systems for the transliteration of Japanese and Chinese.

Pronunciation is according to the rule of sounding consonants as in English and vowels as in Italian. Since spoken Korean contains a wider array of vowel sounds than can be accommodated in the simple English alphabet, certain diacritical notations have been employed in transcribing. For present purposes, the reader need only take note of the sound ǒ which is pronounced like a in above. Certain other vowel sounds are: o as in moss, u as in full, ae as in bag, and oe as the German o. Aspirated sounds are indicated by ', such as n'. The plosives k, p, t, and ch should be pronounced without appreciable aspiration. When voiced, they are written g, b, d, or j.

Common usage makes it impossible to obtain complete uniformity in the transliteration of personal names. For example,

the same Chinese character may be Romanized variously as Paik, Park or Pak, depending upon personal preference in evaluating the consonants and in reproducing the vowel sounds. Where the spelling employed in the text is at variance with the general phonetic rules (according to the McCune-Reischauer system), this deviation is to be explained by the fact that the person himself romanizes his name in that way (i.e., Rhee Syngman for Yi Syngman), or that the particular spelling is more familiar to Western readers (i.e., Kim Ilsung for Kim Ilsŏng). With the exception of the name Rhee Syngman which is frequently inverted in Western language sources to read Syngman Rhee, the surname always appears first in accordance with Korean usage. Korean personal names usually consist of three syllables (sometimes two, such as Kim Koo or Lee In) which represent a like number of Chinese characters. In the text the rule has been followed of representing the second and third syllable as a single word. Euphonic changes which arise in spoken Korean from the occurrence of certain sounds next to each other have been ignored.



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Introduction

BLACK List Forty was the code name for Korea to the U.S. combat troops which landed on Korean territory. It was an appropriate label as Korea soon became, during the three and a half years of occupation, the “end of the line” with respect to American military supplies and personnel as well as the principles and practice of American democratic ideals. U.S. responsibility for the present situation in Korea has been, and is, enormous. It is a responsibility shared, but not lessened, by the U.S.S.R. and by independence-hungry Korean leaders not yet prepared for full responsibility.

The Cairo declaration that “in due course Korea shall become free and independent,” made by the chiefs of state of the United States, the United Kingdom and China on December 1, 1943, was reaffirmed at Potsdam on July 26, 1945, and subscribed to by the Soviet Union on August 8, 1945. Today Korea is divided by an artificial barrier, the 38th parallel; two governments claim sovereignty over all of Korea and operate in divergent patterns on each side of the line. Both governments are dependent upon outside forces and nations for aid and protection. Divided Korea today is far from being free and independent; it has made but few and faltering steps in that direction.

Officially the line was chosen to mark the separation between

Japanese forces which would surrender to the Russians and those that would surrender to the Americans. It was a hasty military decision, perhaps adequate for its limited military objective. But as time went on the line became one to separate two zones of occupation, two spheres in which contrasting methods of control were exercised, and finally two Korean governments which adapted the more divergent features of their sponsors. The North—the former Soviet Zone—has the larger area, roughly 48,300 square miles, but one-third the population, roughly 9,000,000. The South—the former American Zone—is roughly 37,000 square miles in area and now has over 20,000,000 inhabitants.

When the columns of the Soviet First Far Eastern Army marched into Korea from bases near Vladivostok in late August 1945, they were enthusiastically greeted by Koreans displaying pictures of Stalin and waving Korean and Allied flags. Troops of the U.S. Seventh Infantry Division, which landed at the west-coast port of Inchön on September 8, 1945, and then occupied positions in various parts of South Korea, enjoyed a similar popularity. Welcoming flags and banners were everywhere and American troops found themselves enthusiastically hailed by smiling Korean throngs. There could be no doubt of the genuineness of the expression of gratitude in these demonstrations, but if the American and Soviet forces took it for adulation, they were indeed mistaken.

The significance of the hurriedly-made Korean flags was lost on many of the foreign troops. They failed to realize that to most Koreans, the advent of foreign troops meant a liberation, a first step to freedom and independence. They were exultant over the liquidation of Japanese colonial rule to which they had been subjected for thirty-five years. However, they were also quick to suspect American and Russian intentions. As early as the second day of the occupation, Korean political leaders pressed U.S. Army officials for details on how the two occupying powers were going to cooperate in establishing a Korean

government. They were not satisfied with the vague replies which their questions elicited.

The obvious signs of tension between the American and Russian areas of occupation could not be concealed behind assurances of cooperation. In South Korea, the hastily-made welcoming banners and flags quickly disappeared and with them faded the enthusiasm of the people toward the occupying forces as U.S.-Soviet disagreement became increasingly plain. If the festive atmosphere persisted in North Korea, it was because the Soviet Union and the puppet Korean regime were kept in the forefront of public attention by wholesale advertising of Communist slogans and symbols on literally every wall and in every shopwindow.

It was not surprising that the Korean people were quickly disillusioned with the occupation and gravely concerned over their country's future. Koreans were simply displaying their sense of political realism, acquired by long experience with the effects of foreign rivalry, when they read the intentions of the United States and the Soviet Union from the conspicuous absence of cooperation between the two powers and from the unofficial insinuations they made against each other, rather than from official high-sounding assurances of unanimity. In the following three years of occupation, the two powers demonstrated that their activities in Korean affairs were influenced by bitter disagreement in the tradition of earlier international rivalries which had been so largely responsible for the destruction of Korean independence.

The United States has a peculiar responsibility for Korea in spite of official efforts to ignore, deprecate, or side-step it. The U.S. was the first Western nation to break into Korea's medieval isolation by means of its 1882 treaty of amity and commerce. For twenty years after the signing of this document American representatives were favored at the Korean Court. They were considered influential agents of a friendly power during a period when Korea was subject to the pressures of a major rivalry

between China and Japan and a minor one between England and Russia. China was eliminated as a possible ally in 1895, England in 1902, Russia in 1905. The two powers then left in the field were the United States and Japan. President Roosevelt saw no reason at that time for opposing Japanese expansion on the Asiatic continent and so, by the end of 1905, Japan had no competitor for Korea except the Koreans themselves and they were unable to stop the annexation which came in 1910. Fear of a possible re-enactment of invasion from a resurgent Japan is at present an obsession of Koreans, both north and south. They see in the present U.S. policy of the creation of a strong Japan, a terrifying resemblance to the events of 1902-1904, which resulted in a Russo-Japanese war and their own loss of statehood.

In South Korea the task of setting up a Korean government was nursed through many vicissitudes by the U.S. Army, Military Government and State Department. The Army Commander, Lt. General John R. Hodge, started out by rejecting the newly-organized Korean Republic which had been set up before American entry into the country. He solved the troubles attendant upon this move and that of an initial retention of Japanese officials by proclaiming that "Military Government is the only government" in South Korea. The U.S. Army Military Government in Korea was contracted to "USAMGIK," but its obvious dependence upon intermediaries led Koreans to call it "the interpreters' government."

The first attempts to provide a measure of Korean participation in the formulation of Military Government policies were unsuccessful. The Representative Democratic Council resembled the Japanese Central Advisory Council and was dominated by rightists. In December 1946 a more ambitious attempt to secure Korean participation was undertaken with the establishment of the South Korean Interim Government (SKIG) and the half-appointive, half-elective South Korean Interim Legislative Assembly (SKILA), which exercised limited powers within a framework of authority dominated by the military governor.

SKIG and SKILA managed to survive bitter internal crises, which, however, reduced them to impotence.

At Moscow, December 27, 1945, it was decided to establish a joint Soviet-American Commission which would work toward a unified provisional Korean government. However, the first session of the Joint Commission held in the spring of 1946 failed ostensibly over the question of the selection of Korean members. This was followed by top-level negotiation between Secretary of State Marshall and Foreign Minister Molotov where a compromise was reached allowing for the holding of a second conference. The second series held in the spring and summer of 1947 also failed. The United States then referred the whole problem of Korea to the United Nations for further action. The U.N. Temporary Commission on Korea (UNTCOK) supervised the holding of elections in South Korea in May 1948. The Assembly thus elected hastily set up its constitution, president, committees and cabinet under the direction of Syngman Rhee, in time for the formal investiture ceremony performed by General MacArthur August 15, 1948. Final action on the part of the United Nations Assembly, which had originally planned a coalition government, came in December and was, therefore, merely a benediction.

Developments in the northern zone of occupation followed a readier pattern, and the Soviet occupying forces speedily secured the establishment of a Korean regime which closely conformed with the Russian prototype within a very short time. Moreover, the Soviet Union was well acquainted with Korea and Koreans. The Imperial Russian government had been deeply involved in Korean affairs from 1896 until 1905, when Japan summarily ended its activity in the peninsula. During the period of Japanese control, thousands of Koreans took refuge in Outer Mongolia, Siberia, and the Russian Maritime Province. Koreans were active in the Communist International, and the Communist Party was in the vanguard of anti-Japanese activity in Korea.

It was a relatively simple matter, therefore, for the Soviet

occupying forces to act effectively in Korea through local Communists and the cadre of Soviet Koreans who had come with the occupying forces. The directness of purpose of the Soviet forces and the existence of a body of highly-disciplined Korean Communists ready to carry out Soviet policy assured the speedy establishment of a typically Soviet regime. For this reason, there was, in reality, very little difference, in either organization or personnel, between the Soviet-sponsored People's Committee regime, established in the early weeks of the occupation, and the Democratic People's Republic of (northern) Korea, recognized by the Soviet Union as the sole legal Korean government in early September 1948.

Korea has a key position in contemporary Far Eastern politics, partially owing to the three-year American-Soviet occupation of the country. The establishment of two governments "in this small space of 85,000 square miles" has been catastrophic. The job ahead of Korean leaders in the construction of a modern state is a task whose magnitude might well appall them. They need time and capital, and they have neither. They need leadership and their leaders are unprepared. Owing to the despotism and inefficiency of Korean government under the old monarchy and the efficient but still despotic administration of the Japanese, leadership will be slow in developing from the common people.

Though the Korea of today is modernized in many essential respects the people are little better prepared for political responsibility in a modern world than they were in 1900. The Korean independence movement during the intervening years demonstrates this point in its lack of unified and directed action under the guidance of mature leaders. The only experience that Koreans have had in the exercise of democratic procedures has been in small village governments and in Christian institutions. Many Koreans are aware of their shortcomings and are exerting themselves in heroic ways to overcome their difficulties in time. They are aware that they must face the facts of their situation and that they must adopt a program of austerity if they are to

succeed in launching their new state into a modern world. In the last analysis the problem is theirs. They are eager to accept their responsibilities, but if the 38th parallel cannot be abolished without a bloody civil war and if pressure from Russia cannot be alleviated and that from a renascent Japan be averted, their chance to retain their freedom has already ceased to exist.

CHAPTER ONE



The Historical Background

THE HISTORY OF AN OLD KINGDOM

KOREA has a long history. Located on a peninsula with admirable boundaries but with the disadvantage of being at a crossroads of civilization, and peopled by a race which many centuries ago became unified as a distinct group with its own physical and cultural characteristics, Korea has grown to a nation of twenty-nine million persons. Korea has also become one of the world's most acute trouble spots.¹

The peninsula of Korea is roughly 150 miles wide and 600 miles long and has an area of 85,228 square miles. The country is mountainous with a coastline dotted with islands, a combination of scenic attractions which has given rise to a native poetical tradition in praise of the beauty of the land. On the north, the Yalu and Tumen rivers form the boundary which separates Korea from Manchuria. For a short distance of some eleven miles at the mouth of the Tumen River, Korea shares a boundary with Soviet Siberia. Famous Paektu (White Head) Mountain is the source of both rivers, with its highest peak rising to an elevation of over 9,000 feet.

Northern and eastern Korea is largely mountainous territory,

¹ There is no modern history of Korea written in the English language. An excellent short survey, drawing upon modern materials, may be found in an article by Sir Paul Butler, "A Korean Survey," *International Affairs*, July 1946, pp. 361-75.

whereas the southern and western sections are for the most part hill-and-valley country. The Diamond Mountains (called Kumgang-san by the Koreans), situated in central Korea next to the eastern coast, have long been a mecca for tourists from all parts of the Far East owing to the spectacular scenery found there.

Along much of the eastern coast the mountains rise abruptly from the seashore, a marked contrast with the western coast where the ground rises gradually from the shore. The western half of the country is therefore well suited to farming and as a result comprises most of the rich rice lands which support a large portion of the population. The eastern coast, on the other hand, has natural resources best suited to the production of hydro-electric power and to deep-sea fishing.

The origin of the Korean people, like that of other old nations, is obscure, but the traditions, folk-lore, customs and beliefs of the people studied in the light of finds discovered in recent years in the shell-mounds, grave-sites and monuments of various kinds afford some information as to the ancestors of the present inhabitants of the peninsula. Recorded history does not begin in Korea until about the time of Christ, but from then on the history of the Korean people is well documented.

Tradition places the founding of their society in the year 2333 B.C. by a mythical personage named Tan'gun. Another famous figure is that of Kija, a Chinese refugee, who is credited by Korean tradition with the founding of the first Korean kingdom, Chosŏn, in 1122 B.C. The archeological evidence so far uncovered in Korea does not substantiate either the Tan'gun or the Kija tradition, but it throws much light on prehistoric Korea. According to deductions made from such evidence, various clans and tribes inhabited the peninsula in the centuries before the Christian era. They possessed a neolithic culture from which they emerged during the first millennium before Christ, reaching the stage of a bronze and iron culture shortly before the opening of the Christian era. These tribes were a mixture of Tungusic and proto-Caucasian invaders, who had arrived in

successive waves via the plains of Manchuria and the steppes of Mongolia and Central Asia.

Traces of the early neolithic settlements are found in all parts of Korea. In southern Korea these early inhabitants were called the Sam Han (Three Han). These Three Han achieved a considerable reputation for their tribal organization, certain unique customs, and their skill at handicraft. Accounts of the Three Han may be found in the Chinese records of the Han dynasty. In northern Korea the dominant early tribesmen were called the Yemaek (second cousins of the Sam Han), and they joined together to form the ancient kingdom of Chosŏn (founded according to tradition by Kija). Chosŏn finally gave way in 108 B.C. to a Chinese invasion. The Chinese then established several colonies in northern Korea, the most famous being that of Lolang (called Nangnang by the Koreans), with its capital at Pyŏngyang.

The tombs which the Chinese left behind, dating from the second century before Christ to the third century after Christ, have proved a treasure-house of information about the art and industries of Han China. Excellent examples of lacquer, bronze mirrors, pottery, jewelry, battle equipment, and so on, have been found in the few tombs, among hundreds in the area, which have been excavated up to the present time. A fertile field awaits the Korean archeologist in the further discovery and study of Lolang grave finds.

Recorded Korean history begins with the period known as the Three Kingdoms, 57 B.C. to 668 A.D. During this period the country was divided into three parts: the northern section occupied by the warlike kingdom of Koguryo, the southeastern by Silla, and the southwestern by Paekche. Koguryo, whose jurisdiction extended over the greater part of Manchuria as well as over the northern part of Korea, fought off invading barbarians in many campaigns and engaged in one great war with China, in 613, from which the Koreans came off victorious. Fifty years later, however, Koguryo came to an end before the combined attacks of the T'ang dynasty of China and those of Silla.

During the fourth century, when Koguryo strength and prestige were still at their height, Buddhism was introduced into the kingdom along with a flood of other cultural features of Chinese civilization. The southern kingdoms of Silla and Paekche, in their turn, assimilated Chinese culture through the introduction of Buddhism, with spectacular success, and in due course passed it on to Japan.

Allied with the newly established T'ang dynasty of China, Silla soon overthrew the two rival kingdoms and set up a hegemony over the entire peninsula in 668 A.D. The supremacy of Silla lasted for almost three hundred years, during which time the high quality of its culture earned for the period the term of Golden Age. The capital of Silla, Kyongju, was the center of a well-to-do, rather benevolent, civilization. Korea never had anything like it in the more sophisticated and turbulent ages that followed. Many Buddhist temples, monasteries and pagodas of great size and splendor were built and all the appurtenances to furnish them provided. Some pagodas, temples and bronze bells still remain as monuments of this age.

During the Koryo period (935-1392) which followed the Silla, the capital was located at Songdo in central Korea. It was during this period that the name Korea came to be applied to the country by Westerners. The last two centuries of this era were disturbed by the recurrent invasions of the Mongols which ended, finally, in Mongol domination of the country, the first time that the whole peninsula had come under foreign rule. The king accepted the overlordship of the Khan and married a Mongol princess. In 1275 the Koreans joined the Mongols in their unsuccessful invasion of Japan. The Koryo kingdom had also to wage constant warfare against Japanese piracy during most of the fourteenth century. Despite these troubles, Korea reached a high level of achievement culturally. Korean scholars made great progress in literature, Korean artisans perfected the well-known celadon pottery associated with the period, and Buddhist culture in all its aspects reached its zenith.

General Yi T'aejo in 1392 ended the dissolution of Koryo by

establishing his own dynasty in a new capital fifty miles south of Songdo at Hanyang, or as it was known from then on, Seoul. The dynasty remained in power until the Japanese annexation of Korea in 1910. During its 500-year rule the Yi dynasty passed through several brilliant periods of political and cultural development. The first, occurring immediately in the opening years of the fourteenth century, was probably the greatest. At that time an alphabet was invented which was admirably suited to the Korean language, movable metal type was developed (at least fifty years before Gutenberg), encyclopedias and histories were written, and good government established according to the strictest of Confucian principles.

Two hundred years after the establishment of the dynasty, the Japanese invasion of 1592 put an end to the prosperity of the country but seven years of conflict resulted in the withdrawal of Japanese troops and the abandonment of Hideyoshi's plan of conquest. One cause of the Japanese retreat was the brilliant naval victories of Admiral Yi Sunsin, who invented the iron-clad turtle ship which he directed with such superior strategy that he was able to break the strength of the Japanese navy. The austerities endured during this devastating war resulted in another renaissance in Korea, which was cut off in twenty years by the invasion of the Manchus.

In 1653 there occurred a small incident of interest to Westerners. A Dutch ship, the *Sparrow Hawk*, was wrecked on the island of Quelpart and the thirty-six survivors were brought to the capital for investigation. They were forbidden to leave the country and were turned loose to earn their living as best they could. Thirteen years later eight of these men contrived to escape to Japan in a junk, and from there returned to Holland by one of their own ships calling at the Dutch port of Deshima. On his return to Holland one of these men, Hendrik Hamel, wrote an account of his adventures which provides the Western world with the first authentic report on the hermit kingdom.

Not until 1882 did Korea break down the stubborn isolation which had been self-imposed during the Yi dynasty, to make

a treaty with a Western power—and then only because Japanese pressure forced it. The first Western nation to conclude a treaty with Korea was, curiously enough, the United States. For many centuries Korea had maintained the so-called tributary status within the orbit of the Chinese Confucian system without restricting her own independence. Contact with China, therefore, had been relatively unhampered and extensive. There had also been a more or less constant contact between Korea and Japan from the year 1609 on, although these contacts were limited to one port, that of Pusan. Trade was carried on between the two countries through this port via the island of Tsushima. A modern treaty took the place of the old agreement, in 1876.

Korea was slow in adapting to the Western world, in contrast with Japan which adapted and adopted so fast. After two revolts, one in 1882 and one in 1884, the Korean court turned to the conservative Chinese government for support, which was forthcoming in the person of the Resident, the young Yuan Shih-k'ai. Chinese conservatism was opposed by Western liberalism coming from the missionary group, and also by a Japanese economic penetration that was gathering momentum rapidly. In 1894 the Tonghaks, a revolutionary group of cultists opposed to all foreign interference, Asiatic or Western, gained considerable ground among the Korean lower classes and in an attack upon the government caused confusion among their rulers, followed by the arrival on Korean soil of both Chinese and Japanese troops. At this moment Japan was prepared to act decisively to end Chinese influence in Korea and to enforce "reforms" upon the Korean court, and China, although unwilling to withdraw, was still in no position to force the issue. The Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) was hardly a war. It lasted only a few months and ended with an easy victory for the Japanese. In the treaty which followed, Korea's tributary relationship with China was severed and her so-called independence was then guaranteed by Japan.

In the decade 1895-1905 Western diplomacy opened Korea

to much greater Western influence: railroads were built, mines opened, and commerce developed. At this time Russian interests in Korea, coupled with the expansion of Russian imperialism in Manchuria, came into conflict with Japanese imperial ambitions. The ultimate result of this clash was the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905) which successfully eliminated the Russians from their position of rivals of the Japanese in Korea. At this time and immediately following the war Japan, furthermore, obtained the consent of the other powers to the absorption of Korea into the Japanese Empire, and step by step, in spite of the vigorous opposition of the Korean people, this was accomplished. Annexation was finally completed in 1910, at which time Korea became a colony of Japan.

The long historical continuity, during which Korean cultural and social patterns became firmly fixed, has left a unique heritage to the Koreans. They became a nation of one race, one language, one culture, and one proud past. The homogeneity of the Korean people is a significant factor in an evaluation of Korean political problems. Whatever disunity and diversity appear on the Korean political stage are not products of fundamental differences in race or culture within the Korean community, but are consequences of less substantial causes.

Factionalism, nonetheless, has long been a characteristic of Korean politics and was particularly vicious in the last years of the monarchy. Party warfare was an old story in the Korean court, and in the period from 1560 to 1725 the monarchy was greatly weakened by such strife. During part of that period, a struggle between two parties, the Nam-in (Men of the South) and Puk-in (Men of the North) was especially dominant and its traces are still evident today with the north-south division of the country. Party members even wore distinguishing colors and dress. In the latter part of the nineteenth century, party warfare centered in the controversy over Westernization, with a conservative clique opposing the progressive element.

Korea has had many periods of brilliant government and cultural achievement, but in the latter nineteenth century, while

the country was attempting to adjust to the Western international system, the Korean monarchy fell into a state of disintegration. The Confucian principles which had been adopted by the Korean court long before had been pursued to such extreme ends that government was corrupt, inefficient and inflexible. Leadership could not arise from the people because of despotic rule, and the people, therefore, took no part in a government which was conducted by a bureaucracy that was reactionary and factional. Only in the small villages and within the social circle of the family could the people exercise democratic privileges.

Reform measures in the latter days of the monarchy made almost no headway. A few steps were taken in the direction of better educational methods, reorganization of government, improvement of the administration of justice, and the granting of a somewhat larger measure of popular representation. But the urgency of such reform to bring the nation abreast of the outside world was not grasped by either the government or the people. In the decade 1885 to 1895, immediately after Korea was opened to the West, the country slipped backward into conservatism in obedience to Chinese dictation. Then, in the next decade, when Chinese influence was eliminated, the country was subjected to the pressure of power politics in a way which completely thwarted any constructive effort at reform from within.

Soon after the opening of Korea in 1882 the struggle for power began in its modern phase. The first two protagonists were Japan and China. Other secondary tensions were reflected in Korean politics, however, such as the Anglo-Russian rivalry which resulted in the occupation of Port Hamilton by British forces in 1885. Chinese designs to convert the tributary status of Korea, which had no counterpart in Western international practice, into a protectorate were finally challenged by Japan in the Sino-Japanese War. The result for Korea was the loss of the once comfortable connection with China which was regarded as a protection in time of trouble. The new independent status was one of anarchy, for Korea had no opportunity to de-

velop a foreign policy which had a reasonable chance of success. The futile efforts to obtain American support and the desperate tactic of playing off Russia against Japan culminated in the Russo-Japanese War and the end of Korean independence.

During the transition from traditional to modern times three important forces dominated Korean politics: (1) the strong historical and cultural ties which bound the Korean people together into a single unit and led them to resist almost fanatically foreign domination despite the weakness of their own government; (2) the extreme conservatism and factionalism which pervaded the social and political structure and hindered reform; (3) the ancient ties with China which were considered an essential safeguard for independence instead of a limitation upon sovereignty. These three forces—nationalism, conservatism, reliance upon an ally—emerged as dominating characteristics of Korean policy before annexation and they persisted throughout the Japanese era to re-emerge with the removal of Japanese power.

THE LAND AND ECONOMY OF OLD KOREA

Korea occupies a peninsula slightly larger in area than Minnesota, or the United Kingdom without Northern Ireland, about 85,000 square miles. The population, about 29,000,000, is just a little more than that of Spain, ranking eleventh among the nations of the world. Physiographically the country is singularly mountainous and does not lend itself readily to geomorphic classification.² "Actually each abrupt mountain which shelters the villages and each minute plain on which the paddy fields have been laid out has a unique character."³ This rugged character of the Korean terrain has imposed severe restrictions upon the economy of the country. However, it has also made for one

² See Shannon McCune and Arthur Robinson, "Notes on a Physiographic Diagram of Tyosen," *The Geographical Review*, Vol. 31, October 1941, pp. 653-58. Here McCune and Robinson do divide Korea into geomorphic areas.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 658.