KOREAN ART AND HUMOR:
TRACING THE DEVELOPMENT OF TERMS AND IDENTITY

KARIN JOY WARCH

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Department of the History of Art and Archaeology
SOAS, University of London

Abstract

This thesis asks when humor was first used to describe or define Korean art and considers examples to the contrary and the context in which they arise. It attempts to trace the notion of humor as a continuous rhetoric in Korean art scholarship and perception. In order to prove the pervasiveness of humor within the history of Korean material culture and its promoted perceptions and receptions on the global stage, this thesis also examines key terminology, and the origins, application connotative development of humor within key historical, social and political Korean contexts. The role of Japan and early Korean scholars, both native and international is considered with regard to the legacies inherited by the pioneers of Korean art scholarship and characterization.

Also considered is the restless desire of Korea to define its national identity, and how political motives and diplomacy are met through the collaboration and international organization of art and culture exhibitions. Specific historical events examined include the late 19th-early 20th century, the Colonial Period, and the post-war years. Key events discussed include the first international exhibitions of Korean art, the 1988 Olympics, and the current wave of "K-pop" on the global stage.

The topic of humor and its application to the above-mentioned periods and events in Korea's history is traced along with the development of its meaning and relationship to Korea's art and culture.

Dedicated to the loving memory of my parents,
Richard and Margot Warch

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Notes

Romanization and Spelling

The McCune-Reischauer system is Romanization is used, with the exception of direct quotations from texts and directly cited names.

Author Names

Korean, Japanese, and Chinese names are given in the Asian customary order of the family name first, followed by the given name.

For the sake of convenience, the name “Korea” is used to refer to the Republic of Korea, or South Korea; references to the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) are clearly stated.

Introduction

When *Masterpieces of Korean Art* opened in Washington, D.C. at the National Gallery of Art in 1957, the catalogue that accompanied the exhibition contained the following observation: “The cherished formality and technical excellence of Koryŏ was transformed into the informal spontaneity of the Yi [Chosŏn], full of charm and humor, simple yet refined.”[1] In 1997, then Kyŏngju National Museum Director, Kang U-bang admitted "An aspect that I keep coming across time and again while studying art history is the Korean sense of humor."[2] He defined the “Korean sense of humor” aesthetically as the result of imperfection. "Humor comes from the anomaly of imperfection, asymmetry, and non-inhibition."[3] Compared to the art of Korea’s neighbors, Kang went on to say "Few Korean art works are as perfectly finished as the art works in China or Japan. However, I find them even more satisfying because, instead of perfection, I can detect a sense of humor, freedom and beguiling innocence."[4] In Martha Schwendener’s article from August of 2007, the New York Times published an art review on ‘Korean Funerary Figures: Korea’s Extraordinary Send-Offs for Ordinary People.’ In it, the displays of *koktu*, or wooden funerary figures are described as not “somber and forbidding mortuary art…[but rather] fun and friendly – even kind of cute.”[5] One of the contributors to the exhibition catalogue, Dr. Ockrang Kim, was quoted as describing the collection of objects as “a tribute to

[1] *Masterpieces of Korean Art: An exhibition under the auspices of the Government of the Republic of Korea*, 1957: 20.
[2] Kang, U-bang. “The Charm of Anomaly in Korean Art.” *Korea Journal*, (Autumn, 1998), 21.
[3] Kang, “The Charm of Anomaly in Korean Art.” *Korea Journal*, (Autumn, 1998), 21.
[4] Kang, “The Charm of Anomaly in Korean Art.” *Korea Journal*, (Autumn, 1998), 21.
[5] Martha Schwendener, “Korean Funerary Figures: Korea’s Extraordinary Send-Offs for Ordinary People,” *The New York Times*, August 17, 2007, sec. Art Review.

our ancestors' optimism and humor…[and wish] to journey into the beyond accompanied by boys, girls, men, women, clowns and acrobats."[6]

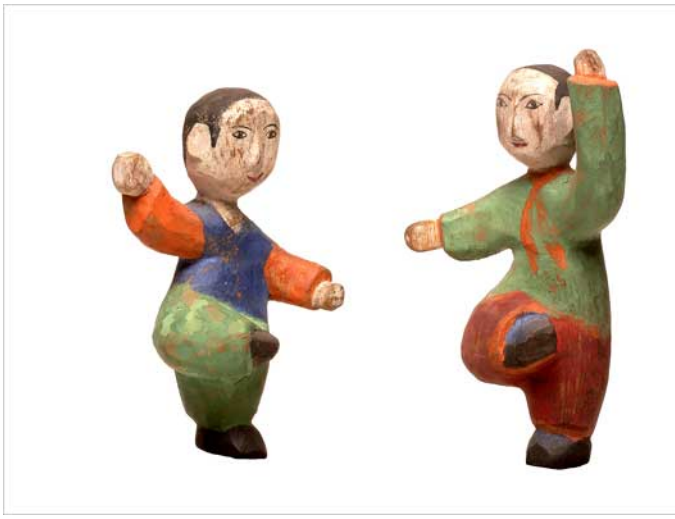

Fig. 0.1
Koktu Dancers
Painted wood, 19th century

From "Korean Funerary Figures: Companions for the Journey to the Other World" at the Korea Society, New York, NY, 2007

The Question of Humor

While Schwendener's comments imply a Korean sense of humor that is found in the most unlikely circumstances, the catalogue excerpt from 1957 and Dr. Kim's comments attest to the pervading perception surrounding Korean art: it is humorous. All three commentaries illustrate the long-lasting persistence of humor and its close association with Korean art. What their comments do not explain, however, is the reason behind this perception, and why it has remained so particular to Korean art and culture within the public's imagination. Director Kang's comments reveal the prolonged desire to define Korea apart from China and Japan. His regard for imperfection as a root cause for humor in Korean art may be traced back to Yanagi

[6] Schwendener, "Korean Funerary Figures: Korea's Extraordinary Send-Offs for Ordinary People," *The New York Times*, August 17, 2007, sec. Art Review.

Sôetsu (1889-1961), the Japanese art collector and champion of Korea's p'unchŏn ceramics and the *mingei* ("folk art") movement, whose characterization of Korean art and aesthetic as one of "sorrow" had lasting effects on the ways in which Korean art came to be generally regarded. The contrast between sorrow and humor is sharp, and yet paradoxically all the closer for that. The turn shift from sorrow to humor which begs the question of how and why the history of defining Korean art developed within these perspectives, and how humor in particular, has proven to be the more persistent and resilient.

The roots of Korean art scholarship and early attempts to define and characterize it begin with Japan's annexation of Korea and the Japanese government's excavation of archaeological sites throughout the peninsula. As will be discussed later, Yanagi, took an active interest in Korean art, particularly ceramic wares from the late Chosŏn period. His philosophical views and opinions regarding aesthetics and cultural taxonomy of East Asia have remained in the conscience of Korean scholars and continue to color how terms are used to describe and interpret the art of Korea, as Director Kang's comments demonstrate. What has been lost over the successive years is the complexity of Yanagi's philosophical approach to art and aesthetics, and his regard for the artists themselves. Consequently, what remains in the scholarship and in popular opinion is a rather condensed summation that has been reduced to his promoting *mingei* (folk art) and his assessment of Korean art as embodying "an aesthetic of sorrow."[7] A contemporary of Yanagi and a native Korean scholar called Ko Yusŏp (1905-1944) was another pioneer in Korean art and aesthetics. Like Yanagi, Ko did not separate art and life, but rather than finding an

[7] Kim Brandt, "Objects of Desire: Japanese Collectors and Colonial Korea," *Positions* 8, no. 3 Winter (2000), 735.

inherent sorrow in Korean art, Ko believed the singularity of life and art became the source for "naiveté and 'disinterestedness…'"[8].

Korea's aesthetic journey from sorrow, to naïve, to its arrival at humor requires an examination of the conditions under which these and other key terms arose. Yanagi's rather sentimental appraisal for Korean p'unchŏng wares was in reaction to the industrial development and factory-driven mass-produced wares that were being manufactured during his day. The imperfection of the handmade Korean wares retained a human touch that was absent in the perfection of the mass-produced wares he saw. The "sorrow" Yanagi assigned to Korean p'unchŏng may have been his own projection of an art lost in the shadow of a mechanized industry. Director Kang's comments maintain the lineage of Yanagi, but with an emphasis on humor rather than sorrow.

This thesis attempts to trace the developments and find the reasons for how these popularly maintained perceptions like those above, asks when humor was first used to describe or define Korean art, and considers the reasons for how and why humor developed and was applied within certain historical contexts. Through examination and discussions of early Korean art scholarship, representation, and display, this thesis will attempt to trace the notion of humor as a continuous rhetoric in Korean art scholarship and public perception. In order to find the causes for the pervasiveness of humor within the history of Korean material culture and its promoted perceptions and receptions on the global stage, this thesis will examine and trace key terminology, its origins, application, and connotative development towards humor within specific historical, social and political Korean historical contexts.

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[8] Kwon, Young-pil, 'The Aesthetic' in Traditional Korean Art and Its Influence on Modern Life," *Korea Journal*, (Autumn 2003),18.

Underlying Schwendener's, Kim's, and Kang's comments is the sense of singularity and a particular character that belongs to Korea, which distinguishes it from neighbors China and Japan. In short, Korea's identity, which has been, and continues to be, a fascinating, and at times elusive, topic for scholars of the peninsula, its art, culture and people. The desire to identify a uniquely Korean characteristic or aesthetic has its origins in Korea's early attempts to identify itself as an independent nation. The ways in which Korea was initially introduced and presented to the world, and then to itself had long-lasting effects on its identity, both externally and internally.

After Korea's liberation from Japan in 1945, the country experienced what may be called an identity crisis; eager to define itself and assert its independence, Korea quickly became divided between north and south, along communist and democratic ideals, an ideological divide that continues today. In the south, efforts towards nation building and the construction of a resurrected self-identity went hand-in-hand with the issues surrounding early displays and exhibitions of its art, which will be discussed in Chapter 2. The interest in nation building also highlights the division of the peninsula after the Korean War, and the subsequent polarizing cultural ideologies that were pursued in the aftermath. While the north embraced communism and saw its new cultural identity in a bright, untarnished future, the south sought an authentic cultural identity linked to the last dynastic period, the Chosŏn. At this point it is appropriate to clarify that for the purposes of this thesis, the discussions and analyses herein pertain to developments specific to the Republic of (South) Korea, and not the Democratic People's Republic of (North) Korea.

The dawn of the Chosŏn period set out to "reclaim Korea's native heritage while affirming the country's role in the larger civilization by perfecting the

Confucian order."[9] As will be discussed in Chapter 2, the nostalgic reclamation of the Chosŏn by a newly established South Korean democracy in the 1950s legitimized the new government by solidifying its place within a historical lineage. This is one explanation for why the Chosŏn period and the artists and writers who were active during its time, are celebrated and familiar to Koreans today. To the worldwide public, the late-Chosŏn painter Kim Hong-do (sobriquet Danwŏn, 1745 - ca.1806) is arguably the most recognized, not least because of his "skillful understanding and often humorous depictions of the life he saw around him."[10] His genre sketches are almost iconic among Koreans today, and are repeatedly cited for their frankness and informality. As Chung Yang-mo remarks, Kim Hong-do's sketches of everyday life, "the people and settings in them are unmistakably Korean."[11] The supposed embodiment of Korea's essential character in Kim Hong-do's genre paintings has fortified humor's presence in the public's imagination when it comes to Korean art, beginning with the eighteenth century.

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[9] JaHyun Kim Haboush, "Rescoring the Universal in a Korean Mode," in *Korean Arts of the Eighteenth Century: Splendor & Simplicity*, ed. Hongnam Kim (New York: The Asia Society Galleries, 1993), 24.
[10] *Masterpieces of Korean Art: An exhibition under the auspices of the Government of the Republic of Korea*, 1957: 178.
[11] Yang-mo Chung, "The Art of Everyday Life," in *Korean Arts of the Eighteenth Century: Splendor & Simplicity* (New York: The Asia Society Galleries, 1993), 68.

Fig. 0.2

김 홍도 (단원) Kim Hong-do (Danwŏn) (1745 – ca.1806)

무동 (dancing boy) from *Album of Genre Paintings by Danwŏn*, late 18th century, ink and light color on paper

National Museum of Korea, Treasure No. 527.

Another explanation for the prominence of Chosŏn and the relative familiarity it has among the Korean and international public is the wealth of material that remains from the period. The eighteenth century in particular is regarded as "the last glorious age before the collapse brought about by the pressures of modernization and the West."[12] It is small wonder then that many of the works displayed in Washington D.C. in 1957 dated from that age. Even more telling, the Minister of Education for the Republic of Korea, Kyu Nam Choi, wrote at the time, how it was "deeply gratifying …to be able to send an exhibition of Korean arts to eight leading museums in the United States so as to show the essence of Korean culture."[13] In this way the art of the Chosŏn period has continued to keep the public's imagination in thrall while

[12] Kim Haboush, "Rescoring the Universal in a Korean Mode," *Korean Arts of the Eighteenth Century: Splendor & Simplicity* (New York: The Asia Society Galleries, 1993), 23.
[13] Choi, Kyu Nam. 1957. *Masterpeices of Korean Art*, preface. The National Museum of Art in Washington, D.C., et alia. Boston: T.O. Metcalf Co.: 11.

perpetuating the humorous image more broadly across all periods of Korea's art.

Defining Humor

The topic of humor in Korean art provokes questions surrounding issues of denotation and agency within a culturally specific framework. This can lead to the very daunting task of having to definitively explain what humor is and how it operates. Within Western art, this task has been readily accepted and pursued by many scholars, most of whom acknowledge from the beginning that humor as a concept is very difficult to define, and then spend the next three-hundred or so pages attempting to do just that. As Paul Barolsky notes, "we must acknowledge the difficulty of defining …humor. To begin with, there are not precise, universally accepted definitions of humor and wit."[14] In a similar spirit of mind, Wallace Chafe agrees that defining humor and the categories therein is notoriously difficult with many "fuzzy" lines separating definitions, and likens attempts to do so to the story of the blind men encountering an elephant for the first time.[15]

One of the biggest challenges facing scholars who deal with humor is defining the parameters within which humor functions successfully, and is thus recognized. To this challenge, Western scholars have responded resoundingly and definitively. In his book, *Semantics of Humor*, Victor Raskin meticulously lays out the fundamental mechanics of humor, how it works, why it is universally experienced, and the conditions under which it succeeds most effectively within what he calls "a semantic

[14] Paul Barolsky, *Infinite Jest: Wit and Humor in Italian Renaissance Art,* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1978), 3.
[15] Wallace Chafe, *The Importance of Not Being Earnest: The feeling behind laughter and humor,* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Co., 2007),139.

theory of humor…"[16] One's sense of humor, Raskin continues, is a "quantitative rather than a qualitative judgment," implying there are degrees to which an individual may respond to humorous stimuli, and even those who are regarded as having no sense of humor do retain what Raskin calls "their humor **performance**, the use of their **competence**, which is different from that of the people who 'have' the sense of humor." (Words in **bold** are Raskin's) This competence, or "performance" corresponds to "language…logic, morality, religion, etc, and the corresponding judgments…are reflected by such pairs of antonyms as **articulate: inarticulate, logical: illogical, moral: immoral**, respectively."[17] The connection to morality and religion that Raskin mentions features prominently in texts on humor in Korean art, and especially literature.

In Western contexts, some of the most humorous situations are widely argued to be those in which social, political or gender-related norms are violated. When they do occur, they often carry critical commentary (direct or indirect) on the established norm in question. In this regard, humor becomes an effective tool for pointing out inconsistencies and fallacies across different aspects of society. Thus, humor can be utilized to measure the moral gauge of society; it also serves well as a vehicle to convey opinions about perceived moral hypocrisy. Humor of this nature is commonly identified as satire.

Edward Lucie-Smith writes in his introduction to *The Penguin Book of Satirical Verse* that:

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[16] Victor Raskin, *Semantics of Humor*, (Dordrecht:D. Reidel Publishing,1985), 7-8.
[17] Raskin, *Semantics of Humor*, (Dordrecht:D. Reidel Publishing, 1985), 3.

> "Satire, despite its mixed motives, always does have some general aim, a moral centre - otherwise it is not really satire at all. When satire concerns itself with individuals…these are being measured against an abstract thing, a standard of conduct. And it is this which gives force and resonance to the condemnations heaped upon the victims. Without some kind of moral code being implied by the poem, satire is helpless. It becomes merely abuse."[18]

Of course, examples of where humor and satire are used to lampoon and criticize social and political targets are plentiful in Western art and literature as well. Lucie-Smith's comments highlight the importance of satirical humor within a moral framework, and in order for satire to be effective the framework must be established and understood by both the author of the satirical situation (work of literature, poem, image, etcetera), and by the intended audience. Satirical humor, in other words, arises from, and is dependent upon, social context.

To begin in the medieval period in Europe, Janetta Benton points out that while most of the art produced during the medieval period was religious, there was still an element of levity occasionally present. "Witty, clever, or humorous imagery has a long history in art and the Middle Ages were no exception….the entertaining images examined…were likely to elicit a small inner chuckle, a knowing smile, a pleasurable response in the viewer consistent with the restraint and sophistication

[18] Gaut, 246.

characteristic of medieval art in general."[19] During the Italian Renaissance, humor was often associated with comedy, and comedy referred "specifically to the theatre."[20]

Western European works provide examples in which social commentary through satire can be seen. The paintings of Pieter Bruegel (ca. 1525-1569) and the prints of William Hogarth (1697-1764) illustrate this point in their frank depictions of 16th century Dutch peasant life and critically sharp illustrations of a less than competent monarch in King George III, respectively. Bruegel's candid scenes of commoners engaged in everyday activities capture human nature with a touch of humor. His *Parables* series of paintings includes "The Blind Leading the Blind" in which the juxtaposition of the determined stubbornness of the "leader" and his obvious incompetence prompts recognition in the viewer. In his painting of *The Peasant Wedding*, Bruegel's interpretation of human nature is candid, but not mean-spirited; the painter's sentiment comes across easily as a light-hearted appreciation for the common man and his sometime unrefined nature.

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[19] JaHyun Kim Haboush, "Rescoring the Universal in a Korean Mode," in *Korean Arts of the Eighteenth Century: Splendor & Simplicity*, ed. Hongnam Kim (New York: The Asia Society Galleries, 1993), 23–32.
[20] Paul Barolsky, *Infinite Jest: Wit and Humor in Italian Renaissance Art* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1978), 7.

Fig. 0.3 Pieter Bruegel (1525-1569), *The Peasant Wedding*, 1567; oil on panel, 124 cm x 164 cm, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna

Humor and Play in the West

In a similar fashion, the playful nature of humor also requires social interaction and context. William F. Fry of Stanford University simply believes "humor is play."[21] The concept of "play" indicates activity engaged in by participants. It also implies a specific context or circumstance in which play (and therefore humor) arises. Identifying the contextual condition, (or conditions) for humor is another strategy by which scholars have attempted to define it. In short, play is socially based, and creates a social context for humor to exist. "Play" also implies pleasure, a positive product of interaction, which invites opportunities for surprise or the unexpected.

In contrast to Bruegel's subjects of peasants and their daily activities, Hogarth's compositions are more often of royalty or the upper classes, portrayed in less than flattering light, and engaged in uncharacteristic situations. His prints are full

[21] William F. Fry, Jr., *Sweet Madness*, (Palo Alto, CA: Pacific Books, 1963), 138.

of witty references and visual puns that express dissatisfaction and critical sentiment towards the social conventions of his day. In his famous *Marriage á la Mode* series (1743-1745), he illustrates the misery of a marriage of convenience, based solely on financial interests, rather than genuine love and affection.

Fig. 0.4 William Hogarth (1697-1764), *Marriage à la mode* (*2: The Tête à Tête*), ca. 1743, oil on canvas, The National Gallery, London.

Humor in gestures and play are often found in Italian *quattrocento putti* (angels) or accompanying youths who display incongruous expressions of play or amusement that are in stark contrast to the sobriety of the subject or scene. Paul Barolsky argues the humor of a child versus that of an adult thus emerges as a possible consideration

to take into account when dealing with works of art that contain young and old.[22] In contrast to the men and women who share their space, children are more direct and candid in their behavior, thus revealing subtexts of truths through their unchecked honesty and naïveté.

A similar comparison may also be made between animal and human behavior, where animals are depicted mimicking human behavior, or are given more liberal license to behave more candidly or directly. As satirical devices, animals also serve as visual agents for revealing moral depravities in human behavior in a less direct, less accusatory mode. Through such depictions, the natures of humans and animals are revealed to have more similarities than differences.

Other strategies for arriving at a firm definition for humor within the Western context begin with the circumstances in which humor is found. Political scientist, teacher, and humorist, Stephen B. Leacock, offers the following conditions:

> The humor…arises…out of any set of circumstances that involve discomfiture or disaster of some odd incongruous kind, not connected with the ordinary run of things and not involving sufficient pain or disaster to over-weigh the pleasures of contemplating this incongruous distress: or it may arise without any great amount of personal discomfiture when the circumstances themselves are so incongruous as to involve a sort of paradox. One and the same principle runs through it all…the idea of the 'thing smashed out of shape,' the comic broken umbrella.[23]

Leacock's description may fall more closely in line with definitions of satire,

[22] Paul Barolsky, *Infinite Jest: Wit and Humor in Italian Renaissance Art*, (Columbia: University of Missouri Press,1978), 27.
[23] Raskin, *Semantics of Humor*, (Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing, 1985),15.

owing to the "discomfiture or disaster" he mentions. He also touches on the element of surprise, or the "incongruous" that introduces humor through the unexpected. This leads to another point of discussion of humor as an experience versus an aesthetic.

As the nineteenth-century naturalist, Lockwood had occasion to witness many accounts in which animals, ranging from cats to porpoises, engaged in activities that could be deemed humorous. He describes in detail the antics displayed by monkeys and dogs and notes the similarities with human behavior. Lockwood's writing reveals the context and accepted conventions of the times in which he lived, and the prevailing attitude towards animals and the understanding of their emotional intelligence is frustratingly primitive by today's standards. Lockwood's obvious awareness and appreciation of the humor of animals identifies him as ahead of his time in terms of his empathy and advocacy for animals and their emotional welfare. In 1876 he wrote, "Surely there is among them, as related to a psychology of their own, a true humor, if one could but get at it; and is it not worth the delving?"[24] Perhaps the "true humor" to which Lockwood refers is the experience.

In their article, "Belief and the Basis of Humor," Hugh LaFollette and Niall Shanks argue that one's experience of humor is directly dependent on one's acquisition of what they term a system of beliefs.[25] The more complex the belief system, the wider the range of humor it is possible to appreciate. This theory is in line with that of Berys Gaut's, who says, "the most influential theory of humor holds that it involves the enjoyment of incongruities, where these are understood in terms of

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[24] Samuel Lockwood, "Animal Humor," *The American Naturalist*, Vol. 10, No. 5 (May 1876), 269.
[25] Hugh LaFollette and Niall Shanks, "Belief and the Basis of Humor", *American Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 30, No. 4 (Oct., 1993), 330.

absurdities or violations of norms…"[26] The "absurdities" and "violations of norms" are applicable to social contexts, and therefore readily available for expression in artistic contexts.

This returns to Director Kang's comments quoted at the beginning of this section. His comments were made in reference to the then current exhibition of Korean traditional farming equipment. With titles such as "A Human Being" for a pendulum used to weave traditional mattresses, and implements used to dig for mushrooms labeled "Dancing Cranes," "violations of norms" abounded.[27] The unexpected discrepancy between the familiar function of the objects and their new identities gave the viewers pause, and prompted them to reconsider "the familiar" in a new ("unfamiliar") context. But the question still remains, is the experience really "humorous?" The presence of humor within a given context is a difficult argument in any circumstance, and there are few things more tiresome to prove. Cultural and social contexts, historical relevance and currency, familiarity with the supposed source material for the humor in question are all considerations in understanding and appreciating humor, as Director Kang's comments illustrate. His comments were made in 1997 on farming tools and everyday objects that were hewn and used up to the early twentieth century. The humor so readily identified among works from the Chosŏn dynasty has permeated and spread to all periods of Korea's art history and culture. Its acceptance and presence across the broad spectrum of Korean art and culture makes labeling anything humorous easy, if not always easy to identify or appreciate. To attempt to determine the presence or absence of humor, then, is not the

[26]Gaut, Berys, *Art, Emotion, and Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 243.
[27] Kwon, Young-pil, "Humor, and Aesthetic Value in Korean Art* Especially as Expressed in Scholarly Painting," *Korea Journal*, Spring 1997, 72.

aim. Rather, it is the process by which certain objects and works of art have been labeled humorous, and how the act of such labeling itself as it relates to the overall understanding and interpretation of Korean art today.

Humor in China and Japan

It is clear that scholarship on humor in the West, and within Western art history specifically, is comparably rich and varied when compared to scholarship on humor within the Korean context. Humor studies in the arts of China and Japan attest to not only to the presence of humor in those countries' art and culture as well, but also to the strong scholarship already undertaken by scholars of those countries . The arts of China and Japan are certainly not devoid of humor, particularly when it comes to literature. In China, the language has proven especially accommodating for puns, which provides opportunities for literal and visual double meanings in its literature and art. In Japan, subtle satire and visual puns are also found along with anthropomorphism and exaggeration. While Japan's form of humor is associated with *asobi* or "play", China's tends to be more didactic in nature. Naughty children appear frequently in classrooms, as do animals (particularly monkeys), engaged in unruly behavior. In a long handscroll by Zhang Hong (1577 - ?) schoolboys take advantage of their dozing schoolmaster by performing handstands and trying to remove his cap.

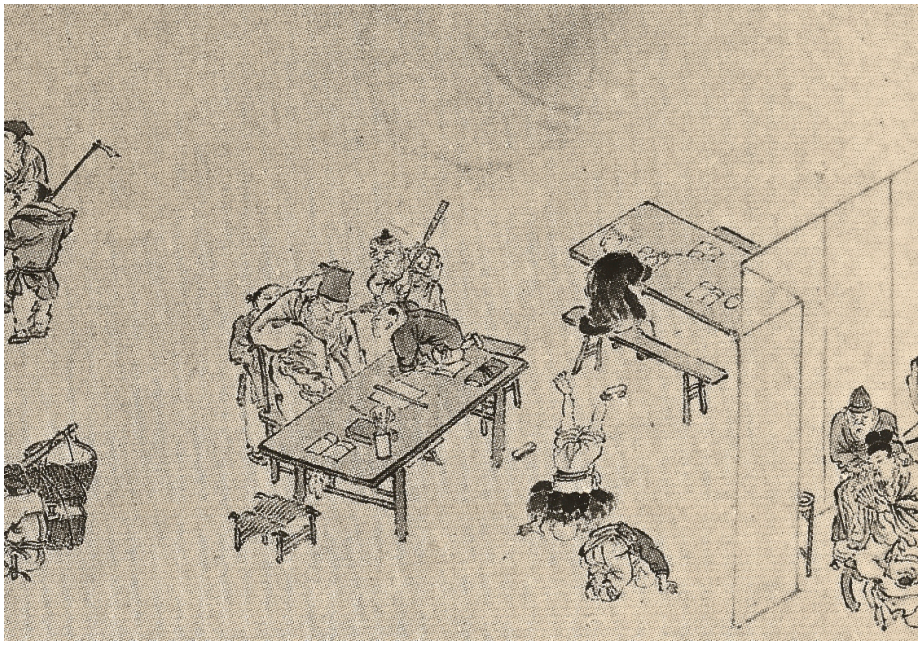

Fig. 0.5 Zhang Hong 張紘（1577-？）
Classroom Antics (detail from hand scroll), ink on paper, Ming dynasty, 16th c.
Gugong Museum, Beijing

The obvious disrespect shown is nonetheless amusing as much as it serves as a visual and mental reminder to the viewer that such mischievous behavior is not appropriate, but nevertheless amusing to witness.

In Japan, the concept of "play" (*asobi*) is comparable to a light-hearted or "playful" attitude in which "a sense of humor, a love of music, being 'laid back,' or at the extreme, a neglect of one's responsibilities and debauchery."[28]

[28] Guth, Christine, *Asobi: Play in the Arts of Japan*, Katonah Museum, (1992), 9.

Fig. 0.6 Detail from *Chōjū Giga The Frolicking Animals Scroll, one of four fascicles known as Chōjū Jinbutsu Giga (Funny Pictures of Birds, Animals and People,* 12th and 13th c.
Handscroll, ink on paper, 1149.6 cm x 30.6 cm

Like humor, play is another term that is easy to understand or recognize, but difficult to define, and as a result, in the history of art it is often overlooked because of its variety and subjective interpretations that elude definitive classification. Attempts have been made, however, as Christine Guth's categories of play in Japan demonstrate. The forms of play seen in Japanese art reflect traditionally dominant "social and cultural values."[29] In this way, Guth contends that play becomes a way of connecting to the past. Intricately wound within Japanese society, different forms of play served to diffuse political differences in the form of contests (usually poetry or painting) by which opposing sides could mete out their differences in a symbolic

[29] Guth, Christine, *Asobi: Play in the Arts of Japan*, Katonah Museum, (1992), 9.

manner.[30] Play was a means of free expression as well as escape from the confines of reality; one sees this when children play "make-believe" and the whimsical and bizarre become possible. Artistically, mimicry, caricature, and simulation feature prominently in Japanese forms of "play." The variations of humor thus pointed out in China and Japan are undeniable, and yet they have not come to define their respective cultures' art. Neither China nor Japan's histories of art are consistently regarded or described as being humorous.

Humor in Korea

Kwon believes that addressing the subject of Korean aesthetics "is not very different from discussing what the characteristics of Korean art are, or stressing how Korean art is distinct from the art of other countries."[31] The "quest" for a Korean aesthetic has since prompted a re-evaluation of the motives behind such a pursuit. Kwon cites criticism for the Japanese-colonial origins in which interest in Korean art and aesthetics began with Japanese initiative and in association with "Western-centrism."[32] For others, the attempt to define what makes Korean art distinctive is an attempt to "restore national pride through art."[33] In Kwon's opinion, the interest in

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[30] Guth explains that contests in the form of poetry and painting were another form of play that were "ritual games that promoted social order and national welfare by allowing apposing factions within the government to resolve their differences in a symbolic manner." In *Asobi* (1992),18.
[31] Kwon, 2003:11.
[32] Kwon, 2003:11.
[33] Kwon, 2003:11. Kwon includes a footnote here, referring to Hong Seon-pyo's critique of O Se-chang's *Geunyeok seohwanjing* (A Biographical Dictionary of Korean Western Painters), in which Hong remarks, 'Trying to examine the lineage of literature and art in his country at a time when it had fallen into a colony and his people became stateless, has something in common with the spirit of Confucius…seeking to preserve the nation by examining its history.' (Hong, 1998:xii)

defining Korean aesthetic can be attributed to Korea's acceptance of the West's academic approach to aesthetic theory and analysis. In his words, "Western aesthetics, which developed aesthetic categories on the basis of an analytic approach, is very strong in laying out methodological principles upon which to make an objective assessment of art phenomena."[34] Within the "methodological principles" is an "aesthetic categorization", in which "Humor (*haehak*) occupies an important place…"[35]

Of the modest number of writings that are devoted to the topic of humor in Korea, the majority deals with humor in literature and poetry, where the humor found therein is context-dependent and term-specific. In Korean, the Chinese-derived term "haehak" (해학 , 笑話) carries the same meaning of "humor" in English, and there is also "iksal" (익살, 一個笑話) meaning a joke, a jest, or humor. "Nongdam" (농담) can also mean a joke, a jest or witticism, but a witticism may also be called "gyeonggu" (경구, 警句). There is "ban-eo" (반어, 諷刺) for irony, "golgyae" (골계, 可笑) referring to comic humor, "giji"(기지, 機智) for wit, and "pungja" (풍자, 諷刺) for satire. Finally, Korean has adopted the English-sounding "yu-meo" (유머) to generally refer to humor in specifically Western contexts.

The tendency among Korean scholars to distinguish humor and satire has led to a recurring trend and unresolved agreement on the terms' meanings. The consequence of doing so is that while there is substantial scholarship on the presence of humor in Korean culture, the discussion is generally limited to works of literature and poetry, and less so on art. Among the writers of Korean literature repeatedly

[34] Kwon, 2003:12.
[35] Kwon, 2003:23.

cited is Pak Ji-won (sobriquet Yŏnam, 1737-1805). Regarded today among Korean literature scholars as one of the most important late-Chosŏn writers of his day, Pak is best known for satirical stories that exposed what he felt were social inequities between the Chosŏn ruling and privileged classes and its commoners.[36]

In contrast to Korean literature studies, detailed descriptions and definitions of Korean humor remain deficient when it comes to Korean art. The relatively limited number of English texts that specifically deal with humor in Korean art tend to discuss humor in broad, general terms. This has led to an unquestioned acceptance of humor, and its place within the Korean art tradition, with no apparent need for clarification or specificity. Kwon Young-pil is one of a handful of contemporary Korean art scholars whose research looks specifically at the subject of humor in Korean art, and who agrees, "to denote comicality and humor as prominent features of Korean art is not unusual."[37] He accepts the presence of humor in Korean art willingly enough, but is more reluctant when it comes to identifying specific examples. He appears to be in accord with Chŏng Pyŏng-uk, who concedes that perhaps "one ought to begin with the definition of the concept of the word humor, to deal rationally with a subject…" but because of the various uses and meanings "not only in [Korea] but also in other countries…" he decides it is "better not to undertake

[36] Pak, No-chun, "Bak Ji-won: Satirist of Aristocratic Society", in *Anthology of Korean Studies: Korean Literature: Its Classical Heritage and Modern Breakthroughs*. Korean National Commission for UNESCO, edt. (Elizabeth, NJ: Hollym International Corp., 2003), 247-48.
[37] Kwon, Young-Pil. "Humor, an Aesthetic Value in Korean Art: Especially as expressed in scholarly painting," *Korea Journal*, (Spring 1997), 68.

the very complex task of defining it."[38]

Methodology

In undertaking the question of how the terminology used to describe Korean art came to mean, and eventually become "humorous," this thesis follows a chronological historical framework, within which key terms are extracted and followed across successive periods of Korean art history scholarship. The representation of Korean art and culture as being humorous is analysed through considerations of historical context, motivation, and internal and external interests and agendas. Comparable discussions of China and Japan are included when and as required. Primary sources include personal memoirs kept by Western visitors to Korea in the antebellum years, records from the Japanese Government's collection and records of Korean archaeological campaigns during Korea's annexation, press releases and news clippings from early exhibitions, as well as catalogues and books published at the time. Finally, the works of art themselves, which were repeatedly and consistently identified by scholars and members of the public as being "humorous" are presented and analyzed within different contexts in order to highlight the changes and developments that occur in building towards a universal acceptance of humor in Korean art and cultural identity.

[38] Chŏng, Pyŏng-uk. 'Humor in Ancient Korean Poetry and Songs', *Korea Journal*, (May 1, 1970),15.

Plan of Chapters

Chapter 1: Presenting Korea: Early Beginnings

This chapter will examine early writings on Korean art, culture and people from two three perspectives, the first from Japan, and the second from the West, and the third from within Korea itself. After the Kanghwa Treaty of 1876, which effectively ended Korea's isolation and opened its borders to international commerce and speculation, Western and Japanese interest in the peninsula grew rapidly. With increased accessibility came increased tourism from the West, and steady encroachment and occupation by Japan. This chapter discusses Japan's early efforts to display Korean art and culture and the motivations behind them. Key figures including Yanagi Sôetsu and Ko Yusŏp are discussed in terms of their perceptions of Korean art as the genesis for inherited interpretations and perceptions held by later scholars. Western impressions are examined as well in order to identify early assignations that were made by visitors to Korean art, the land, and its people that lay foundations for lasting terms of Korean identity that imply or include humor.

Chapter 2: 1950s-1960s: Post-War Years and New Beginnings

Chapter 2 follows South Korea's goals to assert its national identity to itself and the world – promoting and marketing Korean culture that is rooted in and linked to the Chosŏn period. The wake of the Korean War and the resulting two Koreas left a need and an opportunity to redefine itself on its own terms. Focusing on South Korea's development and fortification of its internal and external image through early major international exhibitions, this chapter examines the ways in which Korea

chooses to display and market itself and the diplomatic and political factors involved in shaping Korea's self-identity in contrast to China and Japan.

Chapter 3: 1970s-1990s: Reinforcing the Message

Chapter 3 follows the rise of Korea's presence on the world stage and in the international imagination as a major cultural and economic contributor and power. The growth in Korean studies fueled by growing interest in its art and culture resulted in the establishment of the World Taekwondo Federation in 1973, a successful bid for the 1998 Olympics in Seoul, and the founding of major Korean cultural institutions, including the Korea Foundation in 1991. This chapter continues to examine Korea's efforts to define itself and assert its own identity with particular attention paid to key terms used to describe and characterize Korean art and culture that are introduced and upheld today. The thread of humor continues to run through the culture as seen in the selected mascot for the '88 Olympics, 호돌이 (*Hodori*) and exhibitions like the Kyŭngju National Museum's re-contextualizing presentation of the traditional within a modern framework. *Hodori* pays homage to a favorite subject in classical Korean art and literature, the Amur tiger, which carries associations of power and authority, as well as hypocrisy and stupidity. Historical and the traditional roots are also referred to in museum exhibitions, but are deliberately upended by repurposing their original functions, thereby allowing a collection of gardening hoes to transformed into a flock of cranes.

Chapter 4: Humor and Korea in the New Millennium

Chapter 4 considers Korean art and culture today and the ways in which they are presented. In taking stock of the early developments and efforts made, first by outsiders, and then by Korea itself, this chapter examines the state of Korean art and culture today and trending developments from technological engineering to the latest "K-Pop" boom with regards to humor and its place in contemporary Korean art and society. How these more recent cultural developments have influenced Korea's cultural image, what they may mean for the future, and humor's place in it are considered.

Chapter 1
Early Beginnings of Defining Korea

Japan's Perspective of Korea

Needs and Desires: Korea's deficiencies, Japan's ambitions

In undertaking an investigation of Korean art and the history of its scholarship, it is necessary to bear in mind the history of Japan and its relationship with Korea and Korea's art and culture. The two countries share a volatile past, but it was at the beginning of the twentieth century when Japan's interest in the peninsula's material culture began in earnest. The non-negotiable way in which Japan imposed itself and its "modernization" onto Korea was critically observed in the West, with the primary criticism being that Japan was shortsighted in not allowing Koreans to keep their traditions and customs, and upholding practices that promoted Korean inequality and subordination. In a scathing article from January 1920, Homer B. Hulbert condemned the actions of Japan in and against Korea. He described the antagonistic relationship between Japan and Korea as being comprised of contempt on the part of Japan for Korea, and hatred by Korea for Japan "because of the selfish and aggressive nature of the Japanese."[39] At the time, Japan was exercising a systematic campaign in Korea to assert its advantage over the Korean people. The one thing keeping them from achieving total dominance, in Hulbert's opinion, was the presence of Christian Missionaries: "Korea could never be completely cowed and enslaved so long as Christianity flourished as it was doing."[40] The question of why Japan would do this leads to the subject of Japan's custodial interest in Korea and how it regarded its

[39] Homer B. Hulbert, "Japan in Korea," *The Journal of International Relations* 10, no. 3 (January 1920): 270.
[40] Homer B. Hulbert, "Japan in Korea," *The Journal of International Relations* 10, no. 3 (January 1920): 271.

culture, in particular (and most pertinent to this thesis), its art. The steps taken then to establish a systematic method for registering and cataloging the uncovered objects, architectural relics and historic sites endure today. The most significant and lasting impact Japan's initial efforts had, was in casting a general character for the art of Korea – one which prevails and continues to impact Korean art scholarship today.

The years leading up to Korea's annexation saw the country, as many scholars and writers from that period attest, in a state of social and economic destitution and political impotency as a result of ineffectual government. As a strategic location from which to launch or advance political and military campaigns, Korea had endured centuries of devastation by invasions from the Mongols and Japan, leaving it weakened internally and wary of foreign interests. Before the turn of the century, the international machinations taking place outside of Korea lay the foundation for the peninsula's eventual annexation.

Japan's Excavation of Korea

The attitude Japan adopted towards Korea is often perceived to have been rooted in its desire to assert its cultural dominance and political authority. This is a perception that resounds and is reiterated throughout numerous historical documents and personal accounts written by both Koreans and Western visitors to Korea during its colonial period. In their book, *Old Korea: The Land of Morning Calm,* Elizabeth Keith's and E.K. Robertson Scott's accounts of Seoul in 1920 reveal a sympathetic eye towards the state of a once grand ancient city now "crumbling to decay…[yet] Koreans still retain their distinctive characteristics which differentiate them from both

the Japanese and Chinese."[41] There were other perspectives, however, of the Japanese involvement with Korea that cast Japan in a more favorable light. Because of the "crumbling" state of Korea at the beginning of the 20th century, American scholar Clarence Vosburgh Gilliland shared one writer's opinion that Japan was "not trying to explore Korea, but…trying to develop it."[42]

Fig. 1.1 Elizabeth Keith *The Eating House* (watercolor on paper), ca 1920

Fig. 1.2 Elizabeth Keith (1887-1956) Photo ca. 1920

Gilliland's quotation, and the benevolent tone it imparts on Japan and its attitude towards Korea, resonates in more recent studies on Japan's activities in Korea during its occupation. The last decade or so has seen renewed interest and studies that are revisiting the relationship between Korea and Japan at the turn of the 20th century up to Korea's liberation in 1945. Fresh insights into Japan's motives for colonizing

[41] Elizabeth Keith and Elspet Keith Robertson Scott, *Old Korea: The Land of Morning Calm*, (London: Hutchinson & Co., Ltd., 1946): 9.
[42] Clarence Vosburgh Gilliland, "Japan and Korea Since 1910," *Annual Publication of the Historical Society of Southern California* 11, no. 3 (1920): 52.

Korea, and establishing and enforcing the policies it set in place, suggest Japan's regard for Korea was not simply a matter of occupation and cultural annihilation, but from the Japanese perspective, a recognition of their extended empire and their subsequent desire to unify and assimilate their new territory. *[back up with evidence and sources]* The relationship between Japan's desire to develop and assimilate Korea, and the uncompromising power with which it chose to do so are key components to understanding how Japan regarded itself with regard to Korea's art. After its annexation Korea became the object for Japan's patrimonial campaigns. In the process, Japan was also prompted to look more closely at itself. A brief look into Japan's efforts in Korea and the subsequent self-examination they prompted provides valuable insight into the ways in which later interpretations of Korean art were to be made.

Motives and Marketing Korea: Promoting the Japanese Empire

Clearly, it is impossible to separate the history of Korean art history from the history of Japan and its interactions with the West. Because Korea and Japan share a history during the colonial period, the histories of the two countries cannot be considered mutually exclusive. This becomes more evident when considering the two countries' cultural introductions to the West, as well as each other, through the discovery and public display of their arts.

In 1910 the British-Japan Exhibition was held in London. For Japan, it was an opportunity to present itself as "an imperial power, equal to its Western

counterparts."[43] The reception was starkly divided between British and Japanese audiences. While the British audiences were "delighted with the 'exotic' exhibits, and savored the exposure to an unfamiliar culture, Japanese visitors, by contrast, felt ashamed of seeing Japan lost in antiquity."[44] They embarrassment they felt by the British reaction to their art and culture sharpened the contrast by which they viewed themselves; they did not see themselves as delightfully exotic, but at the forefront of modernity and industry. The Japanese reaction was indicative of its increased modernization and economic stability, reflecting the country's growing power and wealth. As Japanese scholars came to study Occidental historiography, they applied the model in constructing Oriental history, at the root of which was the debate of Japanese ethnic identity. The core ideas of "Oriental" history (*tōyōshi*) were China, Korea and Japan. Japan regarded itself on par with its Western counterparts in terms of establishing itself by means of authentic "antiquity" and stability - "China was a disorderly place - not a nation - from which Japan could both separate itself and express its paternal compassion and guidance.'"[45] Of course, Korea was also seen as an opportunity for Japan to demonstrate its power to the West, as well as the rest of the "Orient", by bringing technological modernity and stability to the peninsula.

The concept of *tōyōshi* became increasingly politicized, eventually leading to what Kikuchi calls a construction of Japanese ethnic identity. This "construction", Kikuchi argues, lead to a Japanese "ultra-nationalism, imperialism and also to the

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[43] Kal, Hong, *Aesthetic Constructions of Korean Nationalism: Spectacle, politics and history*. New York: Routledge, (2011), 23.
[44] Kal, Hong, *Aesthetic Constructions of Korean Nationalism: Spectacle, politics and history*. New York: Routledge, (2011), 24.
[45]Tanaka, S., *Japan's Orient: Rendering Pasts into History*, University of California Press, Berkeley, (1993),108.

justification of colonization."[46] The emphasis on nationalism and ethnic identity inevitably led to increased interest in cultural and historical interests. Bearing in mind the collective embarrassment that Japanese visitors felt on seeing their "traditional" crafts on display for British audiences in 1910, the *mingei* movement and the subsequent acceptance and rejection of both the "modern" and the "traditional" among the Japanese themselves revealed the ongoing discourse taking place within Japan and its views on its own aesthetics, which would later come to bear on the arts of Korea.

Fig. 1.3
Promotion poster for the 1915 Korean Industrial Exposition

Seoul, Twentieth Century: A Photographical History of the last 100 Years, Seoul: Seoul Development Institute, 2000

In 1915 the Japanese Colonial government presented the Korean Industrial Exposition (Chosŏn mulsan kongjinhoe) at Kyŏngbok Palace. The purpose of the exhibition, after five years of occupation, was to show the progress achieved thus far to the

[46] Yuko, Kikuchi, "Hybridity and the Orientalism of 'Mingei' Theory". In *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 10, No. 4, Craft, Culture and Identity (1997), 350.

general public. As a means to justify colonial rule, the exhibition was accompanied by a visual campaign, meant to promote what Hong Kal refers to as "a sign of comparative modernity."[47] The exhibition included over 40,000 objects, ranging from agricultural tools, to art objects that were produced by both Koreans and Japanese settlers. Displayed side by side, the objects drew a visual comparison, illuminating the Japanese Government General's capacity to "order things in a totality of progress."[48] In this way, the underlying narrative of "progress" reinforced the notion that the future of Korea was dependent upon, and ultimately lay in Japan's present.

Fig. 1.4
Promotional postcard for the 1929 Korean Exposition

Colonial Chosŏn and War Art, Seoul: Research Institute for Collaboration Activities, 2004

The Korean Exposition (Chosŏn pangnamhoe) opened to the public in 1929. This time, the purpose of the event was to showcase "harmony between the Japanese and Korean" and refocus the imagery of Korea within the ideology of assimilation refined by the rhetoric of "co-prosperity."[49] This shift in the representation of Korea from a comparative context to one of assimilation and integration underlined the Japanese

[47] Kal, Hong, *Aesthetic Constructions of Korean Nationalism: Spectacle, politics and history*. New York: Routledge, (2011), 16.
[48] Ibid., 21.
[49] Ibid., 32.

interest in enfolding Korea, which the slogan "the Japanese and Korean, One Body" makes plain.

Fig. 1.5 Visitors to the 1929 Korean Exposition
Photo from *Chōsen Hakurankai kinen shashinchō* [photo album of the Korean Exposition], Seoul: Government General of Korea, 1930

After Liberation in 1945, Korean intellectuals were eager to establish their independence, and redefine the nation, but they disagreed on how to do so, which led to the Korean War. Keith Wilson[50] points out that after the Korean War, in which two independent Korean states were established, the arts assumed fresh national roles for both North and South Korea. While the north embraced communism and saw its new cultural identity in a bright, untarnished future, the south sought an authentic cultural identity linked to the last dynastic period, the Chosŏn.

[50] At the time of this composition, Mr. Wilson was Associate Director and Curator of Ancient Chinese Art, Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery.

Exhibitions and collections in Europe and the United States and their interpretations of "foreign" material culture informed the Japanese and their early approaches to displaying the art and culture of Korea. As Japanese art had already been introduced to Western viewers, its reception and assessment lay the foundations for how Japan would approach the art and culture of its new colony. In an article that addresses this development, the author recounts being asked to write on the topic of "Japan in American Museums" which prompted the author to ask, "which Japan?"[51] Yoshiaki Shimizu's article examines the display of Japanese art in Western museums and suggests the earliest public displays of Asian art between the end of the nineteenth and the early twentieth century were motivated by interpreting the meaning of Asian (Japanese) art, rather than identifying the art objects of which they were comprised. The focus on interpretation and meaning versus identification provided new value to an object, elevating it from a mere piece in a collection, to an informative and significant element integrated within a culture. This shift moved the collection and display of art objects from "cataloguing" to a more developed practice of anthropology and archeological research.

Shimizu notes that the museums of today share a history with the nineteenth-century collections and ethnographic displays of objects from other cultures. In these first attempts to introduce outside cultures into the West, stories about "the other" were narrated through their chosen collections and displays. The approach the exhibitor had towards the exhibited at the time is efficiently summarized by John Mack of the British Museum, who examined the role museums assumed in their displays, and concluded they were "'arenas for the exercise of power…[and an

[51] Shimizu, Yoshiaki, "Japan in American Museums: But Which Japan?" *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 83, No.1 (Mar., 2001), 123.

assertion of a] right to represent cultures that are not their own."[52] The role Mack describes infers that one culture cannot speak for or express itself; therefore it becomes the responsibility ("role") of the other to speak for it. The point being, the museums, through their displays and "stories" therein speak for, not about the cultures in question. This polarizing approach to intercultural relations creates an "us and them" dichotomy and reinforces the differences among cultures. In Shimizu's opinion, the early public displays of other cultures represented "evidence of understanding" versus "archive of engagement…"[53]

The links among ethnography, anthropology, and art history were highlighted in 1979 with "Chanoyu: Japanese Tea Ceremony" in which a "topical" theme for display was chosen for the Japan House Gallery.[54] The exhibition catalogue was jointly written by American and Japanese scholars and was therefore able to provide a context for the objects that was both informative for Western newcomers, and honest to the Japanese culture. The trend in collecting and exhibiting Japanese art in museums illustrates a trend in "increasingly fragmented presentation of fields and interests."[55]

Yanagi Sōetsu and Mingei

The first of two figures who are consistently cited for their early impressions of Korean art is the Japanese folk artist and connoisseur Yanagi Sōetsu (a.k.a. Yanagi

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[52] This extract was taken from Mack's essay for the catalogue accompanying *Images of Other Cultures*, an ethnographic exhibition in Osaka held in the early years of the twentieth century. *Images of Other Cultures*, an ethnographic exhibition in Osaka held in the early years of the twentieth century. In Shimizu, *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 83, No. 1 (Mar., 2001), 123.
[53] Shimizu, *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 83, No. 1 (Mar., 2001), 123.
[54] Shimizu, *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 83, No. 1 (Mar., 2001), 124.
[55] Shimizu, *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 83, No. 1 (Mar., 2001), 126.

Muneyoshi, 1889-1961).[56] Yanagi belonged to an elite group of Japanese intellectuals and was an avid collector and promoter of Korean ceramics. He came from a middle-class intellectual background and "shared a somewhat precarious position as a member of a cultural elite largely cut off from the monopoly capital that was rapidly producing a new haute bourgeoisie of industrialists and financiers."[57]

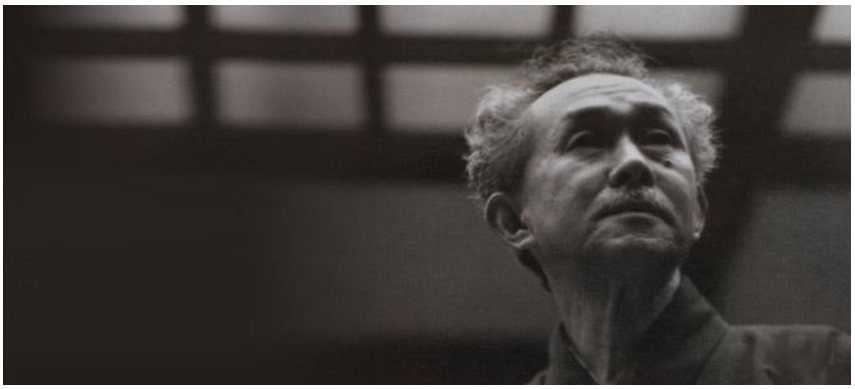

Fig. 1.6 Yanagi Sōeetsu, *Mingei Studio* (mingei.com.au), accessed 20 June 2015

As one of the earliest individuals to study and share an appreciation for Korean art, Yanagi's interpretations of the so-called Korean aesthetic laid foundations for how Koreans perceived and interpreted their material history.

[56] Kwon, Young-pil. 'The Aesthetic' in Traditional Korean Art and its Influence on Modern Life', *Korea Journal*, Autumn 2003:16.
[57] Brandt, Kim. "Objects of Desire: Japanese Collectors and Colonial Korea", in *Positions*, Vol. 8, no. 3: Winter 2000, Duke University Press: 715.

display of the Korean Folk Art Museum in 1924.

Fig. 1.7 Photo featuring Yanagi's collection of Korean ceramics
Japan Folk Crafts Museum archive

As a scholar whose interest in aesthetics was rooted in an academic tradition emphasizing art history, Yanagi was among a group that included Ernest Fenollosa (1889-1908) and Okakura Tensin (1862-1913) who defined the core of Japanese aesthetic as "'seasoned simplicity of mysterious profundity.'"[58] It was Yanagi's interest in ceramics that led him eventually to Korean ceramics in 1914.[59] After visiting Korea in 1916, he defined the Korean aesthetic as one "of sorrow" in which

[58] Kwon, 2003:12. Kwon includes a footnote citing "Dongyang-ui gakseong" (Awakening in the East), in Kakasu Okakura's work, *The Ideal of the East with Special Reference to the Art of Japan,* London: John Muray, 1903.
[59] Kwon, 2003:16.

Korea's "painful history" reverberates.[60] Yanagi's insights caught the attention of the intellectual community in Korea, some of whom took great interest in his aesthetic theory, while others felt the need to bring critical perspective to his assessment.[61] The melancholic tone Yanagi applied in drawing from Korea's history accommodated a paternal-like sentiment for the Japanese, and a self-awareness and interest in national identity for the Koreans. As time would reveal, however, Yanagi's "aesthetic of sorrow" for Korean art would prove divisive, prompting Korean scholars to define their nation's art for themselves. The shift from sorrow to humor as an aesthetic characteristic, thus feels reactive; a deliberate choice made by Koreans to assert their own voices and views on their own art, in direct opposition to what had been set before them by the Japanese.

Yanagi was instrumental in bringing "nationalism" and "ethnic identity" to the arts. With an education in Western philosophy, Yanagi was also a product of Japan's increasing interest in and adoption of Western ideas. The same year of the British-Japanese Exhibition (1910) he and other Japanese intellectuals co-founded the avant-garde journal, *Shirakaba* ("white birch") that promoted Western philosophy, writers and artists. In light of the Japanese sentiment towards the British-Japanese Exhibition discussed earlier, Yanagi's interest and promotion of Western philosophy and aesthetics indicates growing diversity among Japanese scholars with regard to exhibition practices and objectives. Yanagi's relevance to Korean art stems from his leadership of the *Mingei* ("folk art") movement, which championed aesthetics in the

[60] Kwon, 2003:16.
[61] Kwon, 2003:16.

commonly used object that was hand-made by un-named craftsmen.[62]

Fig. 1.8 *Punch'ŏng (green powder) Bowl*
Stoneware with white slip under glaze, ca. early 16th c.
Metropolitan Museum of Art

The virtues Yanagi identified and promoted in *mingei* were in reaction against the growing trend of modern science and industry, politics, and nationalism, all of which promoted "particularistic and divisive, [and] unnatural modes…"[63] that ran counter to the unifying humanist philosophy he advocated. In finding the "transcendent" and "mystic" in folk art, Yanagi attributed art with "universal beauty, truth and

[62] Yuko Kikuchi, "The Myth of Yanagi's Originality: The Formation of 'Mingei' Theory in Its Social and Historical Context," *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 7, No. 4 (1994), 247.
[63] Brandt, Kim, "Objects of Desire: Japanese Collectors and Colonial Korea", in *Positions*, Vol. 8, no. 3: (Winter 2000), Duke University Press, 725.

humanity"[64], qualities indicative of his knowledge of Western philosophy, and herein lies the irony of his position.

As Brandt and Kikuchi both point out, Yanagi's attempts to dispense with the assumption of Western hegemony and Asian ("Oriental") backward inferiority were made from a Western (educational and philosophical) perspective.[65] Yanagi implemented a Western method of assignation and constructed a system of categorization to distinguish the arts of Japan from China and Korea. He also applied Western philosophical modes of interpretation these categories by proposing an association with each country to a formal element in art, which included form, color, and line.[66] To China he attributed power, as demonstrated through its characteristically stable forms; to Japan he attributed pleasure because of the tendency towards bright colors; and to Korea, he attributed sorrow and loneliness, interpreted through the use of "thin, long, curved lines…."[67]

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[64] Brandt, Kim, "Objects of Desire: Japanese Collectors and Colonial Korea", in *Positions*, Vol. 8, no. 3: (Winter 2000), Duke University Press, 725.
[65] See Brandt's article "Objects of Desire…", pp. 733 and Yuko Kikuchi's article, "The Myth of Yangi's Originality: The Formation of 'Mingei' Theory in its Social and Historical Context," *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 7, No. 4 (1994), pp. 252.
[66] Brandt, Kim, "Objects of Desire: Japanese Collectors and Colonial Korea", in *Positions*, Vol. 8, no. 3: (Winter 2000), Duke University Press, 735.
[67] Brandt, Kim, "Objects of Desire: Japanese Collectors and Colonial Korea", in *Positions*, Vol. 8, no. 3: (Winter 2000), Duke University Press, 735.

Fig. 1.9 *Incense Burner*
Dehua porcelain with pink-tinged glaze, Qing dynasty, 18th-19th c.
British Museum

Yanagi's assessment of Korean art has since been criticized for being overly sentimental and subjective, but it is easy to forgive when considering the context from which he was writing. During Korea's colonial period, the idea of Korea as a country in mourning due to its "national history of unceasing disaster"[68] was in accord with Yanagi's, and most of Japan's, general regard towards Korea and its art. Yanagi's strategy of linking history and cultural identity through aesthetics had a profound and lasting impact on the scholarship of Korean art, not least among Korean scholars.

[68] Brandt, Kim, "Objects of Desire: Japanese Collectors and Colonial Korea", in *Positions*, Vol. 8, no. 3: (Winter 2000), Duke University Press, 735.

Fig. 1.10 *Plate*
Porcelain with figure of Ononokomachi in enamels Arita ware, Imari type
Edo period (1615-1868), 1760. Metropolitan Museum of Art

Ko Yusŏp

Korean art historian Ko Yu-sŏp (1905-1944) [69]differs from Yanagi in that unlike Yanagi, who was self-taught in aesthetic theory and art history, Ko was a learned art historian and scholar of aesthetics from Gyeongseong Imperial University.[70] Described as the "sole Korean art historian of his homeland"[71] during the colonial period, Ko holds an important place in the history of Korean art and its scholarship. Like Yanagi, Ko was educated in Western theory and analysis in Japan,

[69] Kwon, 2003:18.
[70] Kwon, 2003:18.
[71] Kim, Youngna, "The Achievements and Limitations of Ko Yu-seop, a Luminary in Korean Art History." *Archives of Asian Art*, Vol. 60 (2010), 79.

Fig. 1.11 *Ko Yusŏp (1905-1944)* *Archives of Asian Art*, vol. 60 (2010)

and was aware of Japan's increased focus on modernity, technological innovation and nationalism. In light of the environment in which he found himself, Ko applied an empirical approach to the study of Korean art, as well as Western techniques of analysis in an effort to forge Korean art history into a modern, scientifically legitimate discipline. Like Yanagi, he also attempted to identify the character of Korean art, but rather than basing his assessments on aesthetics, he formulated a methodology based on historical context and "the need to grasp the prevailing art style of the period…to develop a methodology that would link a given art style to its historical and social background."[72]

Another Japanese scholar of Korean art was Dr. Sekino Tadashi (1868-1935), who conducted a survey of Korean traditional architecture, ancient tomb structures, ceramics, and Buddhist sculptures.[73] Jang notes that Sekino is considered to be the first modern historian of Korean art , and with a background in the history of Japanese architecture, he "was the first scholar to survey Korean material culture using modern

[72] Kim, Youngna, "The Achievements and Limitations of Ko Yu-sŏp, a Luminary in Korean Art History." *Archives of Asian Art*, Vol. 60 (2010), 81.
[73] Sang Hoon Jang, "A Representation of Nationhood: The National Museum of Korea" (University of Leicester, School of Museum Studies, 2014), 39.

research methods."[74] He focused his research on the Three Kingdoms Period and Buddhist art. He dismissed the Chosŏn period as one of decline and plagued by "so many evils."[75] The condemning assessment of Korea's last dynasty served to justify Japan's political and academic development in Korea. Sekino's attitude remained unchallenged, and "became a firmly established theory" that can still be felt today. [76]

Ko's scholarship followed Western methods, rooted in contextual historical analysis that he then backed by authentic historical documentation. There was also the inevitable linking of Korean art to Western art styles and periods, a practice that was also used by Japanese art historians in which Japan was linked to the West. Ko was not immune to the aesthetic theories held by Japanese scholars like Yanagi and the expression of beauty, but he believed in a different set of parameters for determining its roots. While Japanese scholars like Yanagi and Sekino maintained Korea's climate and geographic characteristics were determining factors for shaping Korean art and culture, Ko believed in the perpetual change and evolution of beauty and its expression.[77]

Ko's efforts to define Korean art are significant due to the fact that his were the first to be made from a Korean perspective. His perspective, however, was couched in a Western-by-way-of-Japan perspective. His education in the Japanese colonial university system meant that he was unavoidably influenced by the Japanese method of integrating art history with aesthetic studies. While Ko challenged the

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[74] Sang Hoon Jang, "A Representation of Nationhood: The National Museum of Korea" (University of Leicester, School of Museum Studies, 2014), 40.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Sang Hoon Jang, "A Representation of Nationhood: The National Museum of Korea" (University of Leicester, School of Museum Studies, 2014),41.
[77] Kim, Youngna, "The Achievments and Limitations of Ko Yu-sŏp, a Luminary in Korean Art History." *Archives of Asian Art*, Vol. 60 (2010), 83.

assessments made by Yanagi, arguing they were "too poetic to be descriptive of an nation or people", he was later criticized in a similar manner and was accused of writing in a style that was more poetic than academic.[78] With the benefit of hindsight, it is easy to see Ko was writing in a style reflecting the Japanese preference at the time. Nevertheless, his work prompted other Korean art scholars to study and define Korean art for themselves, and his accomplishments continued to influence Korean art scholarship after Korea's liberation from colonial rule. Ko's lasting influence is important to the history of Korean art scholarship but has proven problematic in the subsequent development of Korean art scholarship, given the limitations in which he worked and the Japanese precedent that had already been set forth by Yanagi and his followers.

The preliminary groundwork that Yanagi and Ko laid out for Korean art scholarship practices continue to color how Korean art is interpreted and characterized. There is little dispute as to the importance of their work, but the hold their work continued to wield over scholars to follow led to a singular, repetitive approach to Korean art history, with scholars confirming and affirming what had come before. The result was a view of Korean art that was derivative and generalized under a uniform cloak of aesthetics defined along either subjective emotive terms or physical locality. Interpretation of Korean aesthetics with regards to emotive terms in particular shifted from Yanagi's sorrowful sentimentality to playful humor. In contrast to Ko's theory of perpetual change, humor proved to be a recurring and consistent factor in later interpretations of Korean art, particularly following the

[78] Kim, Youngna, "The Achievments and Limitations of Ko Yu-sŏp, a Luminary in Korean Art History." *Archives of Asian Art*, Vol. 60 (2010), 84.

Korean War. The explanation for this shift can be understood when the history of Korean archaeology and scholarship is considered.

The ultimate challenge for both Japanese and Korean scholars of Korean art was to define it in a way that was distinguishable. The motives, however, were different: for Japan, characteristics that provided evidence of Korea's need for guidance and stability were found by assigning emotions to aesthetic preferences (i.e. long, thin, cured lines signified sorrow and loneliness[79]); for Korea, characteristics found through the use of scientific methods of material analysis and historical documentation through recovered traditional materials supported a national individuality. In fact, the interests of Japanese and Korean art scholars were both influenced by the West. European and American influence over both countries' art history practice impacted both countries, directly in the case of Japan, and less directly (via Japan) in the case of Korea. This can be seen most clearly through the earliest exhibitions of both Japan and Korea.

In his writings on Korean aesthetics, Ko shares Yanagi's position that Korean art "has the nature of 'folk art,' in which life and art are not separate."[80] For Ko, however, this perspective on the singularity of life and art becomes the source for "naïveté and 'disinterestedness,'"[81] terms that were employed by the German humanities scholar, Andre Eckardt (1884-1974) in his 1929 work, 한국 미술사

[79] Brandt, Kim, "Objects of Desire: Japanese Collectors and Colonial Korea", in *Positions*, Vol. 8, no. 3: Winter 2000, Duke University Press, 735.
[80] Ko, Yu-sŏp. 1963. 한국 미술사급 미학 농고, *Hanguk misulsa geup mihak nongo* (History of Korean Art and Korean Aesthetics). Seoul: Tongmungwan: 6.
[81] Kwon, 2003:18.

(History of Korean Art, *Geschichte der koreanischen Kunst*).[82] Both these terms can carry slightly negative connotations in the West, but Ko claims them for Korean aesthetics, arguing that while details in Korean paintings and ceramics may not be "'expressed to the fullest…they are embraced into the whole and achieve an intimate grandness, which is obviously an artistic feature…'"[83] This "artistic feature" does not include any mention of Yanagi's sorrow. The preceding introduces early efforts made to define the Korean aesthetic, by native and non-native scholars of Korea. In later years, Ko is described as being "basically of the same opinion [as Yanagi], as he defines the characteristics of Korean art as the qualities of 'technique without technique,' 'planning without planning,' 'asymmetry,' and 'nonchalance….' In most cases, a work of Korean art is probably not meticulous in tiny details…It rather tends to embrace a wholeness, hence its savory taste in total effect. This nonchalance lies in the docile state of mind of Korean artists and artisans who love nature as it is.'"[84] Nonchalance is something that will surface again in Korean art, but under a new name.

The West's Perceptions of Korea

When Yanagi encountered Korean p'unchŏng ceramics for the first time, he saw what he came to identify as an "aesthetic of sorrow" in the long contours and natural forms. As Brandt has pointed out, Yanagi's was an assessment couched in a Western methodology of categorization constructed to highlight distinction among the

[82] Kwon, Young-pil. 1992. "Andreas Eckardt-ui misulsagwan" (Andreas Eckardt's Conception of Art). 미술사 학보 (*Misulsa hakbo,* Art History Review) 5:22.
[83] Ko, 1963:6.
[84] Wŏn-yong Kim, "Philosophies and Styles in Korean Art: A Prelude to the History of Korean Art," in *Tradtional Korean Art*, ed. UNESCO Korean Ntl. Commission (Korea: The Si-sa-yong-o-sa Publishers, Inc., 1983), 10.

arts of China, Korea, and Japan. Prior to Yanagi's assessment, impressions of Korean ceramics had been made by westerners in the late nineteenth century who began making Korea a destination for archaeological and missionary purposes.[85] North-American Missionaries and Western European scholars found their way to the peninsula in relatively small numbers, finding upon their arrival a country and people wary of strangers, provoking curiosity. In his collection of reflections of Korea by Westerners between the 17th and early 20th century, Martin Uden establishes a historical context in which foreign travelers were coming to Korea, starting in the 17th century. Due to its geographic location between China and Japan, Korea's peninsula was "the target of numbers invasions" from both countries for centuries.[86] The invasions actually help to unify the country, Uden argues, but still left it vulnerable to foreign invasion. Uden continues to say it was the establishment of the Yi (Chosŏn) dynasty in 1392 that acknowledged China's suzerainty, and by so doing, Korea incurred fewer hostile confrontations in return for regular tribute paid to China's Ming court.

William Elliot Griffis considered the history and historical precedent with an already established western history as he posited, "With the history of the Aryan nations we are familiar, and think it is clear to us. We insist that we know we can understand what they did and that their thoughts need no translation to us…. The

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[85] A number of personal accounts are collected in Martin Uden's *Times Past in Korea: An illustrated collection of encounters, events, customs and daily life recorded by foreign visitors*, (London: Routledge, 2003); see also Charlotte Horlyck's "Desirable commodities – unearthing and collecting Koryŏ celadon ceramics in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries," in *Bulletin of SOAS*, 76, 3 (2013), 467-491.

[86] Martin Uden, *Times Past in Korea: An Illustrated Collection of Encounters, Events, Customs and Daily Life Recorded by Foreign Visitors* (London: Routledge, 2003), xvii.

researches in to language, art, myths, folk-lore, show him that the infancy of the [Asian and Western] races was the same, and that modern differences are impertinent accidents."[87] However, "No such reconciliation of ideas is yet demonstrable between the Mongolian and the Aryan…. Language gives as yet little clue to a common origin; art and symbol seem at the other pole…"[88]

People

Griffis describes the accomplished Korean scholar in complimentary terms, someone who " writes a polished essay in classic style packs his sentences with quotable felicities, choice phrases, references to history, literary prismatics, and kaleidoscopic patches picked out here and there from the whole range of ancient Chinese literature, and imbeds them into a mosaic - smooth, brilliant, chaste, and a perfect unity."[89] Griffis wrote that in the "Corean mind, the wise saws and ancient instances, the gnomic wisdom, quotations and proverbs, political principles, precedents, historical examples, and dynasties are all Chinese, and ancient Chinese. His heaven, his nature, his history, his philosophy, are those of Confucius, and like the Chinaman, he looks down with infinite contempt upon the barbarians of Christendom and their heterodox conceptions of the universe. Meanwhile his own language, literature, and history are neglected."[90]

Christian missionaries, primarily of the Jesuit school based in Japan made

[87] William Elliot Griffis, *Corea, The Hermit Nation*, third (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1889), 307.
[88] Ibid.
[89] William Elliot Griffis, *Corea, The Hermit Nation*, third (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1889), 340.
[90] William Elliot Griffis, *Corea, The Hermit Nation*, third (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1889), 340.

more concerted efforts to introduce Koreans to the Christian doctrine. Efforts to convert the Korean populace were regarded as "a threat to the established Confucian order and as a possible cloak for foreign intrigue, the reaction of the government in Seoul was hostile…"[91] Some personal accounts describe first encounters with Koreans and being given a rather chilly reception. Given its rather fraught history, Uden argues it is little wonder that Koreans viewed newcomers of any kind with wariness. "It is hardly surprising that, given the recurring experience that strangers simply came to invade the homeland, Koreans were wary of contact with foreigners."[92] The earliest Westerners to Korea's shores, Uden tells us, were shipwreck survivors, most of whom then became captives at the royal court. Henrik Hamel managed to escape, however, and record his experience and impressions of Korea in the year 1653.[93]

In light of the dire circumstances in which the people found themselves, the offer of eternal salvation offered by Christian Missionaries from the West was no doubt a welcome alternative to the mortal suffering endured by the most destitute members of society. The personal accounts and reflections collected in Uden's volume, particularly those dating near the turn of the century, are less focused on the lives of upper-class *yangban* scholars, and more on the plight of the commoner. Uden notes the increasing instability of Korea's society accounts for the remarkable number

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[91] Uden, *Times Past in Korea: An Illustrated Collection of Encounters, Events, Customs and Daily Life Recorded by Foreign Visitors*, (London: Routledge, 2003) xviii..

[92] Uden, *Times Past in Korea: An Illustrated Collection of Encounters, Events, Customs and Daily Life Recorded by Foreign Visitors,* (London: Routledge, 2003) xvii.

[93] Uden, *Times Past in Korea: An Illustrated Collection of Encounters, Events, Customs and Daily Life Recorded by Foreign Visitors*, (London: Routledge, 2003) xviii.

of Christian converts made by 1839 (xviii-xix). This, coupled with a succession of weak kings at court meant that power and control ebbed away from Korea's governing center. The consequences led to endemic corruption with all official posts being made available to anyone with enough money to bid for them. It is hardly surprising to learn that the combination of governing incompetence and oppression provoked rebellions and uprisings among the common populace.

The conditions of Korea were often cited by visitors who were shocked at seeing the lasting effects that centuries of foreign invasions, government corruption, and social unrest had wrought upon the country. Some reports give harrowing descriptions of the state of Korea and its population. On 16 January 1928 - H.B. Drake wrote, "One pities them, of course; it is impossible not to. But it is used to avoid indignation."[94] Drake's observations of the abject squalor in which he finds the Korean people surviving evokes empathy: "After all, in essentials, does the East differ so much from the West? In Korea the rich man and the poor have precisely the same social sense as their counterparts in England."[95] There is reference made, however, to the resilience of Koreans, despite their hardship. In her book entitled *Korea and her Neighbours*, Isabella Bird Bishop describes the way in which unwelcome news is relayed as witnessed by her: "Che-on-i, emerging with the broad smile with which Orientals announce bad news**,** informed us that the boat was too small!"[96]

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[94] From H.B. Drake, *Korea of the Japanese, 1928*, in Uden, *Times Past in Korea: An Illustrated Collection of Encounters, Events, Customs and Daily Life Recorded by Foreign Visitors*, (London: Routledge, 2003), 20.
[95] Uden, *Times Past in Korea: An Illustrated Collection of Encounters, Events, Customs and Daily Life Recorded by Foreign Visitors*, (London: Routledge, 2003), 20-21.
[96] Bishop, Isabella Bird, *Korea and her Neighbours*, (London: John Methuen, 1897),108.

Art

The West had little interest in Korea until the late 18th and early 19th century when French and British merchant ships began to show more interest through their contact with Japan. Western European and North American growing awareness and knowledge of Korean ceramics is recorded in their interactions with Japan. Koryŏ celadon and Chosŏn *punch'ŏng* wares were particularly sought after by Japanese collectors.[97] Percival Lowell's account of a visit to a local official's home for tea dated 25 January 1884 includes the following observation: "I noticed that the bowls were different from any I had seen before. They were rudely enough made, but the colors of the butterflies and flowers upon them were really beautiful. They turned out to be of Korean manufacture of two years before. Previous to that time…Korean pottery had been plain, either unglazed or glazed, of a sombre greenish hue."[98] Lowell's tone suggests surprise at encountering these works amidst what others of his day described as quite meager if not desperate surroundings.

The "rude" assessment regarding the manufacture of the bowls suggests Lowell's likely familiarity with the more formal grace and elegance of Koryŏ celadons or Chinese porcelains. The details of the butterflies and flowers are not lost

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[97] Please see Charlotte Horlyck's article, "Desirable commodities – unearthing and collecting Koryŏ celadon ceramics in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries" in *Bulletin of SOAS*, 76, 3 (2013), 467-491, in which she discusses this point and quotes Pierre Louis Jouy (1856-94) who wrote of Koryŏ celadons, "These pieces...to which a remote antiquity was ascribed, were held in high esteem by Japanese connoisseurs." (Please see Pierre Louis Jouy, The Collection of Korean Mortuary Pottery in the U.S. National Museum. Smithsonian Annual Report (Washington: U.S. National Museum,1888), 589).

[98] Uden, *Times Past in Korea: An Illustrated Collection of Encounters, Events, Customs and Daily Life Recorded by Foreign Visitors*. 27-28.

on him, as they harken back to a more illustrious time. Of the tea bowl's decorative detail, Lowell concludes it "was the first symptom of a desire to revive, though with color in place of form, what has become with them a lost art."[99] Was it the imperfect form of the bowl that he found objectionable? He certainly does not indicate any recognition of humor in it. How then, does the humble Korean punch'ŏng tea bowl transition from an object of "sorrow" and "sombre" aesthetics to one embodying "charm and humor"[100]?

A brief article from 1921 illustrates the general opinion and knowledge Americans possessed of Korean art. "Fine painting, beautiful pottery, heavy and harmoniously wrought embroidery, and artistic metal work formed a pleasing ensemble. And this ensemble convinced one of the importance of Korean art, a fact that comes to many visitors and students of art as a complete surprise."[101] The article announces the acquirement of a Koryŏ celadon "wine jug" to the Cleveland Museum of Art's collection of Korean pottery, which John L. Severance purchased for the Museum from Dr. A.I. Ludlow.

[99] Uden, *Times Past in Korea* (2003). 28.
[100] "Masterpieces of Korean Art: An Exhibition under the Auspices of the Government of the Republic of Korea" (National Gallery of Art, Washington DC, 1957). 20.
[101] J.A.M., "Korean Art in Gallery X," *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art* 8, no. 8 (Oct.) (1921): 121.

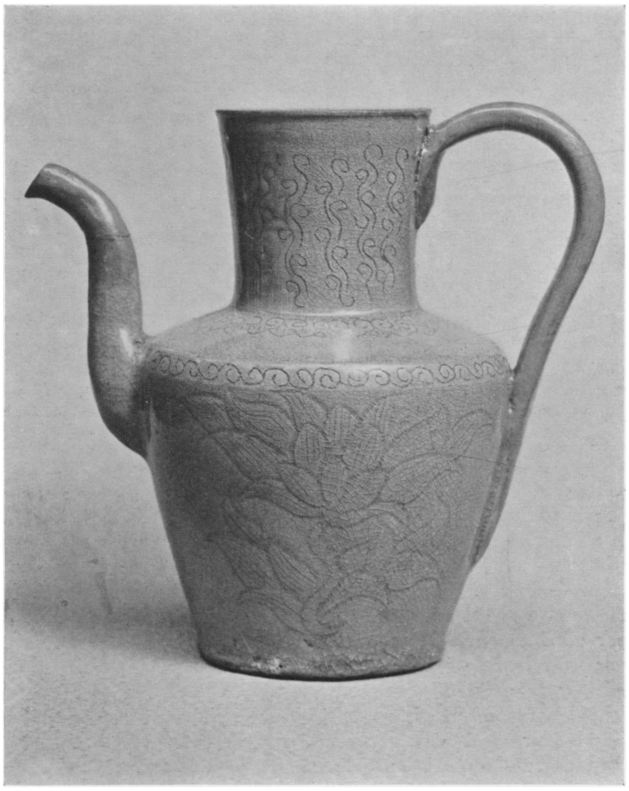

Fig. 1.12
Wine Jug
Stoneware with celadon glaze and incised design
Koryŏ Dynasty (930-1392 AD)
Cleveland Museum of Art
Gift of John L. Severance

With the addition of the wine jug, the author proclaims, "we are able to show a complete range of Korean pottery during the best period, that is, from 920 to 1392 A.D."[102] Punch'ŏng wares and porcelain from the Chosŏn are either readily overlooked, or not known. While the appreciation for Korean art is clear, the author acknowledges the challenge of recognizing Korean art as distinct from China and Japan:

> That Korea had a national consciousness thoroughly developed when these objects of art were current, namely six hundred years ago, is obvious. She had a national art, though the influence of powerful neighbors must have been felt in every walk of life, and particularly in the field of art. And it would seem

[102] J.A.M., "Korean Art in Gallery X," *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art* 8, no. 8 (Oct.) (1921): 122.

> that she still has a glowing spark of national consciousness that may kindle her decadent art into renewed vitality and once more give to the world a unique national art which will be loved and admired by all.[103]

The above excerpt carries a poignant tone of melancholy, recalling something that has been lost, which is nothing less than Korea's "unique national art." The "glowing spark of national consciousness" would continue to burn and grow to a conflagration by the mid-20th century.

Impressions of Korean painting initially made by foreigners were rather muted, many of which regarded Korean works as poor copies of Chinese models. Griffis dismisses any notions of original or unique qualities of Korean culture; he writes that "in spite of their national system of writing, the influence of the finished philosophy and culture of China, both in form and spirit, has been so great that the hopelessness of producing a copy equal to the original became at once apparent to the Corean mind. Stimulating to the receptive intellect, it has been paralyzing to all originality."[104]

"This historical background seems to have played a great part in the formation of their national traits, such as tolerance of reality, resignation, an optimistic philosophy, naturalness, escapism, and dislike of artificialness. But this reasoning still remains short of what can really support our discussions on the character of Koreans and their art. A more satisfying answer can be found in a careful synthetic consideration of various elements, such as topography, geography, history, cultural environment and

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[103] J.A.M., "Korean Art in Gallery X," *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art* 8, no. 8 (Oct.) (1921): 122.

[104] William Elliot Griffis, *Corea, The Hermit Nation*, third (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1889), 338-339.

life-style that constitute a specific composite whole."[105]

Country

'The humour…arises…out of any set of circumstances that involve discomfiture or disaster of some odd incongruous kind, not connected with the ordinary run of things…"[106] – Stephen Leacock (1935)

In describing his impressions of Korea during a visit in January 1870, Alexander Williamson remarked, "One party says we have no right to force ourselves upon an unwilling people; another, that the Coreans [*sic*] are happy as they are; while a third looks partly at the evils and partly at the expenses of war."[107] As a missionary arriving from the West, Williamson's observations indicate the state of his position (one of privilege) and his moral obligations (as he sees them) to aid the people by imparting to them Christian doctrine. As he wrote, "I believe, it is at once the duty and privilege of such countries as Great Britain and America to lead the van, and use the power God has given them to open up countries which are stupidly and ignorantly closed against them like Corea [*sic]*."[108] Korea's reputation of being a "Hermit Kingdom" is not acceptable for Williamson, for whom the dilapidated state of the

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[105] Kim, "Philosophies and Styles in Korean Art: A Prelude to the History of Korean Art," 12-13.
[106] Victor Raskin, *Semantics of Humor* (Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1985), 15. The quotation is taken from Stephen Leacock's *Humor: Its Theory and Technique. (*New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1935).
[107] From Alexander Williamson, *Journey in North China*, in Uden, *Times Past in Korea: An Illustrated Collection of Encounters, Events, Customs and Daily Life Recorded by Foreign Visitors,* (London: Routledge, 2003),17.
[108] Uden, *Times Past in Korea: An Illustrated Collection of Encounters, Events, Customs and Daily Life Recorded by Foreign Visitors,* (London: Routledge, 2003),17-18.

country is the result of its own "stupidity" and ignorance. Korea, it appears, is not in a position to help itself, so the West (and through its adoption of western theory and technology, Japan) must come its rescue.

The hardship endured by Koreans for centuries as a result of repeated invasions from its neighbors and its own corrupt government was a point that was regularly employed to explain its poor economic state. It also promoted an image of Koreans that was at turns helpless victim and eremitic recluse. These theories and notions continued through Korea's annexation by Japan, through the years following the Korean War, and through the Korea's industrial boom of the 1980s, as Kim's words confirm: "Sandwiched between the northern nomads and Han China, Korea was frequently victimized by foreign invaders. The Koreans were afflicted with sufferings from merciless foreign invaders as well as from utter destitution and political corruption." [109] With Kim, however, there is a warmer tone that dispels the image of the downtrodden Korean as his focus turns more positive. Despite their hardship, "their sense of resignation was not always of a pessimistic nature. It was a means by which to tolerate their hard-pressed reality, a passage to enlightenment and an optimistic philosophy. Accepting and tolerating the hardship, they believed in a fertile land that offered crops honestly."[110]

[109] Kim, "Philosophies and Styles in Korean Art: A Prelude to the History of Korean Art," 12.
[110] Kim, "Philosophies and Styles in Korean Art: A Prelude to the History of Korean Art," 12.

Chapter 2
Post-War Years: Defining South Korea in the aftermath

Marketing Korea: International Exhibitions

In 1953, the Korean War ended in a stalemate that remains unresolved. Four years later in 1957, collaboration between the recently established South Korean government and the United States brought about the first major exhibition of Korean art to American audiences. While collections of Korean art and artifacts existed prior to this event, the North American public's familiarity with and exposure to Korean art was predominantly couched in deferential relations to Chinese and Japanese art. When *Masterpieces of Korean Art* opened in Washington, D.C. at the National Gallery of Art in 1957, it was an opportunity to showcase the art and culture of the peninsula, and to present them independently from those of China and Japan. In an attempt to distinguish Korean art from its Chinese and Japanese counterparts, Korean scholars and western scholars sought novelty in Korea, if not contrary aesthetic perspectives and approaches. What they found was frustratingly paradoxical, and disappointingly similar, as some reviewers concluded during the 1957 and 1961 exhibitions of Korean art treasures in Washington, D.C. and London, respectively. The catalogues and public reactions to these exhibitions contain descriptions of Korean art and reveal early impressions by scholars and the general public in the west. Based on these early impressions, a lineage of connotations may be traced in which humor emerges as the predominantly understood element in Korean art.

In the Preface to the accompanying catalogue for the Washington, D.C. exhibition, the Minister of Education for the Republic of Korea at the time, Kyu Nam Choi, wrote of how "deeply gratifying [it was] …to be able to send an exhibition of

Korean arts to eight leading museums in the United States so as to show the essence of Korean culture."[111] Throughout the catalogue the "essence" of Korean culture is discussed across the different media (sculpture, ceramics and painting) as well as throughout specific periods of Korea's history. The terms used to describe Korea's history and art reveal early origins for the development of how Korean art would later come to be interpreted. For example, comparing the aesthetic taste of Chosŏn to the preceding Koryŏ: "The cherished formality and technical excellence of Koryŏ was transformed into the informal spontaneity of the Yi (Chosŏn), full of charm and humor, simple yet refined."[112]

[111] *Masterpieces of Korean Art: An exhibition under the auspices of the Government of the Republic of Korea*, 1957. National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Seattle Art Museum, Seattle, The Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Minneapolis, California Palace of the Legion of Honor, San Francisco, Los Angeles County Museum, LA, Honolulu Academy of Arts, Honolulu. Boston: T.O. Metcalf Co, 11.
[112] *Masterpieces of Korean Art: An exhibition under the auspices of the Government of the Republic of Korea*, 1957, 20.

Fig. 2.1 Kim Hong-do (Danwŏn) 김홍도 (단원) (1745 - ca.1806), *지붕* (roofing), in *Album of Genre Paintings by Danwon*, ink and light color on paper, National Museum of Korea, Treasure No. 527

Fig. 2.2 Sin Yun-bok 신윤복 (1758 – ?), *Tano p'ungjŏng* 단오풍정 ("Tano Festival Day"), 1805, ink and color on paper, Kansong Art Museum

A few paragraphs later, genre painting albums are described in a similar tone: "The paintings here exhibited of Sin Yun-bok and Kim Hong-do are expressions of an immediacy, humor, and appreciation of common men and women which had been missing in Korean painting since the days of Koguryŏ."[113] In particular, "Kim Hong-do is especially famous in the history of the painting of the Yi dynasty for his skillful understanding and often humorous depictions of the life he saw around him."[114] The paintings of Kim Hong-do prompt an interpretation that is in stark contrast from Yanagi's earlier "sorrowful" assessment of Korean punch'ŏng wares. The reasons for this could be found in the different media, the different periods in history and/or the cultural vantage points (Japanese and American) from which the interpretations were made.

The preceding excerpts from the exhibition catalogue provide the earliest precedent for interpreting Korean art in a humorous mode.[115] Four years ago Christopher Lotis noted that Yanagi's writings "helped popularize Chosŏn period ceramics at a time when earlier, Koryŏ period art was more valued, but many other scholars have discussed and attempted to define and interpret the Korean aesthetic over the years. Some elements described as being embodied in traditional Korean art include simplicity, naiveté, naturalness, or non-artificiality, shamanism (pertaining to

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[113] *Masterpieces of Korean Art: An exhibition under the auspices of the Government of the Republic of Korea*, 1957, 21-22.
[114]*Masterpieces of Korean Art: An exhibition under the auspices of the Government of the Republic of Korea*, 1957, 178.
[115] Humor does appear in reference to experiences in Korea and as a means for describing specific encounters with Korean people in written Westerners'memoirs and travel journals from the late nineteenth century. William Elliot Griffis's *Corea, the Hermit Nation* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1882) and Martin Uden's collection of memoirs, *Times Past in Korea* (London: Routledge, 2003) are two examples in which such recollections are found. The exhibition at the National Gallery in Washington, D.C. was the first time humor was applied to Korean art.

themes and principles of free expression), and humor.[116]

Masterpieces of Korean Art, 1957

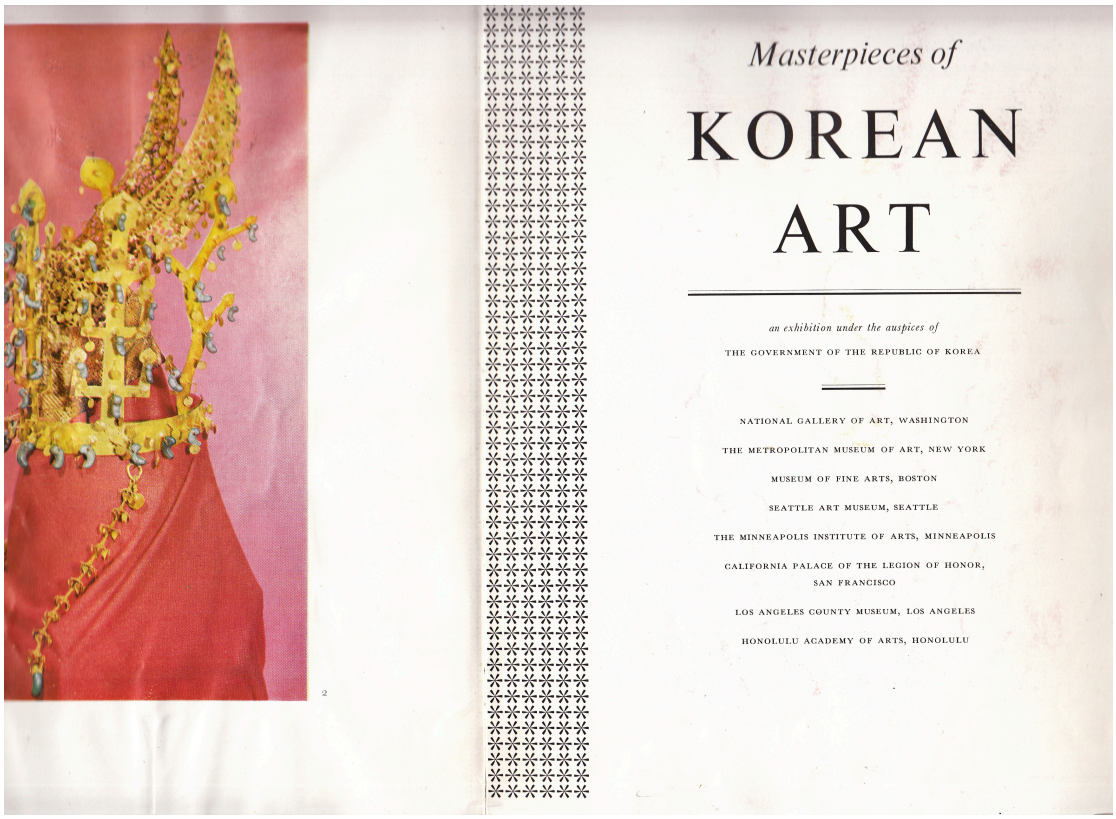

Fig. 2.3 Title page from the catalogue for *Masterpieces of Korean Art* Exhibition Washington, D.C., 1957

In his review of *Masterpieces of Korean Art*, Alan Priest (then curator of Far Eastern Art for the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York) emphasizes the land and culture from which the "masterpieces" originate. "The land of Korea" begins his article, followed by a romantic description of the "jagged, tumultuous ranges," the

[116] Lotis, Christopher J., Michel D. Lee, and Paul Michael Taylor, *Symbols of identity: Korean ceramics from the collection of Chester and Wanda Chang* (Washington, D.C.,Asian Cultural History Program, Smithsonian Institution, 2011).

"serene" rivers and valleys, and even the "primordial purity" of the air.[117] Land and its atmosphere are presented as essential elements in forming the character of the Korean people, whose personality "to this day has stubbornly maintained a character which survives outside influence. There is no doubt that the Koreans have their own special character."[118] Priest acknowledges China's influence in much of the artifacts on display, but is deliberate in saying "one would rarely mistake a Korean work…for a Chinese work."[119] When comparing a Buddha statue from the Unified Silla kingdom to a Tang dynasty counterpart, Priest declares they share a "majestic serenity…but they are not the same. The [Unified Silla] Buddhas are a little more simple in delineation, a little more gentle in mien."[120] Gentleness is also applied to statues of *Maitreya Bodhisattva*, which, again, Priest assures his readers, could never be mistaken for being of Chinese origin. "They are marked with a character we can only call Korean."[121]

[117] Alan Priest, "The Korean Government Exhibition," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 16, no. 6 (February) (1958): 169.
[118] Priest, "The Korean Government Exhibition," 169.
[119] Priest, "The Korean Government Exhibition,"170.
[120] Priest, "The Korean Government Exhibition," 170.
[121] Ibid.

Fig. 2.4

미륵보살 반가상 Kŭmdong Mirŭk Posal pan'gasang (Meditating Maitreya bodhisattva)
gilt bronze, 7th c.
National Museum of Korea
National Treasure No. 83

Elusive though the definition (or definitions) for the Korean character may be as of yet, Priest has dropped some early clues when compared to Chinese models. "Simple" and "gentle" characterize the sculpture, while with Chosŏn ceramics Priest invites readers to "enjoy the freedom of the shapes and designs" and avoid comparison of the "perfection of glaze and elegant variety of shape" of wares from the Koryŏ.[122] The overall impression Priest leaves is that the Government of the Republic of Korea has sent to the United States and exhibition of great dignity and beauty."[123] In this respect, Minister Kyung Nam Choi's wish to "show the essence of Korean culture" may be confirmed as having been successfully fulfilled.

A colleague of Priest's, Robert T. Paine, Jr. also wrote a review of *Masterpieces of Korean Art.* His impressions, like Priest's, acknowledge the country from which

[122] Priest, "The Korean Government Exhibition," 170-71.
[123] Priest, "The Korean Government Exhibition," 169.

the works have come, but he makes a point to include the efforts he witnessed during his visit to Seoul made by the Korean government to safeguard their cultural artifacts. This presented some difficulty in accessing some items for the exhibition, as Paine relates. The timing of the exhibition at the Boston Museum of Fine Art coincides with the eventual stalemate of the Korean War, so the state of the peninsula was rugged at best. The tolls of the Korean War were still being felt, and the South Korean government, in collaborating with the United States to present its treasures to its allies, was declaring its friendship and its gratitude.

When it comes to discussing the works in the exhibition, Paine uses the term "primitive" to describe Silla-period stoneware fragments found in the tombs of Kyungju; he contrasts the rather modest find with the vast sumptuousness of the gold crowns and other objects also found.[124] Koryŏ celadons, particularly those with contrasting inlay designs are "quiet in color contrasts and rich in floral motifs…"[125] The Chosŏn ("Yi") dynasty introduces a new surface design technique, which Paine notes provides the surface with "a human informality rather than a stiff mechanical quality."[126] Embodied in these later ceramic works are "simplicity, severity, and abstraction….qualities often sought for in the standards of…the 20th century."[127] The collection on display was comprised primarily ceramic and sculptural work - the reason for which, Paine explains, being Korea's tumultuous history:

> Korea has so frequently been a battlefield for warring armies that the survival of works of art has been exceptionally low. Korea…has suffered repeated invasions by Chinese armies. "It is hard to find historic buildings of great age in

[124] Robert T. Paine Jr., "Exhibition of Korean Art," *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts* 56, no. 303 (Spring 1958): 20.
[125] Paine Jr., "Exhibition of Korean Art," 26.
[126] Ibid.
[127] Ibid.

> Korea. The preserver of her art treasures has been her soil, and from her tombs have come forth a succession of objects dependent in part on the social position of the person buried and in part on the burial customs of the period.[128]

When he discusses Korean paintings, Paine points out that a different kind of challenge had to be met: collections in American museums had a few Buddhist representative pictures or "a few ancestry portraits, but these would be the work of traditional craftsmen, not the esteemed work of men of genius."[129] In other words, the Western public was familiar with a narrow facet of Korean painting, and thus the variety of more "strongly national or highly individual" works were difficult to interpret and place within the exhibition. Paine notes, "The first of these tendencies [i.e. national/individualistic] is exemplified in landscape in the works of the artist (Chŏng Sŏn 1676-1759) and in genre [painting] by Sin Yun-bok (b. 1758-?), whose "Picnic party" painting is "portrayed with great skill and charm."[130] The article concludes with Paine recalling an honor bestowed on him and the other curators for the exhibition by then current President of South Korea, Rhee Syngman. Only then did he realize "how his official interest had prepared the way and made it possible for us to borrow for exhibition abroad so many of Korea's masterpieces in varied fields of art."[131] Paine appreciates how politically charged, as well as culturally important the exhibition was for Korea.

In reviewing Paine's article, he introduces some new terms in addition to Priest's to describe Korean art. "Primitive", "human informality", "charm" are fresh additions, while he reiterates "simplicity" – all of which are applied to ceramic works.

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[128] Paine Jr., "Exhibition of Korean Art," 28.
[129] Paine Jr., "Exhibition of Korean Art," 29.
[130] Ibid.
[131] Ibid.

Paine points out the poor representation of Korean paintings in American museum collections, which has resulted in the American public's limited knowledge of, and therefore appreciation of, Korean painting. Like Priest, Paine conveys a sense of great respect for Korean art, but also an underlying tone of frustration or impatience at the narrow scope it had within the American conscience. The "strongly national or highly individual" paintings that were seen for the first time by many U.S. audiences presented difficulty in interpretation, rather than an understanding of a nation's culture.

***National Treasures of Korea*, 1961**

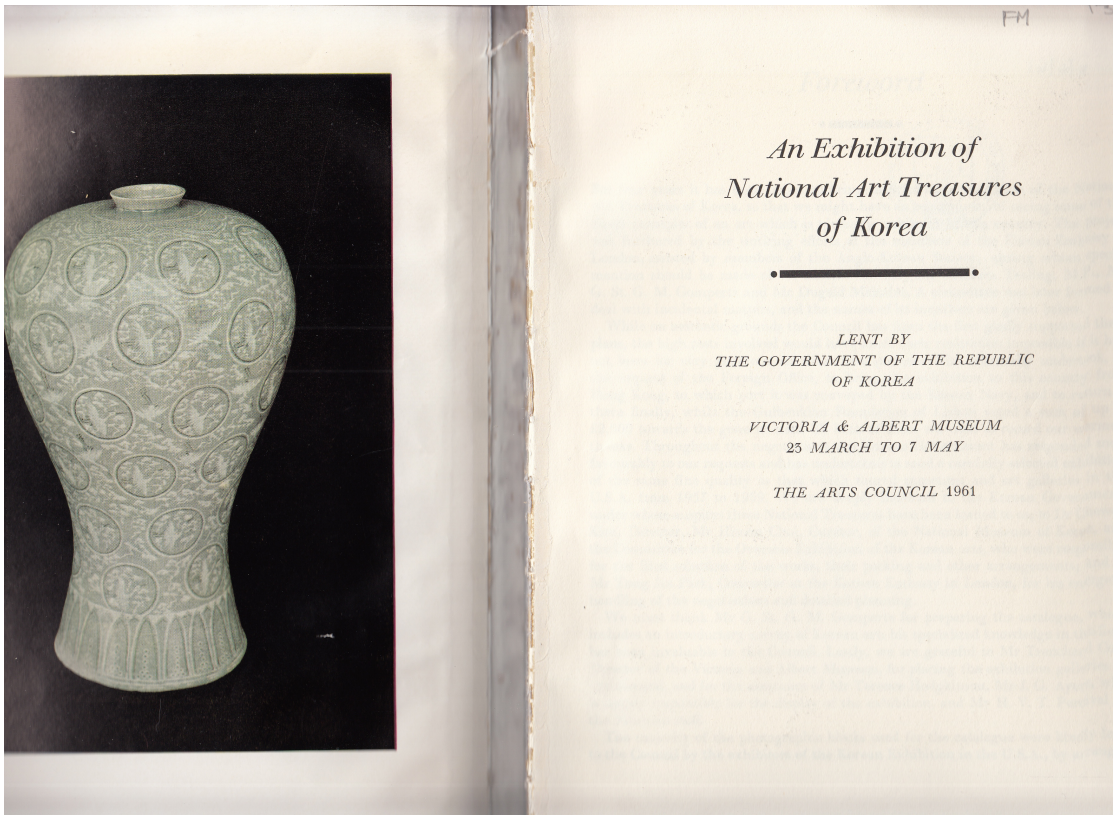

Fig.2.5 Title page for *National Art Treasures of Korea* Exhibition, London 1961

Four years after the exhibition in the United States, a slightly expanded version of *Masterpieces of Korean Art* opened at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London in 1961. This revised incarnation of the exhibition was, like its American predecessor, the first loan exhibition of Korean art to be shown in Europe. *The National Treasures of Korea* opened to widely critical acclaim and captured the attention of royalty and official dignitaries.[132] Godfrey St. George Montague Gompertz's Introduction to the catalogue presents Korean art apart from China and Japan. While he refrains from using the term "humor" to describe any of the works, he does draw attention to what he calls the "native idom"[133], and declares "The essential characteristics [of Korean art] have been a great sense of form and balance together with remarkable freedom and spontaneity."[134] In Western scholarship the "freedom and spontaneity" to which he refers are characteristics often associated with humor.[135] Dr. P.W. Meister, the Director of the Frankfurt Museum at the time of the exhibition, gave descriptions that contribute to the effort by others in establishing a

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[132] V&A Archive, MA/28/110: "National Art Treasures from Korea. "The Victoria and Albert archives contain press cuttings and photographs of some of the distinguished visitors to the exhibition. Among them, Princess Alexandra, H.E.s the Danish Ambassador and the Doyen of the Diplomatic Corps, Dr. Chewon Kim, Director of the National Museum of Korea, Dr. P.W. Meister, Director of the Frankfurt Museum in West Germany, and naturalist and BBC presenter, David Attenborough.

[133] Gompertz, Godfrey St. George Montague, *The National Treasures of Korea*, *An Exhibition of National Art Treasures of Korea*. Lent by the Government of the Republic of Korea to the Victoria and Albert Museum, 23 March to 7 May, 1961. From the Introduction to the catalogue, no page number.

[134] Gompertz, G. St.G. M., 1961. From the Introduction to the catalogue *The National Treasures of Korea*, *An Exhibition of National Art Treasures of Korea.*

[135] Berys Gaut notes in his book, *Art, Emotion and Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) that humor can be unaffected by social propriety and conventional mores, thereby allowing a certain freedom of expression. Spontaneity is characterized by the unexpected, lending an element of surprise, which is a characteristic also attributed to humor.

place for Korean art based on its "native" merits; he along with others in attendance no longer regarded Korean art as a "derivative" of Chinese and Japanese art, but culturally independent.

Fig. 2.6
Incense Burner
Celadon with open work design
Koryŏ dynasty, 12th c

National Treasure No. 95
National Museum of Korea
(author photo credit, 2011)

Press reviews at the time of the exhibition provide a range of public reactions and interpretations of the treasures on display. There are a few dissenting views in which Korean art is described as being little more than derivative of Chinese examples. Denys Sutton of the *Financial Times* writes that "It must be admitted, I think, that Korean painting lacks the subtlety of the Chinese," and, "Despite its many virtues, Korean art may seem to suffer from a certain provincialism…"[136]

[136] Sutton, Denys, excerpt from *The Financial Times*, London, 1961.

Fig.2.7 *Flattened Bottle*, *p'unchŏng* ware with incised fish design
Chosŏn dynasty, 15th c. National Treasure No. 178
National Museum of Korea (author photo credit, 2011)

A slightly less dismissive opinion is expressed by Frank Davis who writes of Korean paintings, "I think one has to be very learned indeed – or super sensitive beyond the ordinary – to detect a specifically Korean flavor as distinct from Chinese…."[137] The comparisons to Chinese art are hardly surprising, and as the above impressions highlight, some viewers found the distinctions difficult to find. It is against this general impression, therefore, that humor in its various forms and connotations comes to be claimed as one sharp distinction. As was noted earlier, humor is found in the art of China and Japan but does not possess the same level of consistency as it does in Korea. The reasons for this are explored in the following sections, with consideration given to cultural traditions (Confucianism), China's and

[137] Davis, Frank, "A Page for Collectors: A Korean Exhibition" *The Illustrated London News*, 1961, 669.

Japan's attitudes towards humor, and their respective applications and expressions of it.

Throughout the critical reviews, two themes of thought emerge. First, the violent history of Korea is cited often throughout the reviews of the exhibition. Michael Sullivan's review imparts a sense of loss for what has been destroyed, as well as a longing for what might have been possible to exhibit, and Korea's history been more peaceful. "history of Korea has been so often scarred with war and devastation that no exhibition of what has survived could give more than a hint of her artistic achievement."[138] The devastation wrought by repeated invasions by the Mongols and later Japan is mentioned repeated throughout the reviews by way of highlighting the survival of Korea's art and material culture and the enduring nature of the nation's people. As one un-named reviewer wrote "This is the first exhibition of Korean art ever held in this country where its great artistic and cultural importance has been largely neglected in favor of the arts of China and Japan. Throughout its history Korea has been victim of it geographical situation being alternately dominated and attacked by Japan and China."[139] Another reviewer wrote rather pointedly "Lying between the Eastern Sea and the Yellow Sea, between China and Japan, Korea has by this misfortune of its geographical position become the cockpit of Asia."[140]

The second theme that emerges is that despite its history, the character of Korea's art treasures is "delightful"[141] with an "irrepressible sense of fun"[142], imbued

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[138] Michael Sullivan, "The National Art Treasures of Korea," *The Burlington Magazine* 103, no. 698 (May 1961): 194.
[139]Unidentified author, "From the Past", Excerpt from *Specimen*, 1961:393.
[140]Unidentified author, "National Art Treasures of Korea", extract from *Art News and Review*, London April 1961.
[141] Collis, Maurice, "Presenting Korea's Contribution: Filling A Gap", *Sunday Telegraph*, Art Forum section: London, 26 March 1961.

with "humanity, and a corresponding delight in animals."[143] The contrast between the violence of Korea's history and the "sense of fun" found in its art is a paradoxical relationship between history and how it informs artistic expression. The impressions made later by the West contradict Yanagi's assessment; where he saw sorrow and loneliness, they saw playfulness, and in so doing they invoked the art and cultural artifacts of Korea with a sense of humor about itself and its history.

Eric Newton appears twice among the press reviews for the exhibition, and his impressions are among the most thoughtful and informed. His remarks are discussed last, as a way to highlight the earliest developments in how Korean art was received, reviewed, and interpreted among Western audiences. Newton's impressions also confirm that humor captured the early imagination of newcomers to Korean art and left a pervasive impression on the country's culture and aesthetic. He concedes Sutton's impression of "provincialism"; "The difference is almost what one would have guessed," he writes. "'Provincial' is the word that first occurs to one, provided one can rid it of its usual derogatory meaning."[144]

Newton begins to make the distinction between the Korean aesthetic and that of China, highlighting their differences for the first time by describing Korean art not as a lesser derivative, but as a fundamentally different attitude towards the art. He posits, "In the best Chinese art there is a severe, almost chilly perfection, a refinement that often strikes one as inhuman. In Korea humanity comes into its own again."[145] Newton

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[142] Hannyngton, H., *Lady* Magazine, March 1961.
[143] Mullaly, Terrence, "Work of Dignity, Charm, and Superb Craftsmanship", *The Daily Telegraph and Morning Post,* Thursday, 23 March 1961.
[144] Newton, Eric, "Treasures from Korea", *Time and Tide*, London, 1961.
[145] Newton, *Time and Tide*, 1961.

begins to draw the connection between Korea's "humanity" and humor, where humanity and humor connote similar meanings.

Mrs. Kim, wife of the Director of the National Museum of Korea, seen at the opening of the exhibition beside one of the masterpieces of Korean art, an early 7th-century Maitreya—the Buddha of the Future. About the same age but from the Paekche kingdom is the rare tile (left) decorated with a phoenix in relief. (Below, left) The warrior's battering ram and field kitchen are, in fact, the spout and funnel of this stoneware vessel of the 5th–6th century from Silla.

Fig. 2.8
Mrs. Chewon Kim (wife of National Museum of Korea Director at the time) with 7th c. bronze sculpture of *Meditating Bodhisattva, Maitreya*

Lady London, 1961
International Press Cutting Bureau, Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) Archives

This observation falls within the second theme noted earlier, which referred to an irrepressible sense of delight in Korean art, imbued with "humanity." Newton concedes that not surprisingly, "Korean art tends to inherit its traditions from China, and, in its later stages, it passed them on to Japan. But it would be a mistake to suppose that what is to be seen at the present exhibition is merely a halfway house between the two. Echoes of Chinese methods and mannerisms were bound to occur,

but they are echoes distorted and translated by the temperament of the Korean people."[146]

Fig. 2.9 Exhibition opening visitors David Attenborough, Curator Hisoon Choi, Museum Director Dr. Chewon Kim, and traditionally dressed attendant *The Daily Telegraph,* 1961 V&A Archives

Another contrast is identified in the brief but perspicacious excerpt by Cecily Ben-Tovin from the London *Tribune,* in which the cartoonist writes, "Unlike the seriousness of the Chinese vision, the Korean drawings and paintings, more so than the bronze sculptures, are warm and humorous"; there is, Ben-Tovin also argues, a "feeling, a mystery that tantalizes the imagination."[147] Ben-Tovin's accompanying

[146] Newton, Eric, "Treasures from Korea." In *The Guardian*, Thursday March 23, 1961.
[147] Ben-Tovin, Cecily. 1961. *Tribune,* 31 March.

cartoon of a Korean woman in traditional dress admiring what looks like a blue and white porcelain bowl with a tiger painting behind her illustrates his sentiments.

Fig. 2.10

Cecily Ben-Tovin
Cartoon from the London
Tribune, 1961, Victoria and
Albert Museum Archives

Another anonymous review highlights the contrast the violent history and the art of Korea: "Korean art obviously echoes some of the traditions of the art of China, but both in painting and sculpture the Koreans show a simple delight in everyday incidents, a happiness and sense of fun, often missing in the more serious – and perhaps, more seeking for perfection – approach of the Chinese."[148] The reviewer

[148] [148] Unidentified author, "Korean Show Draws Raves in London", excerpt from *Trinidad Guardian*, Port of Spain, 1961.

goes on to say, “It is remarkable that with Korea’s stormy history of wars and invasions, so many treasures have been saved.”[149]

In his discussion of Korean versus Chinese sculpture, Newton points out the “casual charm” present in Korean sculpture: “[Korean] counterparts, for example, of the serene seated bodhisattvas of China, are more human and less withdrawn. A Korean seated Maitreya in gilt bronze has a casual charm that is never to be found in Chinese sculpture.”[150] But most telling is his impression of Korean painting, of which he writes, “what is true of Korean sculpture is even more true of Korean painting. An element of genre - a delight in everyday incidents, often treated with a lively vein of humor – is typical of the painted albums, of which many are included.”[151] The aesthetic contrasts mark an independence of Korean art from the dominant influence of China. What seems to impress Newton most is the approachability of the Korean art treasures when compared to those of China. “This childlike departure from the monumental seriousness of Chinese drawing pervades the exhibition. Korean mountains are less awe inspiring, Korean birds flutter more excitedly, Korean peasants behave more eccentrically than their Chinese counterparts.”[152]

Newton’s observations highlight not only a humorous element in the “casual charm” and “delight in everyday incidents” of Korean art but presents these characteristics as fundamentally distinctive from dominant Chinese models. The desire for Korea to distinguish its art and culture apart from China and Japan was one of the motivations behind the two exhibitions in Washington, D.C. and London.

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[149] Unidentified author, “Korean Show Draws Raves in London”, excerpt from *Trinidad Guardian*, Port of Spain, 1961.
[150] Newton, *The Guardian*, 1961.
[151] Newton, *The Guardian*, 1961.
[152] Newton, *The Guardian*, 1961.

There was also a desire on the part of scholars of Chinese and Japanese art to find something new in Korean art. Most were encountering it for the first time and had little to no knowledge about it. In order to discuss Korean art and understand what they saw, scholars and journalists drew comparisons with China and Japan. In the process, they began to identify similarities as well as differences, and gradually form an essential vocabulary with which to articulate them. As Minister Choi indicated in his statement for the U.S. catalogue, "the essence of Korean culture" was put on display. Through the West's reception and reactions, the essential element (or elements) evolved, and came to be understood as "humorous." But is this a true and accurate assessment? The reason for why humor has remained with Korean art as an attribute is an important question this thesis attempts to address.

Motives

The contrasts marked by Newton's observations are provided as evidence of Korea's independence from the dominance of China. What seems to impress Newton most is the approachability of the Korean art treasures when compared to those of China. Newton's observations highlight not only a humorous element in the "casual charm" and "delight in everyday incidents" of Korean art but presents these characteristics as fundamentally distinctive from dominant Chinese models.

The desire for Korea to distinguish its art and culture apart from China and Japan was one of the motivations behind the two exhibitions in Washington, D.C. and London. This desire stemmed from an interest in asserting a national ethnicity, which was a residual reaction against the Japanese colonial effort to link the two nations along ethnic lines in the interest of unity within the empire. In his thesis, "A

Representation of Nationhood: The National Museum of Korea," Jang Sang Hoon points out that "the concept of the ethnic nation has almost become the only perspective with which to discover and interpret Korean material culture, discouraging an interest in other perspectives."[153] Jang continues that as a result of the ethnocentric perspective, "diversity and difference tend to be unexplored internally for the reason…they hinder the idea of national unity, while the distinct characteristics of Korean ethnic national culture tend to be over emphasized with the goal of achieving international recognition."[154]

Exhibiting China and Japan

There was also a desire on the part of scholars of Chinese and Japanese art to find something new about Korean art that had not been seen before. Most were encountering it for the first time and had little to no knowledge about it. As a way to discuss Korean art and understand what they saw, scholars and journalists drew comparisons with China and Japan. In the process, they began to identify similarities as well as differences, and gradually form an essential vocabulary with which to articulate them. As Minister Choi indicated in his statement for the U.S. catalogue, "the essence of Korean culture" was put on display. Through the West's reception and reactions, the essential element (or elements) evolved, and came to be understood as "humorous." But is this a true and accurate assessment? The reason for why

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[153] Sang Hoon Jang, "A Representation of Nationhood: The National Museum of Korea" (University of Leicester, School of Museum Studies, 2014).

[154] Sang Hoon Jang, "A Representation of Nationhood: The National Museum of Korea" (University of Leicester, School of Museum Studies, 2014), 10-11; cites Simon Knell, et al. "National Museum and the National Imagination" (London & New York: Rutledge, 2011), 13.

humor has remained with Korean art as a distinguishing attribute is an important question this thesis attempts to address. The association of humor with Korean art and its longevity prompts questions regarding humor in the art and material culture of China and Japan. Neither country's art is immune to humor, surely, yet neither nation's art continues to be described as humorous with the same consistency that Korean art has and continues to be.

Humor in Asia

It is clear that scholarship on humor in the West, and within Western art history specifically, is comparably rich and varied when compared to scholarship on humor within the Korean context. Humor studies in the arts of China and Japan attest to not only to the presence of humor in those countries' art and culture as well, but also to the strong scholarship already undertaken by scholars of those countries. The arts of China and Japan are certainly not devoid of humor, particularly when it comes to literature. In China, the language has proven especially accommodating for puns, which provides opportunities for literal and visual double meanings in its literature and art. In Japan, subtle satire and visual puns are also found along with anthropomorphism and exaggeration. The social structures in Asia provide a rigid framework for humor to play against to create satirical commentary; "the best Asian satirists draw their material from ordinary human behavior, in which inconsistency is not unknown."[155]

[155] Feinberg, *Asian Laughter: An Anthology of Oriental Satire and Humor*, 13.

China

In China, examples of humor and human behavior tend to be more didactic in nature. Naughty children appear frequently in classrooms, as do animals (particularly monkeys), engaged in unruly behavior. In a long hand scroll by Zhang Hong 張絃 (1577 - ?, Fig.0.5) schoolboys take advantage of their dozing schoolmaster by performing handstands and trying to remove his cap. The physicality of the figures depicted combined with the setting creates the humor in the scene in the form of slapstick. Leonard Feinberg reiterates what has been said elsewhere about slapstick humor, describing it as a form of humor that, "At its lowest level - slapstick, physical deformity or mental deficiency, embarrassment - humor seems to be pretty much the same in all cultures."[156] The physical spectacle that slapstick provides is what Feinberg calls "obvious or physical incongruity" and in his opinion, "is the most popular form of humor everywhere." [157] Incongruity is once more affirmed (confirmed) as being an important characteristic of humor, irrespective of cultural origins or traditions. The obvious disrespect shown is nonetheless amusing as much as it serves as a visual and mental reminder to the viewer that such mischievous behavior is not appropriate, but nevertheless amusing to witness. In works such as Zhang Hong's there appears to be an "intermingling of sentiment and cynicism, playfulness and discernment, superficiality and acuteness...we find moralizing and bawdiness…comedy and mysticism…spiritual aspiration and slapstick…[and] a juxtaposing of the sacrosanct and the commonplace…"[158]

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[156] Leonard Feinberg, ed., *Asian Laughter: An Anthology of Oriental Satire and Humor* (New York: John Weatherhill, Inc., 1971), 4.
[157] Feinberg, ed., *Asian Laughter: An Anthology of Oriental Satire and Humor*, 5.
[158] Feinberg, ed., *Asian Laughter: An Anthology of Oriental Satire and Humor*, 13.

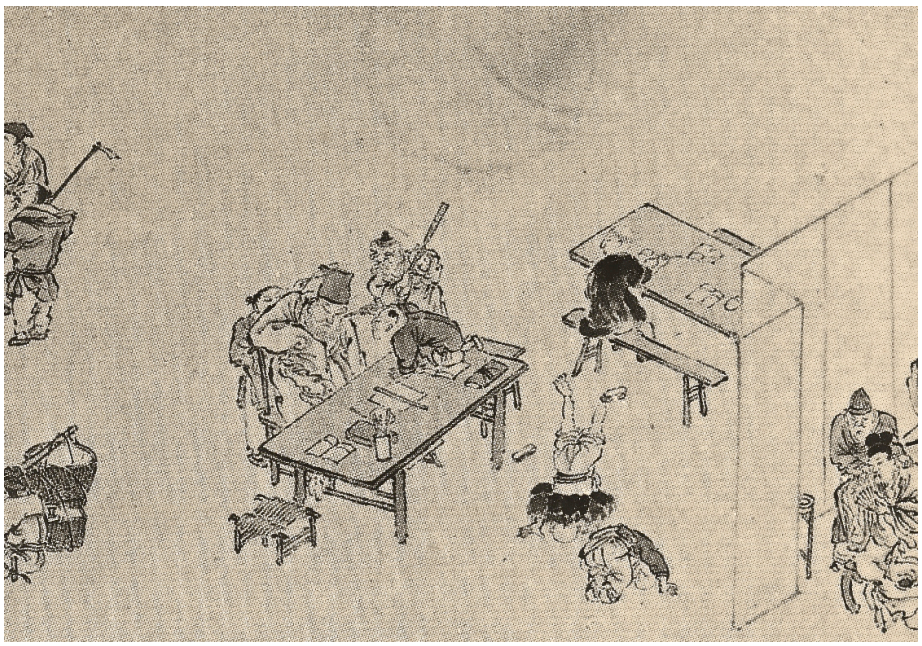

Fig. 2.11 Zhang Hong 張紘（1577-？）
Classroom Antics (detail from hand scroll), ink on paper, Ming dynasty, 16th c.
Gugong Museum, Beijing

Satire in Asia is defined by Feinberg as "entertaining criticism in artistic form" and has two levels of sophistication: one that is more general where it is appreciated through proverbs and jokes, the other is elevated to a conscious form of imitation of another culture's art.[159] He cites medieval Japanese society adapting Chinese culture, and Chinese humor magazines that followed the models of Western satirical magazines like *Punch* and the *New Yorker*.

[159] Feinberg, ed., *Asian Laughter: An Anthology of Oriental Satire and Humor*, 5.

Fig. 2.12
Cover of *Modern Sketch (Shidai manhua),* inaugural issue
January 1934, Shanghai

Courtesy Colgate University Library

In his article, "China's *Modern Sketch* – 1: The Golden Era of Cartoon Art, 1934-1937," John A. Crespi describes the cover illustration of *Modern Sketch's* inaugural issue as follows: "Equal parts comic and gallant, this strange horseman heralded the arrival of the longest running and most influential humor and satire magazine in China during the first half of the 20th century…"[160] The illustration makes visual references to the West with the bottle of ink, dip pen and drafting triangle, but includes a traditional Chinese brush pen, satirically protruding from the rear end of the unusual warrior's mount.

Feinberg argues that in Asia, humor as a sophisticated form of artistic expression was generally dismissed by societal elites and "officials", but enjoyed freely among

[160] Crespi, John A., "China's Modern Sketch – 1: The Golden Era of Cartoon Art, 1934-1937," *MIT Visualizing Cultures*, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2011. http://ocw.mit.edu/ans7870/21f/21f.027/modern_sketch/ms_essay01.html. Accessed 11 August 2015.

the lower classes. What accounts for this disparity in interest? Why, as Feinberg points out, were humor and satire "considered inferior forms of aesthetic expression?"[161] It seems figures of authority, or those in positions of power are more often the targets of humor by the lower classes, the powerless. If this is accepted, do humor and satire fundamentally embody an underlying "threat" to establishment, the higher orders of society and authority? Feinberg cautions against jumping to conclusions too quickly, warns scholars of the dangers of making generalizations about another country's aesthetic preferences out of context. In addition to generalizations, there is also the difficulty of language and cultural specificity. As Westerners looking in from the outside, there is a lot that can be lost in translation. This is a key problem, "the difficulty of translation, unfamiliarity with local context, and the transience of contemporary allusion"[162] are all obstacles in being able to fully appreciate humor, specifically satirical humor in a spontaneous way. That being said however, Feinberg maintains that insight and discoveries can be still be gained by reading English translations of Asian humor and satire. He expresses his disappointment in finding that when one is able to do this the subjects and targets for satire in Asian literature "prove to be depressingly similar to those in the West. It may be that East is East and West is West, but the two meet effortlessly in choosing the victims for their satirists."[163]

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[161] Feinberg, *Asian Laughter: An Anthology of Oriental Satire and Humor*, 5.
[162] Feinberg, *Asian Laughter: An Anthology of Oriental Satire and Humor*, 6.
[163] Feinberg, *Asian Laughter: An Anthology of Oriental Satire and Humor*, 6.

Satire

The hypocrite in society is the favored target for satirical humor. In Asian literature and traditional lore, hypocrisy features prominently in the behavior of popular characters and individuals. The social structures and religion are other sources rich in popular targets for both the Western and Asian catalog of satirical material. "The discrepancy between religion's aspirations and human imperfections" is frequently found on both sides of the globe, Feinberg observes.[164] The "fool" is another universal source of humor, held up to social norms, but free from moral judgment, "for there is nothing immoral about being a fool."[165] Feinberg describes the characteristics of humor as all being varying forms of incongruity, upon which, "all humor depends in varying degrees…"[166] He writes that "Not all satire…is funny; sometimes invective or ingenuity or grotesqueness serves instead of humor to make the criticism more striking, or more entertaining, than complaint alone could be. But most popular satire, in the East as well as the West, does use humor as the fundamental device to make its criticism palatable."[167] Satirical humor thus serves as a tool for exposing the truth about human nature and hypocrisy. In China there is a proverb that says: "'Great politeness usually means 'I want something.'"[168]

In citing other Western scholars on the subject, he illustrates the difficulty in generalizing such a broad topic as humor. R.H. Blyth's *Oriental Humour* is used as an example, where the author declares Japanese humor to take a more subtle form, but then Feinberg points out the examples Blyth uses to prove this declaration are "just as

[164] Feinberg, *Asian Laughter: An Anthology of Oriental Satire and Humor,*7.
[165] Feinberg, *Asian Laughter: An Anthology of Oriental Satire and Humor,* 8.
[166] Feinberg, *Asian Laughter: An Anthology of Oriental Satire and Humor,*9.
[167] Feinberg, *Asian Laughter: An Anthology of Oriental Satire and Humor*, 9.
[168] Feinberg, *Asian Laughter: An Anthology of Oriental Satire and Humor*,11.

blunt and crude as those of other countries."[169]

China and Confucianism

At the end of the Ming and the start of the Qing dynasty, Confucianism was the prevailing ideology in China. The fundamental principle of both the religion and the philosophy of Confucianism lay in the "postulation of the universe as a self-created, infinite, and 'harmoniously functioning organism consisting of an orderly hierarchy of interrelated parts and forces, which, though unequal in their status, are all equally essential for the total process.'"[170] In Confucianism, "human society was closely linked with nature, and nature in turn with the cosmos. All was ordered and hierarchical, and in a profound sense justified."[171]In China, the Confucian ideology and the hierarchical order it emphasized resulted in "harmony" rather than "humor" being the notable characteristic most sought and desired by artists and critics. The ideal Confucian emperor of China would have the Mandate of Heaven, legitimizing his rule, while enjoying divine status and ensuring his legitimacy was reinforced. In this way, as Kim Haboush describes it, kingship in China was based on the Mandate of Heaven; the emperor "was enshrined in a nearly mythic aura" and royal authority developed in such a way as to "enhance the awesomeness of imperial authority."[172] Early Chinese Neo-Confucian philosopher Cheng Hao and his followers "were

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[169] Feinberg, *Asian Laughter: An Anthology of Oriental Satire and Humor*, 5.
[170] Albert Feuerwerker, *State and Society in Eighteenth-Century China: The Ch'ing Empire in Its Glory* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, The University of Michigan, 1976), 14.
[171] Ibid.
[172] JaHyun Kim Haboush, *The Confucian Kingship in Korea: Yŏngjo and the Politics of Sagacity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001). (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).1.

unequivocal" in their interpretation and amplification of Chinese philosopher Zhang Zai's theory of Confucian benevolence. Exegesis of Confucian ideology, particularly the values placed on maintaining and adhering to a strict social hierarchy was promoted to the lower classes by "so-called village lectures (*hsiang-yueh*)."[173]Feuerwerker argues that these were offered as a means to exhort the benefits of such a social system, not just to the elite, but to everyone. They presented "Confucian-trained officials and gentry …as the defenders of common values shared by all strata, and upholders of a natural and proper social order."[174] Public rituals of ancestor worship and other appeals to the metaphysical/"magical" worlds "were important means of gaining assent of the populace…"[175] Meanwhile Confucian scholars Cheng Yi, Yang Shi and Zhu Xi focused on reconciling it "with the discriminative nature of the social structure in which they were living…"[176] Zai's theory would soon be replaced by yet another school of thought, which revived the initial egalitarian idea during the Ming and early Chosŏn periods. By the Ming dynasty, the emperor of China and his power were nearly unchallengeable; he could mete out punishments and laws with impunity. In Korea, Confucian philosophers Yi Hwang and Yi Yi are credited by Lee for reviving Zai's *Western Inscription*, but interpreting it in a different way from their counterparts in China, namely Wang Yang-ming (1472-1528), who believed "The great man regards Heaven and Earth and the myriad things as one body. He regards the world as one family and the country as

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[173] Feuerwerker, *State and Society in Eighteenth-Century China: The Ch'ing Empire in Its Glory*, 17.
[174] Ibid.
[175] Ibid.
[176] Junghwan Lee, "Counterbalancing Egalitarian Benevolence: A History of Interpretations of Zhang Zai's Western Inscription in SOng China and Joseon Korea," *The Review of Korean Studies* 13, no. 3 (September (2010): 144.

one person…"[177] In this final analysis, Chosŏn Korea's ties with Ming China and the desire to reignite the nation "as one" animated South Korea's government following the war in its search for its national identity.

China and Humor

The pervading Confucian ideology in China eschewed humor as an undesirable element to one's character. An ambitious government official could not break a smile in public, lest his authority be questioned and his character doubted. For this reason, humor in classical Chinese art and literature is rare. Moreover, art and literature of a humorous or satirical nature were considered "inferior forms of aesthetic expression."[178] When either humor or satire was "expressed" it was either done under a pseudonym in China, or as subtle satire in Japan. Humor and mirth was expressed, however through more covert means. Ironically, the Chinese language allows for puns to form double meanings and humor in art.

Human behavior (and misbehavior) has provided writers and artists with endless sources of humor, and examples can be found throughout Asia and the West. Visual forms of humor take the form of anthropomorphism and exaggeration.

In China the humor found is not so much "playful" but as was seen in the literature, more didactic in nature. Chinese art scholar Sung Hou-Mei reported on a painting in the Cincinnati Art Museum's collection that had "hitherto [been] ascribed

[177] Lee (September 2010): 144-145.
[178] Feinberg, *Asian Laughter: An Anthology of Oriental Satire and Humor*. 5.

to a Korean artist."[179] Tigers were popular subjects for painters in China and Korea, to which Sung credits part of the reason for the mistaken attribution. The painting has since been recognized as the work by Xu Gui (15th century). Sung points out that "Xu was easily assumed to be Korean since more depictions of tigers have survived among Korean paintings than among Chinese paintings"[180]. Xu's painting shows a mother tiger with three cubs. While Sung argues that the painting serves as a "blatant example of how even an officially signed piece by a leading Ming court painter can remain anonymous" due to pervading ignorance surrounding Ming court painters and their work, Sung does not mention the underlying perceptions of Korean versus Chinese painting that might account for the mistaken attribution. Sung describes the scene of the mother tiger with her cubs as capturing "the intimate moment of a nursing tigress with her playful young."[181] Recalling Ben-Tovin's comments on Korean art from 1961, one questions if there is anything "warm and humorous" about Xu Gui's tiger. Sung's argument centers on the lack of scholarship on Ming court painters, but recognizing the "playful" treatment of the tiger by a confirmed Chinese painter forces one to reevaluate the assumed nature and character of the Korean tiger in art.

[179] Hou-Mei Sung, "Tiger with Cubs: A Rediscovered Ming Court Painting," *Artibus Asiae* 64, no. 2 (2004): 281.
[180] Sung, "Tiger with Cubs: A Rediscovered Ming Court Painting," (2004): 281.
[181] Sung, "Tiger with Cubs: A Rediscovered Ming Court Painting," (2004): 281.

Fig. 2.13

Xu Gui 徐貴(1430s – 1490s)
Tiger with Cubs
Hanging scroll, ink and color on silk;
139.7 x 82.6 cm.
The Cincinnati Art Museum
(1964.703)

The popularity of tigers as a subject for court painters presented both a challenge for painters, as well as an opportunity to impart messages of political and social significance. Sung recounts that early paintings of tigers were realistic depictions of the animals in their environment, and the tableau of a mother tiger with her cubs soon "developed didactic political overtones…"[182] The maternal tiger came to signify and advocate for the Confucian ideal of filial piety. Comparisons between Xu's tiger painting and another Ming dynasty tiger painting by an unknown artist lead Sung to conclude that Xu's tigress "invites us to contemplate the dignity of the fiercest of animals."[183]

[182] Sung, "Tiger with Cubs: A Rediscovered Ming Court Painting," (2004): 283.
[183] Sung, "Tiger with Cubs: A Rediscovered Ming Court Painting," (2004): 284.

William Elliot Griffis wrote that in art, "though the native picture-maker may draw a lion in such preposterous shape and which such impossible attributes as to show at once that no living model was ever before his eyes, yet in those pictures of tigers drawn by Corean [sic] artists which we have examined, accuracy and vigor of treatment predominate over artistic grace."[184]

Fig. 2.14

Kim Hong-do (Danwŏn) 김 홍도 (1745 ca.1806)
Songhamaeng hodo 송하맹호도
(Tiger under a pine tree)
Late 18th c., ink and color on silk
Ho-Am Museum of Art

As a subject of both fear and reverence, the tiger features prominently in Korean life, from symbols on military flags and attire, to tribute offerings to the Chinese court. As a symbol of fierce power, the tiger was feared, but was also a popular symbol used to illustrate social mores and national proverbs, as in the following examples: "a wooden

[184] William Elliot Griffis, *Corea: The Hermit Nation*, 6th ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1897), 322.

tiger" means an ass in lion's skin; "a broken-backed tiger" refers to impotence and malicious rage; "to give wings to a tiger means "to add shrewdness to force," and "a tiger's repast is another way to describe excessive eating or gluttony.[185]

While humorous forms of play link Japan to the past, humorous admonishments link China to the future. The *Admonitions of the Instructress to the Court Ladies* scroll from the 8th century is perhaps the earliest example of Chinese political parody. The scroll features various forms of behavior a lady at court should avoid; the scenes are not necessarily humorous, per se, but they set an early precedent for depictions of "bad behavior" to recognize and avoid.

Japan and Play

In Japan, humor is found in the approach to "play" in art. "The Japanese character of Japanese painting reaches the culmination in the sinuous, playful forms, lines and colors of Ukiyoe and romantically decorative paintings such as those of Korin. This is not a departure from Chinese painting, but it is completely an independent national style."[186] In Japan, the concept of "play" (*asobi*) is comparable to a light-hearted or "playful" attitude in which "a sense of humor, a love of music, being 'laid back,' or at the extreme, a neglect of one's responsibilities and debauchery."[187] Kim Wŏn-yong wrote that the playful nature of Japanese prints was a mark of the nation's own artistic method. "The Japanese character of Japanese

[185] William Elliot Griffis, *Corea, The Hermit Nation*, third (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1889), 322.
[186] Weon-yong Kim, "Philosophies and Styles in Korean Art: A Prelude to the History of Korean Art," in *Traditional Korean Art*, ed. UNESCO Korean Ntl. Commission (Korea: The Si-sa-yong-o-sa Publishers, Inc., 1983), 19.
[187] Guth, Christine, *Asobi: Play in the Arts of Japan*, Katonah Museum, (1992), 9.

painting reaches the culmination in the sinuous, playful forms, lines and colors of Ukiyoe and romantically decorative paintings such as those of Korin. This is not a departure from Chinese painting, but it is completely an independent national style."[188] Kim regards the artistic qualities of "playful forms, lines and colors" as confirmation of a national identity for Japanese art. He draws a similar parallel for Korean art, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Fig. 2.15 Detail from *Chōjū Giga The Frolicking Animals Scroll, one of four fascicles known as Chōjū Jinbutsu Giga (Funny Pictures of Birds, Animals and People)*
12th and 13th c.
Handscroll, ink on paper, 1149.6 cm x 30.6 cm
Kōzan Temple, Kyoto

Like humor, play is another term that is easy to understand or recognize, but difficult to define, and as a result, in the history of art it is often overlooked because of its variety and subjective interpretations that elude definitive classification. Attempts have been made, however, as Christine Guth's categories of play demonstrate. The

[188] Kim, "Philosophies and Styles in Korean Art: A Prelude to the History of Korean Art, 19."

forms of play seen in Japan reflect traditionally dominant "social and cultural values."[189] In this way, play is a way of connecting to the past. Intricately wound within Japanese society, different forms of play served to diffuse political differences in the form of contests (usually poetry or painting) by which opposing sides could mete out their differences in a symbolic manner.[190] Play was a means of free expression as well as escape from the confines of reality; one sees this when children play "make-believe" and the whimsical and bizarre become possible. Artistically, mimicry, caricature, and simulation feature prominently in Japanese forms of "play." Not surprisingly, so does humor. The Korean attitude toward approaching the same subject many times is to make each one different. Oh Ju-seok explains that this is why there are so many different variations of paintings featuring a tiger and magpie. No two tigers or magpies are the same, whereas consistency and uniformity are more valued in Japan, hence the popularity of the woodblock print (Ukiyo-e), which never gained the same level of popularity in Korea.[191]

The forms of humor thus pointed out in China and Japan are undeniable, and yet they have not managed to define their respective cultures' art. Neither China nor Japan's histories of art are consistently regarded or described as being humorous. Why, then, does the association remain with the art of Korea? Howard S. Levy contends that traditionally, the peasants in East Asia made up the majority of the populations of China, Japan and Korea, and yet in the literature of the three countries,

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[189] Guth, Christine, *Asobi: Play in the Arts of Japan*, Katonah Museum, (1992), 9.

[190] Guth explains that contests in the form of poetry and painting were another form of play that were "ritual games that promoted social order and national welfare by allowing upposing factions within the government to resolve their differences in a symbolic manner." In *Asobi* (1992),18.

[191] Ju-seok Oh, *Special Lecture on Korean Paintings*, trans. Subun Lee and Yoon-jung Cho (Seoul: Hollym Corp. Publishers, 2011). 127.

their presence is largely ignored and overlooked. Instead, Confucian scholars produced the majority of the literature, resulting in much of the writing serving didactic agency within a Confucian societal framework. This "framework of traditional morality [was] reinforced by stale cliché," Levy argues; "court intellectuals wrote about court concerns."[192] Because of the imbalance of representation of all members of Korean society, the extent to which Westerners have been able to learn about Korean culture was limited to only the literate minority. If we agree to subscribe to Levy's contention, the presence of humor within the Western imagination, to say nothing of the Koreans' with regard to their art, is a surprising phenomenon that requires more inquiry.

The Significance of Chosŏn

When Japan accepted the Potsdam Declaration and surrendered to the Allied Powers on 15 August 1945, Korea was faced with having to establish a government system for itself. On 13 September 1945 - Major General Archibald V. Arnold was appointed Military Governor of South Korea, and the United States of America Military Government in Korea (USAMGIK) was established south of the 38th parallel. It lasted until the government of the Republic of Korea was established three years later.[193] From 1945, scholarship on Korean art "grew substantially, overcoming the Japanese colonial perspective while re-evaluating Korean history in a more positive

[192] Howard S. Levy, trans. *Korean Sex Jokes in Traditional Times*, vol. III, Sino-Japanese Sexology Classics (Washington, D.C.: The Warm-Soft Village Press, 1972). 1.
[193] Jang, "A Representation of Nationhood: The National Museum of Korea," 76.

light."[194] These words and tone impart a diminutive light that was cast on Korean art and culture by the Japanese Empire throughout their excavations and cataloguing efforts. The fledgling South Korean government was eager to sever the ethnic ties espoused by the Japanese during occupation and establish itself as a free and independent nation. Nationhood became closely linked to ethnicity, forming an "ethnic nationalism" whose evidence was identified in cultural artifacts. For this reason, Jang argues, "it can be also understood that material culture did become one of the essential mediums that could represent and prove nationhood."[195] It is in this belief that the art and culture of Chosŏn was revisited and embraced for reclaiming a native Korean identity. Following Japan's occupation, Pai notes, Korean scholars of all stripes and disciplines, from historians to archaeologists, from artists to government institutions "unanimously promoted the self-congratulatory view that they were responsible for the 'rediscovery' 채팔견 (*chaepalkyŏn*) of Korean ancient history, art, and culture that had been virtually destroyed by fifty years of colonial occupation."[196] As the last Korean dynastic period before Japan's annexation, Chosŏn was still remembered by an older generation of Koreans. Within the Chosŏn period, it is the eighteenth century that yields the strongest evidence for Korean culture, or so it would appear. "Eighteenth-century Korea…is [after all] generally regarded as having

[194] Insoo Cho, "Foreign Studies on Korean Art: An Analysis of European and American Cases," in *Nationalism and the Construction of Korean Identity*, ed. Hyung Il Pai and Timothy R. Tangherlini, Korea Research Mongraph (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 1998), 137.
[195] Jang, "A Representation of Nationhood: The National Museum of Korea," 243.
[196] Hyung Il Pai and Timothy R. Tangherlini, eds., *Nationalism and the Construction of Korean Identity*, Korea Research Monograph 26 (Berkeley, Calif: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 1998), 20-21.

been peaceful and prosperous."[197] (2) The nostalgia for the period was close enough to recall, and therefore accessible enough to reclaim and help establish a firm Korean identity.

The character of Chosŏn art and literature and the longstanding general association to humor with which it is regarded warrants scrutiny when an examination of humor and its machinations is seriously considered. In asking if humorous intentions are in fact behind the works, or if humorous intentions were projected on to the art from outside perspectives, a deeper understanding may be gained on the perceptions of the works, how and from where these perceptions originate, and why they persist. Does surprise always result in a humorous effect? What is the nature of the humor that is produced? With regard to the Neo-Confucian context of late Chosŏn society, does the humor found within texts and images present an irrational perception of the world, and if so, what bearing or consequence does it have to those who read and see it? If humor is a lens through which disorder, the immoral, and unreasonable are highlighted, how does this lens color or distort one's perceptions? Finally, is the lens of humor overused when it comes to Korean art? These questions are attempts to get to the root of the general acceptance of humor as an integral characteristic of Korean art. This section addresses these questions by looking at specific works that have been identified in Chosŏn-Korean art as having humorous characteristics. In the following section, some key features of the Chosŏn period are discussed with regard to their relevance and importance to Korea's agenda of nationhood in the mid-20th century.

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[197] Kim Haboush, *The Confucian Kingship in Korea: Yŏngjo and the Politics of Sagacity*, 2.

Philosophy

The Neo-Confucian social and political context of the Chosŏn period as discussed in the previous chapter appears to have provided ample opportunity for sincere commentary and criticism to emerge. The ways in which humor was employed to express personal sentiments were effective for painters like Kim Hong-do and Sin Yun-bŏk, and particularly effective for writers, as seen in the works of Park Ji-wŏn. The application of humor to highlight such subjects as social inequities, hypocrisy, and economic discrepancy is rooted in the common interest of moral integrity. "One of the keys to understanding the Confucian world view is the perception that Heaven is rational, that the universe is moral, that human reason is a sufficient instrument to fathom the divine, and that man can reproduce on earth the moral order immanent in the universe."[198] The emphasis on the "rational" and "moral" in Kim Haboush's statement above provokes interest to focus on humor and its link to both rational and moral conscience and personal expression. Late-Chosŏn society was steeped in the Neo-Confucian ideology that included a strict moral code. A harmonious and productive society was predicated on the assumption that each member of society operates within his or her social and economic level, thus maintaining an effective and cohesive social balance. More importantly, the king's seat of power would be secured if his kingdom was thus maintained, thereby confirming the Mandate of Heaven.[199]

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[198] JaHyun Kim Haboush, *The Confucian Kingship in Korea: Yŏngjo and the Politics of Sagacity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001). 7.

[199] The succession of royal authority, or "kingship" is a tradition Korea shares with China, but with significant differences. As JaHyun Kim Haboush notes in *The Confucian Kingship in Korea: Yŏngjo and the Politics of Sagacity*, change in "kingship" in the Koryŏ period (918-1392), moved from one of charisma to one mandated by Heaven in the Chosŏn. (ix) While this authority afforded seemingly

Kingship

During the Chosŏn period, society in Korea was "arguably as hierarchical and discriminative as – if not more than – late Imperial China…"[200] King T'aejo (r.1392-98) - founder of Chosŏn dynasty, along with his followers began an eradication "of all…Buddhist traditions and conventions…" and "forcibly usurping the throne of the Goryeo king."[201]King T'aejo's son and successor, King T'aejong, actively suppressed Buddhism and endorsed Confucianism with the establishment of a type-foundry and propagated Confucian literature. It was under King Sejong, however, Chosŏn's fourth monarch, that Korean culture flourished with the invention of Hangŭl, Korea's own written language/alphabet as well as achievements in astronomy and music. While his accomplishments were many, he is most renowned for the invention of Hangŭl, which is celebrated today, and regarded among linguist scholars as "the most perfect phonetic system ever devised,"[202] Two key differences in the "sage kingship" model as applied in China versus Korea were as follows: first, the Korean monarchy did not regard itself as the central kingdom, whereas Chinese emperors did. This is the mentality the Chinese emperors embraced and reinforced. Second, while the mandate of heaven imbued the Chinese emperors with almost limitless freedom, the title was

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limitless power to the emperors of China, the title was more restrictive and impinging on Korean kings, who had smaller bureaucracies of aristocratic families competing for his attention and influence at court. Kingship and Confucian values and interpretation in Korean society is discussed in Chapter 2.

[200] Kim Haboush (2001),145.

[201] Do-ryun Seok, "Yi Dynasty Scholar Painting," in *Traditional Korean Painting*, ed. UNESCO Korean Ntl. Commission (Korea: The Si-sa-yong-o-sa Publishers, Inc., 1983), 33–34.

[202] Taylor, Insup. "The Korean writing system: An alphabet? A syllabary? A logography?"In Kolers, P.A.; Wrolstad, M. E.; Bouma, Herman. *Processing of Visual Language* **2**. (New York: Plenum Press, 1980),65.

more restrictive and impinging on Korean kings, who had smaller bureaucracies of aristocratic families competing for his attention and influence at court.[203]

In Korea, therefore, the king as an individual is (must be) mutable, adaptable and accommodating, even if the conception of "kingship" remains more or less unchanged. The contrast in worldviews between China and Korea was thus embodied and enforced by their rulers and reflected in societal attitudes and values. Compared to their Chinese counterparts, Korean monarchs were necessarily more pragmatic in their perceptions of the world and their place in it. This allowed a space for humor to exist, perhaps as a contradiction to the "rational" perception of the world. When applied with astute observation, humor acts as a lens through which to highlight disorder, the immoral and unreasonable. In this way, humor and its application take on a didactic quality in Korean art.

Literature *"Laughter is derived from what is human." – Chang Tok-soon*

Peter H. Lee informs us that in Korea, "the traditional prose narrative, whether fictional or not, was deemed unofficial because it created a world other than that sanctioned by the court and offered an alternative view of reality."[204]

One of the most popular writers of Korea's eighteenth century was Park Ji-won (sobriquet Yŏnam, 1737-1805) who was a "leading scholar, thinker and writer of

[203] Kim Haboush (2001), 2.
[204] Peter H. Lee, *A Korean Storyteller's Miscellany: The P'aegwan Chapki of Ŏ Sukkwŏn* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), x.

eighteenth-century Korea."[205] Regarded today among Korean literature scholars as one of the most important late-Chosŏn writers of his day, Park is best known for satirical stories that exposed what he felt were social inequities between the Chosŏn ruling and privileged classes and its commoners.[206] He was one of the first to embrace modernity and social reform, inspired by western innovations and civilization, he focused on moving Korea into a modern age and his ideas would leave a lasting influence on successive generations. Born of a well-to-do *yangban* family, Park did not sit for civil service examinations, unlike most scholar gentlemen of his day. He held minor positions, and was befriended by prominent scholars and intellectuals, many of whom were envoys to China, where he was informed of modern progress occurring there through western exposure. When Park finally had the opportunity to visit China himself, he saw firsthand what the Qing court had been introduced to by the west and was inspired by the progress and innovations toward social and economic development China was beginning to embrace. Upon returning to Korea, Park advocated heavily for such reforms and progress to take place in Korea, using China as his prototype.

These "modern" ideas were shared by other scholars who made up the Sirhak School ("literally studies for pragmatism or realism"), which spoke out in opposition of "old Confucianism" and criticized "the old doctrine as being too theory-oriented,

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[205] Hi Kyung Moon, "Park Ji-Won (1737-1805)," in *Korean Classical Literature: An Anthology*, ed. Chong-wha Chung, Korean Culture Series (London: Kegan Paul International, 1989), 15.
[206] Pak, No-chun, "Bak Ji-won: Satirist of Aristocratic Society", in *Anthology of Korean Studies: Korean Literature: Its Classical Heritage and Modern Breakthroughs*. Korean National Commission for UNESCO, edt. (Elizabeth, NJ: Hollym International Corp., 2003), 247-48.

unrealistic and non-productive…"[207] Park advocated for "more practical" applications to governing, commerce, and developing techniques to oppose the "rigid feudal class system."[208] The rigidity of society, and the hypocrisy of the supposedly most pious and righteous individuals were satirized and exposed in more explicitly subversive literature written at the time.

Humorous stories of a sexual nature in literature found in China, Japan, and Korea were largely based on crude jokes and tale shared among commoners.[209] Subjects about which there remain strict modes of social convention offer the greatest potential for release through humor. These tend to be subjects concerning sex and bodily functions. Humor in Korean narratives often involves scenes with housemaids or *kisaeng*s (professional woman entertainers) "who intervene between a man and his wife and complicate relationships of them all."[210] Another popular scenario often involves a young Buddhist monk trainee or acolyte practicing asceticism under a senior monk, "and who complicates [a situation] by getting involved in an illicit affair between a celibate monk and a temple-going woman."[211] The way in which humor operates and affects rational and moral conceits tends to be based on a single principle: surprise. The consequential effect of the unexpected is necessarily predicated on an assumed expectation. This, in turn, can vary depending on the intent and subject in which the unexpected encounter arises. The intent behind humor is of

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[207] Hi Kyung Moon, "Park Ji-Won (1737-1805)," in *Korean Classical Literature: An Anthology*, 15.
[208] Hi Kyung Moon, "Park Ji-Won (1737-1805)," in *Korean Classical Literature: An Anthology*,16.
[209] Levy, *Korean Sex Jokes in Traditional Times,*1.
[210] Tok-soon Chang, "Humour in Old Korean Novels," in *Humour in Korean Literature*, ed. Shin-Yong Chun (Seoul: International Cultural Foundation, 1977), 16.
[211] Tok-soon Chang, "Humour in Old Korean Novels," in *Humour in Korean Literature*, 16.

particular interest here.

Early stories involving an oversexed *yangban* (noble gentleman) appear in "Ch'ongp'a Kuktam [청파 국담] by Yi Yuk, an anthology of the narratives of the early period of the Yi [Chosŏn] dynasty in the 15th century." [212]

Stories containing explicit sexual humor were initially shared verbally among the working class, but they were "were faithfully recorded by famous Korean scholar-officials when they happened to be living in the countryside, there on assignment or there due to illness or retirement."[213] In Korea, writers of humble origin were few. The civil service examination system set the mode of life for the literati. From childhood, virtually all aspirants to public service were trained in and read the same, primarily Chinese, works."[214] Men at court interacted with and encouraged each other, but there was always a competitive atmosphere, which brought all aspects of the human character. An observant writer was thus privy to human nature and all its nuances and flaws, which might inspire subjects for writing, but none that would be deemed relevant to the Chinese classics for which they were primarily responsible. The scholar-officials who recorded the jokes obtained them from the local villagers though exchanging pleasantries, "and later wrote down the things they had heard which struck them as funny and original."[215] In Levy's opinion, these stories are authentic, and without equal in terms of their candor and erotic humor in China or Japan. Their appeal to both the lower and upper classes speaks to the nature of such

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[212] Tok-soon Chang, "Humour in Old Korean Novels," in *Humour in Korean Literature*, 17.
[213] Levy, *Korean Sex Jokes in Traditional Times,*1.
[214] Lee, *A Korean Storyteller's Miscellany: The P'aegwan Chapki of Ŏ Sukkwŏn,* 7.
[215] Levy, *Korean Sex Jokes in Traditional Times*1.

humor and its roots in social taboo; "'since sex and viciousness comprise the two major streams of impulse we normally try to control, it should come as no surprise that they fuel our gustiest laughter…Ribald humor draws its sustenance from two main sources: sexual behavior and elimination of body wastes'"[216]

What is worth noting is the way in which these humorous stories were propagated across social classes. As Lee's earlier observation pointed out, the lower classes were largely ignored when it came to Chosŏn's Confucian society and literature. With most written material done in Chinese, and transcribed by Confucian scholars, the majority of their writings served a didactic function, reinforcing Confucian societal structure and ideology. The inevitable result was that commoners in literature were consistently overlooked and under-represented. This changed, however, when scholar officials began recording the commoners' stories of humor and sexual impropriety. Levy observes that the stories must have been written as they were heard. He comes to this conclusion in noting that "generally [the jokes and stories] are free of Confucian bias and, in terms of Eros, they ring true."[217] The stories illustrate another key aspect of humor as a means to escape from one's day-to-day banality. "…Every aspect of our existence, from the most trivial to the most profound, is molded by group expectations. It should come as no surprise, then, that the sight of a comic ignoring conventions excites us…because it provides us, vicariously, a moment of freedom from the prisons of our adjustments."[218] The strict social and moral code prescribed by the Confucian ideology meant that stories that defied its

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[216] Victor Raskin, *Semantics of Humor* (Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1985), 39-40.
[217] Levy, *Korean Sex Jokes in Traditional Times*, 2.
[218] Victor Raskin, *Semantics of Humor* (Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1985), 39.

convention could be considered instructive in moral conduct. In one of his comments following a story called "Three Vaginal Hairs Afloat" Levy notes some famous classical lines of poetry by Tang dynasty poet Li Po (701-762) in reference to urinating and farting, and unsuccessful bedroom forays. Levy admits their inclusion in a story so sexually explicit implies "that at times the Korean villagers must have liked to poke fun at sententious Confucian sayings and approved literature."[219] Levy notes that seven "of the ten joke books [transcribed by Cho Yong-am] are attributed to well-known authors, who in their prefaces try to anticipate and counter arguments that much of what they are presenting is injurious to social mores and lacking in social worth."[220] Scholars in Western and Asian humor note that the reader of lucid tales, and likes them, runs the risk of becoming subject to their adverse influence. If, however, the reader finds no pleasure in the unconventional behavior they depict, then the stories "can serve a didactic purpose as tales which warn against wrongdoing. In other words, the moral is in the reader's reactions to the printed page, not in the printed page itself. A few of our authors point out that even Confucius didn't mind selecting that which was wild and profligate, provided there was a moral intent behind the selection."[221] Chosŏn Korea was a society steeped in Confucian ideology and mores; that some tales of subversive behavior and reckless decorum were widely circulated across the otherwise strict social strata speaks to the allure of humor, and its ability to unite.

There was a deliberate distinction made, however, in how different forms of literature were regarded during the Chosŏn period. Like everything in society,

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[219] Levy, *Korean Sex Jokes in Traditional Times*.
[220] Levy, *Korean Sex Jokes in Traditional Times*, 2.
[221] Levy, *Korean Sex Jokes in Traditional Times*, 3.

literature was according a kind of ranking system as well, with Confucian texts at the top, while literature dealing with the human experience and social interactions fell under "literary miscellany."[222] This body of literature was regarded as peripheral to the Confucian canon, but was still regarded as valid because of its authors – those same Confucian scholars who wrote within the canon, also wrote outside it, which granted them liberties in making observations and assertions about their everyday surroundings. "What led to the efflorescence of such collections in the [Chosŏn] dynasty", Lee asks. "More widespread literacy, an increase in the number of men of letters, a wider circle of cultivated readers, greater leisure for the lettered classes, and the position of the writer in the bureaucracy and in society as a while were contributing causes."[223]

As a literary genre, the miscellany expressed "the values and visions of the learned community and the habits of mind of its authors. Regardless of the birth and status of its author, a literary miscellany bore more or less the same validity and authority as other texts written in classical Chinese."[224] Levy's collection of sex jokes and stories, then, fall into this category, but with the significant distinction of originating from the common, rather than the "learned" community.

On depictions of character in Korean literature, Lee says, "Korean portraits were not always psychological or moral in intent. He was not writing a biography, but he still had to sum up his subject's character. Generally, the writer was not a [taxonomist] of social types, or a moralist out to assail vice. He might voice moral indignation, but he

[222] Lee, *A Korean Storyteller's Miscellany: The P'aegwan Chapki of Ŏ Sukkwŏn,* xiii.
[223] Lee, *A Korean Storyteller's Miscellany: The P'aegwan Chapki of Ŏ Sukkwŏn,*7.
[224] Lee, *A Korean Storyteller's Miscellany: The P'aegwan Chapki of Ŏ Sukkwŏn,* xiii.

usually refrained from overt disapproval, biting irony, or pungent satire."[225]

Chang declares that the humor found in these narratives is not based in satire or insult, "but it has a way of penetrating with unflinching good-will the sham façade of man."[226] Avoidance of a mean-spirited humor is deemed more in keeping with the Korean personality, according to Chang. So-called "genuine humor" is found "not in unearthing and condemning the irrationality or banality of life, but in trying to recognize the merit of a virtue, the happiness of an innocent mind, and the love of a pure heart, all of which are buried in it."[227] If satire is to be interpreted as being suggestive of a negative approach, humor may be regarded as a upholding an affirmative outlook on life. Stories in which young student monks outwit their masters to expose their hypocritical behavior (often involving a woman) frequently appear in Korean narrative literature.[228] The humor in these stories can be of a more "aggressive" nature, according to Chang, that can verge on cruelty. The protagonists are usually the student monks who act in a way that both humiliates their masters (who ought to behave better), and saves their masters from "committing social crimes, even as they go about cheating them."[229]

Leonard Feinberg believes "a great deal of satiric humor clearly depends on the superiority the reader or viewer feels to the butt of the joke…Many scholars think that almost all humor stems from the feeling of superiority, the satisfaction derived from

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[225] Lee, *A Korean Storyteller's Miscellany: The P'aegwan Chapki of Ŏ Sukkwŏn,* 7.
[226] Tok-soon Chang, "Humour in Old Korean Novels," in *Humour in Korean Literature*, 17.
[227] Tok-soon Chang, "Humour in Old Korean Novels," in *Humour in Korean Literature*, 19.
[228] Tok-soon Chang, "Humour in Old Korean Novels," in *Humour in Korean Literature*, 19.
[229] Tok-soon Chang, "Humour in Old Korean Novels," in *Humour in Korean Literature*, 19-20.

the discomfiture of someone, under conditions that do not threaten the safety or comfort of the laugher."[230] Within different cultures and societies, humor is often found in the misfortunes or discomfort of others. "It is a serious risk to introduce a naked body into a work of literature."[231] When a man appears naked in a story, it is awkward., but when the woman remains fully dressed, it is even more awkward. The story of Chief Aide Pae and Pangja is successful as a work of humor "due to the humor of the language used, the behavior of the humorous human beings…and the effective blending of all the elements that are centered on these factors with the customs and mores and the feelings of the Korean people."[232] The visual absurdity that the story presents provides humor as well. The shocking image of an official standing naked next to his servant, Pangja on its own might be amusing or a little disturbing.

The fact that the official continues to behave as if all is normal and maintains an air of dignity provides the contextual juxtaposition of the familiar and the ludicrous that leads to a humorous reception. Again, the humor is tainted with a slight element of cruelty at Chief Aide Pae's expense, but it is countered by the way he maintains his dignity even as he is humiliated by his cunning servant. The extremity of the situation and Chief Aide Pae's ability to maintain his composure is at the root of the satirical humor and illustrates Chang's point that, "An exaggeration is not amusing in itself.

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[230] Leonard Feinberg, ed., *Asian Laughter: An Anthology of Oriental Satire and Humor* (New York: John Weatherhill, Inc., 1971), 17.
[231] Tok-soon Chang, "Humour in Old Korean Novels," in *Humour in Korean Literature*, 23-24.
[232] Tok-soon Chang, "Humour in Old Korean Novels," in *Humour in Korean Literature*, 24.

But the hero who keeps his head in the vortex of exaggerations is humorous."[233]

The Story of Hung-bu or Hung-bu Chon

Chang introduces this story as "one of the three great classical novels of Korea together with Ch'un-hyang Chon or The Story of Miss Spring Fragrance and Sim-ch'ong Chon, or The Story of Simch'ong…"[234] It is a tale of two brothers, the older of whom is called Nol-bu (Lazy Man), and the younger is the hero, Hung-bu (Prosperous Man). In typical folktale fashion the two brothers represent extreme opposites in human nature**,** one being very lazy, cruel and selfish, the other being hardworking, kind and generous.

Chang argues there are three basic elements to this story that make it so amusing. First, the contrasting characters of the story, being brothers and being so different, sets up dynamic tension between their two personalities. He argues that even the hero, Hung-bu is a "moronic figure [yet amusing]…as he is much too powerless for all his gentle heart and honesty…", and second, that such extreme character portrayals "are primarily designed to portray humor" and thus fortify the novel with "idiosyncratic Korean idioms, proverbs and folk customs, all of which are given a versatile and extensive treatment so that the reader is kept laughing…."[235] Thirdly, Chang states that the story's "charm…lies in the fact that the content of the story and the

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[233] Tok-soon Chang, "Humour in Old Korean Novels," in *Humour in Korean Literature*, 21.
[234] Tok-soon Chang, "Humour in Old Korean Novels," in *Humour in Korean Literature*, 24.
[235] Tok-soon Chang, "Humour in Old Korean Novels," in *Humour in Korean Literature*, 25.

techniques of description are free of prudery even tough its theme is centered ….on the prudish lesson of 'rewarding virtue and reproving vice.'"[236]

Hung-bu is forced to take his family into the woods, away from his older brother and his wife, but they soon are on the brink of starvation. Hung-bu is forced to go to his sister-in-law and beg for food, whereupon she slaps him in the face with a rice paddle. The scene is meant to evoke laughter from the reader, but for me, the scene is more cruel and humiliating.

Hung-bu is further humiliated by the offer of getting flogged in another man's place, and in return he would be paid. Later the man is pardoned, thereby saving Hung-bu from his flogging, but at the same time denying him the payment he might have earned. Chang points out that it is at this point "The readers of The Story of Hung-bu will find it hard to resist the urge to laugh at the hapless Hung-bu before they simply shed sympathetic tears for him." In so saying, Chang identifies both the humor and the poignancy of Hung-bu's situation. This addresses the link between humor and tragedy; as Chang notes, "this work must be re-evaluated based on the fact that it has sublimated the otherwise tragic material into such a work of humor."[237] This quality of humor was repeatedly mentioned in the reviews from the two major exhibitions of Korean art following the war.

Stories like Hung-bu were popular during Chosŏn and the demand and consumption of them increased as the literate population grew.

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[236] Tok-soon Chang, "Humour in Old Korean Novels," in *Humour in Korean Literature*, 25.
[237] Tok-soon Chang, "Humour in Old Korean Novels," in *Humour in Korean Literature*, 33.

Poetry and P'ansori

In addition to the stories above, *P'ansori* is deeply rooted in popular art."[238] It therefore shares some characteristics with genre paintings, particularly the albums, for their frank portrayals of human experiences. Unlike mask dance or folk songs….[*p'ansori*] have a depth and versatility is accessible to a much larger and more diverse audience. Most significant in this context, *p'ansori* includes the use of "extreme comic expression, witticisms that make the audience burst into laughter, and the caricature of Confucian ideas and taboos."[239] As an popular art form, it was able to convey thoughts and perspectives from all facets of society, rooting its popularity among commoners, but rapidly spreading to the upper classes and even royalty, but always at its heart "one finds the vivacious language of the common people combined with a simple grace**."[240]**

Traditionally consisting of a single singer and a drummer, some *p'ansori* performances grew to include several musicians and one or two singers to tell popular stories.

"As *p'ansori* became fixed narratives, circulating as reading materials, they created a readership for *p'ansori* fiction and contributed significantly to the development of realistic depictions of the commoners' social condition in late Chosŏn."[241] The oral narrative frequently described the challenges and trials faced by commoners in their daily lives. In this way, the performances were respectful of the common man.

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[238] Hŭnggyu Kim, "P'ansori," in *A History of Korean Literature*, ed. Peter H. Lee (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 288.
[239] Ibid.
[240] Ibid.
[241] Hŭnggyu Kim, "P'ansori," in *A History of Korean Literature*, 289.

Kim argues that the departure from purely shamanistic song narratives to *p'ansori* was driven by the demands of the public; "Originally a ritual performed by a shaman meant a religious ceremony, but it also connoted 'a spectacle worth seeing,' suggesting a continuous historical transformation…. *P'ansori* thus stepped outside the boundaries of shamanist ritual and established itself as narrative song - an artistic form appropriate for the demands of the new era."[242] By the eighteenth century, *p'ansori* "had reached a highly cultured and refined level and had begun to appeal to the upper class. Even literati who had earlier shown contempt toward the popular art were impressed."[243]

As *p'ansori* gained more diverse audiences, performers began to diversify their subjects; "assimilating various elements drawn from folk, shaman, and popular songs current at the time, they gathered together various musical forms and transformed the *p'ansori* narratives into an art form."[244] A key development in these transformations was the introduction of more "satirical and humorous expressive [forms] by presenting the various aspects of the commoner's everyday life as both sad and ridiculous."[245] The exposure of *p'ansori* to upper class audiences, garnered more wealthy and literati members in the audience for p'ansori performances. "Among the folk arts enjoyed by the upper class at this time, it was *p'ansori t*hat resulted in the new audiences."[246] With a more sophisticated audience, specific criteria was established to identify "masters" of *p'ansori* from the mediocre. Like painters, examinations were introduced to singers training to be *p'ansori* performers. Singers

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[242] Hŭnggyu Kim, "P'ansori," in *A History of Korean Literature*, 290.
[243] Hŭnggyu Kim, "P'ansori," in *A History of Korean Literature*, 291.
[244] Ibid.
[245] Ibid.
[246] Hŭnggyu Kim, "P'ansori," in *A History of Korean Literature*, 293.

became increasingly aware of the significance of the literati as their audience, and that gaining favor from them was equivalent to passing the civil service examination. This was the reason for gathering, singing in various modes, and competing against one another; "to be recognized and appreciated by the literati."[247] This has continued today, with contemporary *p'ansori* performers competing against each other at festivals throughout the year.

The contribution of *p'ansori* to the art and culture of Korea during Chosŏn was its celebration of the common human experience. As Kim concludes,

> human relationships and moral consciousness were portrayed with a versatile sense of reality in *p'ansori*. The characters in the world of *p'ansori* are neither unequivocally good nor evil but possess multidimensional characteristics. Recognizing all these diverse aspects, the singers perform various events and scenes with a great flexibility that is rooted in a sense of reality found in the lives of the common people. As a result, *p'ansori* was able to endow its various colorful characters with three-dimensional verisimilitude and achieve literary success by depicting the problems of the time either directly or through allegory and farce.[248]

Painting

The preceding sections discussed aspects of Chosŏn society and its social and moral codes that provided outlets for humor to arise in literature and performing arts as a form of social commentary. The Chosŏn period was fertile ground for such astute observations to be made, given the strict social order and moral doctrines enforced at

[247] Hŭnggyu Kim, "P'ansori," in *A History of Korean Literature*, 294.
[248] Hŭnggyu Kim, "P'ansori," in *A History of Korean Literature*,302.

the time. The period of Korean art that is arguably the most cited for providing evidence of Korea's supposed characteristic humor, is the Chosŏn, more specifically, the late Chosŏn. The eighteenth century was ruled by a single royal family, beginning with King Yŏngjo (r. 1724-1776), who was succeeded by his grandson, King Jŏngjo (r. 1776-1800). During this period, "what can be called a Korean school emerged." It is here that "true-view" landscape painting began, marking a departure by Korean painters from the classic Chinese painting manuals.

Fig. 2.16

Kim Che 김제 (1524 – 1593)
Boy Pulling a Donkey
Ink and colour on silk
Ho-Am Art Museum

Kwon points out that in Kim Che's *Boy Pulling a Donkey*, "the sense of humor in the painting is an important factor and a pleasant surprise in that it was born out in the

mind of a dignifed Confucian scholar."[249] Kim introduces a human narrative of a familiar experience in in an otherwise traditional literati painting. Kwon's observation highlights the surprise in encountering the narrative, but also the significance of the painter's social standing. That a well-read and well-bred Confucian scholar would deliberately include a humorous scene in a classical landscape is a departure from convention, and refreshingly delightful because of it.

Fig. 2.17

Chŏng Sŏn 정선 (1676–1759)
Panoramic View of Kŭmgang Mountains
1734
Ink and light colour on paper
130.7 cm × 94.1 cm
Ho-Am Art Museum
National Treasure No. 217

Leaders in this new movement were Chŏng Sŏn (1676-1759) and Kim Hong-do (1745- ?) among others. Following their pioneering approaches to native subjects, Chosŏn painters "took up themes from the daily life of contemporary Koreans with

[249] Young-pil Kwon, "The Ideals of Scholar Painting of the Chosŏn Period," in *The Fragrance of Ink: Korean Literati Paintings of the Chosŏn Dynasty (1392-1910)* (Chicago: The David and Alfred Smart Museum of Art, University of Chicago, 1996), 158.

keen interest and sympathy. The painters, both professionals and amateurs alike, also made sketches of actual landscapes which looked more familiar and closer to Koreans than the imaginary, manual-copied landscapes…in the Chinese manner."[250]

Genre paintings (*pungsokhwa*, 풍속화), sometimes referred to as "common—or vulgar- paintings" (*sokhw*a, 속화) gained popularity from the end of King Yeongjo's reign (1724-1776) through King Jŏngjo, and into King Sunjo's reign.[251] During this period a new class emerged, the merchant class (*sangin*, 상인) who found themselves with considerable funds in a short period of time. They became the "nouveau riche" or "fake nobility," and adopted some favorite pass times of the aristocracy, including acquiring and collecting paintings. In this way, genre painting gained a wider viewership and demand. In this way, the "standard by which paintings were seen, changed, the class demanding the paintings changed, and the idea of beauty in painting changed, as well."[252]

This chapter began by pointing out the use of humor as a critical tool with moral integrity being the incentive for exposing social and political inequalities and hypocrisy. The moral stricture of Confucian society and the discrepancies across classes offer possibilities for why and how humor thrived and rose to prominence as a consistently recognized characteristic of Korean art and culture among scholars. It

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[250] Kim, "Philosophies and Styles in Korean Art: A Prelude to the History of Korean Art," 18.
[251] Dong-Ju Lee, *The Beauty of Old Korean Paintings: A History and an Appreciation*, trans. Robert Carruba and Kyongsook Kim (Seoul: Saffron Books, Eastern Art Publishing (EAP), 1996), 21.
[252] Dong-Ju Lee, *The Beauty of Old Korean Paintings: A History and an Appreciation*, 21.

also examined significant efforts made by Korea after the war in establishing itself politically as a culturally independent and resilient nation.

Fig. 2.18

Kim Hong-do (Danwŏn) 김홍도 (1745 - ca.1806)
Album of Genre Paintings by Danwon,
벼타작(Threshing rice)
ink and light color on paper
National Museum of Korea
Treasure No. 527

The next chapter will look at humor's continued application to differing aspects of Korean culture, including sports events, and the continuation of its pervasive presence across different media and periods of Korea's history where the significance of Chosŏn will feature prominently over the next twenty years (1970s-1990s).

Chapter 3
Reinforcing the Message of Korean Art: 1970s-1990s

Cultural Identity and Terminology

Perhaps John K. Kim's reflections best sum up the state of Korean art and the awareness of it among scholars in the West in the late 1970s. In his editor's remarks and acknowledgements for *Korean Art Seen Through Museums* (1979), he recounts his experience of thumbing through two books on art, one devoted to Asian (Oriental) art, and the other to the art of the world. In each he reports to being left disappointed at their omission and oversight of Korea as a contributor to the world of art, in favor of examples from China and Japan. He is quick to say that these countries are not to blame for this oversight, but lays the blame firmly with "the political weaknesses of Korea…"[253] There is a an unmistakable tone of frustration in Kim's text, who seems no longer content to accept the obscurity of Korea's cultural presence and national identity can be blamed on the overwhelming influence of China, and the dominating presence of Japan. The motivation behind the collaborative effort of *Korean Art as Seen Through Museums* is, as Kim proclaims, "an attempt to help rectify the enormous unvaluation of Korean art and fill in the void of printed Western-language publications about Korean art for a growing number of art-loving Westerners."[254]

Yanagi's theories and influence on Korean art continued to be felt in the early 1980s, though his concept of sorrow appears to have been dismissed in favor of "spontaneity, "as Kim Wŏn-yong's words illustrate. He wrote of Yanagi in 1983:

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[253] John K. Kim, ed., *Korean Art Seen Through Museums* (Seoul: Easter Media, 1979), xix.
[254] John K. Kim, ed., *Korean Art Seen Through Museums* (Seoul: Easter Media, 1979), xx.

> [As] an enthusiastic Japanese connoisseur of Korean art, [he] has most passionately insisted on spontaneity as the main characteristic of Korean art. In his book titled "Chosŏn to Sono Geijutsu (Korea and her Art) published in 1922, he observes that the beauty of Yi pottery is a beauty that antecedes a concept of what is beautiful or ugly. 'It (the beauty) is not made by man but endowed by nature,' he contends. 'It is born as a result of Korean potters' complete trust in nature, of their freedom from a worldly ambition for human perfection.'[255]

Kim notes, "this nonchalance that Yanagi sees as a virtue seems to accord with what [Dietrich] Seckel means by spontaneity."[256] Kim makes clear that he does not oppose the Seckel's assertion that vitality, spontaneity and unconcern for technical perfection are characteristics of Korean art. He does, however, remark that while Seckel's assessment may be valid, it remains indeterminate enough to require additional analysis from fresh theoretical angles for sufficient support.[257] It is in this instance where the subtle shift in terminology and meaning can be witnessed. Where what Yanagi describes as "freedom from…perfection" is called "nonchalance," which becomes "spontaneity." In light of the numerous theories of humor and its often-

[255] Wŏn-yong Kim, "Philosophies and Styles in Korean Art: A Prelude to the History of Korean Art," in *Tradtional Korean Art*, ed. UNESCO Korean National Commission (Korea: The Si-sa-yong-o-sa Publishers, Inc., 1983), 9.
[256] Wŏn-yong Kim, "Philosophies and Styles in Korean Art: A Prelude to the History of Korean Art," in *Tradtional Korean Art*, ed. UNESCO Korean National Commission (Korea: The Si-sa-yong-o-sa Publishers, Inc., 1983), 9.
[257] Wŏn-yong Kim, "Philosophies and Styles in Korean Art: A Prelude to the History of Korean Art," in *Traditional Korean Art*, ed. UNESCO Korean National Commission (Korea: The Si-sa-yong-o-sa Publishers, Inc., 1983), 9.

recognized spontaneous quality.[258] The American art historian, Evelyn McCune (1907-2012), born in Pyongyang (North) Korea argued that "refinement and crudeness are the two polarizing qualities existing in Korean art. Both qualities, she states, reveal honesty and contribute to strength, or vitality. Here the honesty is purity, a trust in nature."[259]

By this time, Korean art is regarded, in fact, as "solid, straightforward and modest and there is no sign of the classicism of Chinese intellects nor the technicality of the Japanese."[260] Kim's general assessment of all of the above opinions is that they can all "be summed up in Dietrich Seckel's terms of vitality, spontaneity and disregard for technical perfection. "Vitality," Seckel wrote, "is a strength resulting from the nonchalance of a creator who is free from hesitation, free from the conflict between the beautiful and the ugly."[261] He continued to say that the strength [of the creator] is even enhanced as he reduces decorations and makes the best of the virtue of his material itself, the texture and natural grain, for example, in the case of wood. This tendency is closely related, in the end, to the second and third virtues we

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[258] In Victor Raskin's *Semantics of Humor* (1985), Stephen Leacock is quoted for offering the following conditions for humor: "The humor…arises…out of any set of circumstances that involve discomfiture or disaster of some odd incongruous kind, not connected with the ordinary run of things…" in Raskin, Semantics of Humor (Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1985), 15. For more on Stephen Leacock's discussion on humor, please refer to his book, *Humor: Its Theory and Technique* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1935).
[259] Wŏn-yong Kim, "Philosophies and Styles in Korean Art: A Prelude to the History of Korean Art," in *Traditional Korean Art*, ed. UNESCO Korean National Commission (Korea: The Si-sa-yong-o-sa Publishers, Inc., 1983), 10.
[260] R. Griffing, *The Art of the Korean Potter* (New York: Asia House Gallery, 1968).
[261] Kim, "Philosophies and Styles in Korean Art: A Prelude to the History of Korean Art," 10.

have…discussed, spontaneity and unconcern for technical perfection."[262] Kim writes that spontaneity is "dual in nature." The same can be said of humor, in that it carries both positive (playful) and negative (satirical/ironic) connotations. Kim describes spontaneity in that by asserting than an artist's attitude toward his work as well as his taste for a spontaneous quality is required.

There is also "the tendency of leaving pottery undecorated in Korean art. An undecorated object elicits a delightful [playful? humorous?] feeling of expanded space leading to the lack of artificial pretense. Kim continues to say that the "third and last virtue in question, unconcern for technical perfection, is revealed in Korean artisans' use of warped pieces of wood as beams, pillars and brackets in building a house. It is also reflected in a slightly deformed, crudely glazed bowl from such qualities. St. G.M. Gompertz, an English specialist and collector, explains: 'The Korean potters were often careless or inexpert in technique: they were more concerned to achieve an artistic effect and seldom paid attention to detail.'" (11) What this fails to recognize is the technical skill and virtuosity of Koryŏ dynasty celadons – It appears that "spontaneity" is accepted word here, being attributed to both the Korean sense of "nonchalance" as well as what Kim calls "docile adaptation in natural environments", which is to say, honesty. As Kim writes, "it is not of fraudulent nature. There is honesty in it [Korean art]."[263] Nature features as a symbol for truth and honesty. There is honesty in humor, as well.

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[262] Kim, "Philosophies and Styles in Korean Art: A Prelude to the History of Korean Art,"11.
[263] Kim, "Philosophies and Styles in Korean Art: A Prelude to the History of Korean Art," 11.

Fig. 3.1
Jar with Tiger and Magpie motif
stoneware with copper red glaze, 28.7 x 25.1 cm
late 18th c.
Japan Folk Crafts Museum

The "honesty" of Korean art may be linked to what Kim describes as a "submissiveness to and love of nature, lack of artificial consciousness" which he says has been a characteristic applied to Korean art, but he does not say by whom, or from when this characteristic was applied to Korean art. Because of the submissive attitude held by Koreans, their art "has developed within the framework of naturalism." Kim does admit that "naturalism as such is a vague term. To make it more precise, the Koreans' philosophy lies not in a man-oriented idealism but in a naturalism oriented by nature."[264] Finally Kim asks the question of the moment: "where and how have such characters of Korean art been formed?"[265] The challenge of defining and analyzing this "naturalism" stems from the relative obscurity from which it was derived. Kim's answer is that they have no doubt come from a national character

[264] Kim, "Philosophies and Styles in Korean Art: A Prelude to the History of Korean Art," 11.
[265] Kim, "Philosophies and Styles in Korean Art: A Prelude to the History of Korean Art," 11-12.

motivated by historical context. Kim illustrates the geography and history of Korea as impacting the "love of nature in the mind of Koreans."[266]

A "love of nature", a "lack of artificial consciousness," a "framework of naturalism" are all expressions that have been used to describe the art of Korea and sometimes applied to characterize the Korean people. They are also vague, subjective, and open to interpretation. The limits of language and the infinite ways in which its terms and meanings can be interpreted contribute to the general acceptance of such non-specific descriptives. And yet, there is a consistency to how and what these generalities are applied. An example for "love of nature" is Korean painter Pyŏn Sang-pyŏk's 변상벽 (1730 - ?) and his painting *Myojakdo* 묘작도 (Painting of Cats and Sparrows). His close observations and faithful rendering of his subjects also provides evidence for "truth and honesty." The painting is a national treasure. It is also consistently identified for its humor. Pyŏn combines his knowledge of Chinese to make a visual and verbal pun. *Mao* 貓 is "cat" in Chinese, but also sounds like *mao*, which means septuagenarian in Chinese. The cats in the painting represent the two septuagenarians (seventy-year olds). *Jak* means "sparrow", but also sounds like *jak* for a government position. Oh concludes the couple must have had six sons, and that the painting "was intended to express wishes that the old man…may live in comfort with his wife and that all his sons may have high positions, like the sparrows merrily chirping in the branches."[267]

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[266] Kim, "Philosophies and Styles in Korean Art: A Prelude to the History of Korean Art,"12.
[267] Ju-seok Oh, *Special Lecture on Korean Paintings*, trans. Subun Lee and Yoon-jung Cho (Seoul: Hollym Corp. Publishers, 2011). 131-132.

Fig. 3.2

Pyŏn Sang-pyŏk 변상벽 (1730 - ?)
Myojakdo 묘작도 (Painting of Cats and Sparrows), ink and color on silk, 93.7 x 42.9 cm., National Museum of Korea

"The new movement in painting coincided with the efforts made by contemporary Yi scholars to improve social conditions and strengthen national identity by promoting practical knowledge rather than studying the metaphysical theories of Confucianism. It was a national reaction against the two foreign invasions around 1600."[268] Perhaps this is what Yanagi was referring to when he mentioned the solidarity or oneness of Korean art.

The search for "Koreaness" in art continues, with scholars revisiting the topic that Chŏng Sŏn discovered in the 18th century, and for which he is celebrated and recognized today: the native Korean landscape. The Korean love and appreciation for

[268] Kim, "Philosophies and Styles in Korean Art: A Prelude to the History of Korean Art," 18-19.

nature has already been mentioned; the idea is applied more specifically to the Korean peninsula's flora and fauna. In her thesis entitled, "Korean Humor in Landscape: Reading Humor in Korean Traditional Space, Dreaming the Restoration of Old Sentiment" (2004), Han Sung-Mi describes humor in the Korean context as a metaphor for "softness, warmth and humanity"[269] As her focus is on traditional Korean architecture and constructed spaces, she argues that the inclusion of "cute" animal sculptures in sites like Kyŏngbok Palace add a touch of humor and warmth to a traditionally formal, if not austere, space.

Figs. 3.3 and 3.4

Guardian animals (dog and tiger)
Kyŏngbok Palace, Seoul
2006.
(author photo credit)

[269] Han, Sung-Mi. "Korean Humor in Landscape: Reading Humor in Korean Traditional Space, Dreaming the Restoration of Old Sentiment." Diss. Louisiana State University, 2004.

In architectural design, she argues the presence of humor creates intimacy between the viewer and the design; it is a catalyst between designers and viewers for communication. Han does not articulate what is being communicated, only emphasizes a spark of imagination and the sensation of "a warm heart and tranquil smile."[270] This must be the "humorous effect" to which Kwon refers in Korean art generally.[271]

Han's "softness, warmth, and humanity" descriptors for the animal sculptures populating palatial grounds touches on Kim Wŏn-Yong's discussion of the significance of Korea's history and its agency in shaping the Korean psyche. "[H]istorical background seems to have played a great part in the formation of…national traits, such as tolerance of reality, resignation, an optimistic philosophy, naturalness, escapism, and dislike of artificialness. But this reasoning still remains short of what can really support our discussions on the character of Koreans and their art. A more satisfying answer can be found in a careful synthetic consideration of various elements, such as topography, geography, history, cultural environment and life-style that constitute a specific composite whole."[272] National identity, Kim concludes, is the result of many factors working together over time "in a specific pattern of environment. Characteristics of art are of course formed by a cultural tradition and they contribute in turn to the formation of a cultural tradition."[273]

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[270] Han, 'Theoretical Analysis of the Humor in Korean Traditional Space,' 2004: 99.
[271] Please refer to the discussion in the Introduction that introduces Kwon Young-Pil's article, "Humor, an Aesthetic Value in Korean Art: Especially as expressed in scholarly painting" (1997).
[272] Kim, "Philosophies and Styles in Korean Art: A Prelude to the History of Korean Art," 12-13.
[273] Kim, "Philosophies and Styles in Korean Art: A Prelude to the History of Korean Art," 13.

Rise of Korean Studies

By 1979, there was enough Korean art distributed across enough museum collections to warrant John Kim's book, *Korean Art Seen Through Museums*, which he dedicated to "the Citizens of the World Who Love Art Across Their National Borders."[274] Contributors to the book included Jon Carter Covell, described as the first Westerner (a graduate of Columbia University) to earn a doctoral degree in "Far Eastern art;" Kim Wŏn-yong, who at the time of publication was one of Korea's leading archaeologists and was Director of the National Museum of Korea (hereafter NMK); Hwang Su-young, a Korean professor of Buddhist art and Dean of Dongkuk University's Graduate School in Seoul; Choe Sunu, then current Director of the NMK and a contributing author to *Korea, its Land, People and Culture of All Ages* (Seoul, 1963); Li Ogg, an assistant professor at the University of Paris VII and then current director of the Center of Korean Studies at the Université de France; Edward Adams, an author on Korean culture and tourism for English readers; Chon Syng-boc, a Korean art history professor from Hongik University and former culture editor of the Korea Herald; and finally John K. Kim, a professional journalist and Department head of International Communications at the Hankuk University of Foreign Studies.[275] Within the first two paragraphs of the Preface, the "national identity of Korea" is remarked upon and acknowledged as rising from virtual non-existence under Japanese Occupation, to undeniable distinction "from that of other Asian nations."[276] Throughout the text, the confirmation of Korea's national identity and distinction is

[274] R. Griffing, *The Art of the Korean Potter* (New York: Asia House Gallery, 1968).
[275] John K. Kim, ed., *Korean Art Seen Through Museums* (Seoul: Easter Media, 1979), viii-ix.
[276] John K. Kim, ed., *Korean Art Seen Through Museums* (Seoul: Easter Media, 1979), xvi.

reinforced. The painter Chŏng Sŏn is lauded as the only one among his peers "who was awakened to the national identity of Korean painting and poured his passion into sketching the real landscape of his country."[277]

The 1988 Seoul Olympics

In the 1980s, Korea's economic rebirth was well underway, with a thriving labor force and auto industry, increased urbanization, and a healthy middle class, the country was reaping the benefits of global influences. Cultural identity, however, remained elusive, prompting the government to initiate an effort to popularize native culture with the slogan, *munhwa hyangsu kihŏ hwakdae* (문화 행수기허 확대,"culture for everyone").[278]

There is perhaps no more compelling event for demonstrating and promoting one's national pride and individuality than the international sports arena. Jarol B. Manheim suggests that when it comes to "less direct forms of so-called 'public diplomacy,' in which the government of one nation seeks to employ the media and public opinion of a second," major international sports events provide the opportunity for such endeavors.[279]

In presenting the Olympic Games, the host country necessarily enters into an agreement with the international public that, as host, it welcome the world's attention along with its atheletes. As such, the politics involved with such massive

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[277] Sunu Choe, "Korean Painting: An Original Contribution to Oriental Art," in *Korean Art Seen Through Museums*, ed. John K. Kim (Seoul: Samhwa Printing Co., Ltd., 1979), 152.
[278] Hong Kal, *Aesthetic Constructions of Korean Nationalism: Spectacle, Politics and History* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 88.
[279] Jarol B. Manheim, "Rites of Passage: The 1988 Seoul Olympics as Public Diplomacy," *The Western Political Quarterly* 43, no. 2 (June 1990): 279.

international events require diplomacy and self-awareness. As Manheim argues, it is "precisely because it holds the attention of large numbers of people in multiple countries and conveys to them simple and highly symbolic messages, high-level international sporting competition is inextricably linked with international politics."[280] South Korea's winning bid to host the 1988 Olympics in 1981 stoked the country's enthusiasm and anticipation of the event. It also prompted recognition and a growing self-awareness as "a member of the group of advanced nations and the renewal of collective identity sparked by a shared memory of colonialism."[281] During the years that preceding the Opening Ceremony, the Seoul established new infrastructures and cultural institutions in preparation for welcoming the world. In the process the nation's culture was redefined to be associated with modern and contemporary ideals, (근대,*kundae* and 현대,*hyondae*, respectively). [282]

Anyone who has ever watched an Olympics Opening Ceremony is witness to a literal parade of nationalistic elements including flags, uniforms, anthems, and commentary. The spectacle is intended to stir up national pride in one's country and engage audiences on an emotional level. The effect major sporting events have on the public imagination is hardly lost on politicians; from local mayors and aldermen throwing out first balls to begin the baseball season, to the President of the United States inviting the Super Bowl Champion team members to the White House, to having military or government dignitaries formally recognized before the commencement of a match, or tournament – the sporting event is never too far

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[280] Jarol B. Manheim, "Rites of Passage: The 1988 Seoul Olympics as Public Diplomacy," *The Western Political Quarterly* 43, no. 2 (June 1990): 279.
[281] Kal, *Aesthetic Constructions of Korean Nationalism: Spectacle, Politics and History*, 88.
[282] Ibid.

removed from political interests, especially the international variety. There is not any international competition more subject to such politicization than the quadrennial world's fair that is the Olympic Games.[283] Small surprise then, that the South Korean government's bid in 1981 to host the 1988 summer Olympic Games was motivated by political and economic objectives.

Prior to making its bid, there were three key issues that confronted South Korea. The first was the 1979 - assassination of then South Korean president Park Chung Hee in 1979. This event sparked off a period of political instability and violent confrontations between government military forces and student demonstrators. In 1980 clashes came to a head in Kwangju and the escalated level of violence earned unwanted international attention. In an effort to assist South Korea's military forces, the United States dispatched naval support to aid General Chun Doo Hwan on 4 June, leading to the establishment of a de facto government the following day. Chun was officially inaugurated as the Republic of Korea's President on 2 September 1980.[284] The situation in which the new President Chun found himself involved three key issues: South Korea's economy was growing rapidly, shifting labor forces from agrarian to industrial markets; the future of the political scene was still undetermined, though expectations of its ascendency remained high, but among the younger population, skepticism and unwillingness to accept the new government was widespread; finally, North Korea remained hostile with assassinations of a number of South Korean officials in Burma and a bomb attack onboard a Korean Air flight. The tension these incidents caused only underscored the raw division of Korea to the

[283] Trevor Taylor, "Politics and the Olympic Spirit," in *The Politics of Sport*, ed. Allison Lincoln (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1986), 216–41.
[284] Manheim, "Rites of Passage: The 1988 Seoul Olympics as Public Diplomacy," 280.

world.

Olympic Arena on a Political Stage

All the above factors contributed to the South Korean government's decision to bid for hosting the 1988 summer Olympics. "Foremost in this decision," Manheim notes, "was the desire to call word attention to, and, not incidentally, to associate the new government with, the Korean economic miracle."[285] The peninsula was enjoying a period of economic vitality and expansion that the government was eager to showcase. The second motivation behind the bid according to Manheim was "the intense national pride sure to accompany selection and the preparations for the Games."[286] Here was an opportunity for Korea to prove to the world that despite its history, it was a resilient nation, unified in the spirit and love for sport and for its country. In this way, Japan may have contributed indirectly to the expectations now held by the South Korean government. The two nations' shared history that, for Japan, has earned Korea's enmity, but also reluctant recognition and appreciation for the economic development and infrastructure they introduced during their occupation. Lastly, the South Korean government was keenly aware of the still active antagonism from North Korea, and the need to address possibilities or conditions for reunification. A successful bid for the Olympics could simultaneously bring the threat of North Korea back to the world's attention, and also grant South Korea some "insurance against northern aggression" as long as the world's attention was held captive by the

[285] Manheim, "Rites of Passage: The 1988 Seoul Olympics as Public Diplomacy," 282. Manheim provides a thorough inventory of the economic contributions and progress made by South Korea at this time. For more details, please refer his article, pages 281-282.
[286] Manheim, "Rites of Passage: The 1988 Seoul Olympics as Public Diplomacy," 282.

anticipation of the Games.[287]

From an economic perspective, South Korea was much like Japan in 1964 when it bid for the Tokyo Olympics. By 1988, South Korea's auto industry was booming with a robust work force, and its middle class was very well educated and on the rise financially.[288] On the political front, South Korea's situation was more similar to Mexico's experience, with student uprisings and residual distrust of governing leadership. Mannheim argues that the clashes between the students and the government were the result of pressure "of rising expectations, [and] a lag between the political needs of an increasingly affluent population and the willingness of their government elite to open the political process to broader participation." [289] Mannheim argues that what may be of most interest "is the role played by the Olympics as a catalyst for political change."[290] The world's attention was fixed on South Korea, and therefore the civil unrest the students maintained, forcing the government make political concessions in order that they be seen more favorably by the international public. "In effect, the Olympic countdown marked a deadline for a restructuring of the political system."[291]

In his concluding remarks, Manheim claims that President Chun's

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[287] Manheim, "Rites of Passage: The 1988 Seoul Olympics as Public Diplomacy," 282..

[288] Manheim discusses the conditions and events surrounding Japan's 1964 Tokyo Olympics bid, as well as those of Mexico in 1968. Both countries experiences in bidding and hosting share common themes with Korea, though it is with Japan that a comparison is more closely made. For a full and detailed description of both countries' Olympic models, please refer to Manheim's article in full.

[289] Manheim, "Rites of Passage: The 1988 Seoul Olympics as Public Diplomacy," 291.

[290] Manheim, "Rites of Passage: The 1988 Seoul Olympics as Public Diplomacy," 291.

[291] Manheim, "Rites of Passage: The 1988 Seoul Olympics as Public Diplomacy," 292.

administration, and its decision to bid for the '88 Olympics proved to be successful, and "as a focal point for domestic political attention, the Seoul Olympics proved an effective generator of visibility and political awareness."[292] The impact of hosting the Olympics for any country can prove to be overwhelming for that host nation's government. As in the case with Mexico, Korea was forced to acquiesce to student demands and make political and social reforms under international scrutiny because of the Games. In light of Korea's experience in hosting the Games, Manheim imparts this admonition to any country entertaining thoughts of making a bid in the future, that:

> [It] might be useful to view the hosting of the Olympics as a highly dramatic, highly visible, quasi-historical, intermediate-length event which possesses a sufficient dynamic of its own, under certain circumstances, to overwhelm those who would use or control it. As such, the act of hosting the Olympics entails not only a set of potentially attractive opportunities for any government contemplating it, but a set of readily predictable and appreciable political risks as well.[293]

호돌이(Hodori): Portrait of a Nation

The belief that tigers brought good luck and offered protection against evil prompted people to hang paintings of tigers on the front doors of their homes and inspired the fantastical art and imagery of Korean tiger paintings today. One particular painting of a tiger was discovered in 1968 and became an internationally recognized symbol for Korea by the early 1970s. Zo Zayong (1926-2000), related the rapid popularity of the tiger's image as it was reproduced widely: "Soon his picture

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[292] Manheim, "Rites of Passage: The 1988 Seoul Olympics as Public Diplomacy," 292.
[293] Manheim, "Rites of Passage: The 1988 Seoul Olympics as Public Diplomacy," 293.

appeared in various newspapers and magazines. By the beginning of 1974, the tiger year, he had already traveled around Korean and Japan through exhibitions, and his face was becoming familiar to many friends from all over the world."[294]

Fig. 3.5
Magpie-Tiger Door Guardian
ink and color on mulberry paper, 55cm x 90cm
19th century
Samshin Hoegwan Teaching Center (formerly the Emille Museum), Songni-san National Park
Republic of Korea

The popularity of the tiger image spanned all aspects of Korean society; it became a logo for numerous distinguished institutions, and its immediate appeal to children transferred easily to the covers of children's storybooks. Reproductions of the tiger appeared in various other media including prints, embroidery and textiles, enamel, and sculpture.

In 1975 the magpie-tiger door guardian painting became an ambassador for Korea when it traveled to the United States. There it made appearances along the west coast, Honolulu and Washington, D.C. where it received enthusiastic receptions. Zo Zayong points out that anyone seeing this painting of a tiger would ever have guessed

[294] John K. Kim, ed., *Korean Art Seen Through Museums* (Seoul: Easter Media, 1979).

he actually "was once used to drive evil spirits away from the front gate…"[295] Its exaggerated, stylized features contribute to its comical appearance. Leonard Feinberg recognized exaggeration as "the most common humorous mechanism"[296] and noted it is found most readily in folktales and folk art of both the West and Asia. The crossed eyes and lolling tongue create an addled expression, making the animal appear "more like a clown than an evil-repelling beast, and in this respect he is typical of Korean tiger painting….the tiger was…sometimes the lordly mountain king; sometimes the messenger of the Mountain Spirit; sometimes as beloved as a member of the family; often a clumsy, foolish beast easily tricked by the smaller creatures of the forest."[297] This description of the tiger in Korean tradition, an animal capable of grace and wisdom as well as clumsiness and foolishness, also captures the range of human nature and experience. This particular tiger did convey a sense of power, ferociousness, or even stoic dignity. Its exaggerated features render the creature harmless and non-threatening to the viewer. Zo Zayong confirms this by declaring the painter of this tiger was not interested in creating a realistic rendering, but rather "a peace tiger."[298]

When the 1988 Seoul Olympic Organizing Committee (hereafter SOOC) was confronted with promoting the Games to the world, the tiger was proposed as a

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[295] Zayong Zo, *Korean Tiger: An Exhibition of Korean Folk Painting to Commemorate the Dedication of the Olympic Stadium* (Seoul: Seoul Olympic Organizing Committee, 1983), 14.
[296] Leonard Feinberg, ed., *Asian Laughter: An Anthology of Oriental Satire and Humor* (New York: John Weatherhill, Inc., 1971), 10.
[297] Zayong Zo, *Korean Tiger: An Exhibition of Korean Folk Painting to Commemorate the Dedication of the Olympic Stadium* (Seoul: Seoul Olympic Organizing Committee, 1983), 14.
[298] Zayong Zo, *Korean Tiger: An Exhibition of Korean Folk Painting to Commemorate the Dedication of the Olympic Stadium* (Seoul: Seoul Olympic Organizing Committee, 1983), 14.

possible mascot, and then embraced as the embodiment and best representation of the Korean people. The SOOC held a contest for mascot ideas, drawing over 4,000 entries.[299] In the end, the tiger image beat out three other finalists including a rabbit, a squirrel, and a pair of mandarin ducks. The successful tour of the *Magpie-Tiger Door Guardian* outside the country may have inspired the choice; "Just appreciating these paintings, one may easily find the unique flavor and friendly charm of Korean tiger art, which really expresses nothing but the humble lives of the Korean folk."[300] The SOOC selected the tiger in 1982, referring to its traditional popular appeal among Koreans. In this way, the tiger's image was transformed from a folk icon to representing a nation's people. Accompanying this transformation were the characteristics associated with the tiger, which would prove to have long-lasting qualities.

Another contest was subsequently held, this time soliciting designs for the tiger mascot. The winning design, was submitted by Kim Hyun, drew on the qualities recognized in the images of the tiger door guardian, with an updated, cartoonish appearance that earned comparisons to Tony the Tiger of the Kellogg's brand cereal, Frosted Flakes, and the comic strip cats Heathcliff and Garfield. The mascot's smiling expression was coupled with a simplified, softened body to give it an overall friendly appearance. The final challenge was coming up with a name for the mascot. The SOOC set a list of criteria the proposed name had to meet: it had to be easy to pronounce and easy to remember; it had to convey a sense of friendliness "and a

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[299] http://olympic-museum.de/mascot/mascot1988.htm. (accessed April 2015)
[300] Zayong Zo, *Korean Tiger: An Exhibition of Korean Folk Painting to Commemorate the Dedication of the Olympic Stadium* (Seoul: Seoul Olympic Organizing Committee, 1983),18.

Korean flavor" but that could also be applied universally.[301] In the end, a combination of the Korean words for tiger ("ho", shortened from *horangi*, 호랑이) and the familiar term for a young boy, *dori* (돌이) won out, and "Hodori" was made official.

Fig. 3.6
The 1988 Seoul Olympics Mascot, Hodori
Designed by Kim Hyun

Hodori's appearance was appealing and easily reproduced as a popular stuffed toy in addition to Olympic marketing campaigns.

The success of "Hodori" is rooted in Korea's folk art tradition, and with the long-held associations and familiarity of the tiger in folktales and art. As Zo confirms, in addition to its friendly charm, another quality of Korean tiger art is its sense of humor and satire…"[302] This runs contrary to expectation, Zo continues. Folk art has its roots in spiritual and religious beliefs, which often carry connotations of solemnity and formality. The exaggerated image of the magpie-tiger presents the viewer with

[301] http://olympic-museum.de/mascot/mascot1988.htm. (accessed April 2015)
[302] Zo, *Korean Tiger: An Exhibition of Korean Folk Painting to Commemorate the Dedication of the Olympic Stadium*.

the anticipation of "unlimited fun, jokes, and all sorts of playfulness."[303]

Humor and Korea: Establishing Terms and Gaining Momentum

Of the modest number of writings that are devoted to the topic of humor in Korea, the majority deals with humor in literature and poetry, where the humor found therein is context-dependent and term-specific. In Korean, the Chinese-derived term "haehak" (해학 , 笑話) carries the same meaning of "humor" in English, and there is also "iksal" (익살, 一個笑話) meaning a joke, a jest, or humor. "Nongdam" (농담) can also mean a joke, a jest or witticism, but a witticism may also be called "gyeonggu" (경구, 警句). There is "ban-eo" (반어, 諷刺) for irony, "golgyae" (골계, 可笑) referring to comic humor, "giji"(기지, 機智) for wit, and "pungja" (풍자, 諷刺) for satire. Finally, Korean has adopted the English-sounding "yu-meo" (유머) to generally refer to humor in specifically Western contexts. The tendency among Korean scholars to distinguish humor and satire has led to a recurring trend and unresolved agreement on the terms' meanings. The consequence of doing so is that while there is substantial scholarship on the presence of humor in Korean culture, the discussion is generally limited to works of literature and poetry, and less so on art.

In contrast to Korean literature studies, detailed descriptions and definitions of Korean humor remain deficient when it comes to Korean art. The relatively limited number of English texts that specifically deal with humor in Korean art tend to discuss humor in broad, general terms. This has led to an unquestioned acceptance of humor, and its place within the Korean art tradition, with no apparent need for

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[303] *Zo, Korean Tiger: An Exhibition of Korean Folk Painting to Commemorate the Dedicaiton of the Olympic Stadium.*

clarification or specificity. Kwon Young-pil is one of a handful of contemporary Korean art scholars whose research looks specifically at the subject of humor in Korean art, and who agrees, "to denote comicality and humor as prominent features of Korean art is not unusual."[304] He accepts the presence of humor in Korean art willingly enough, but is more reluctant when it comes to identifying specific examples. He appears to be in accord with Chŏng Pyŏng-uk, who concedes that perhaps "one ought to begin with the definition of the concept of the word humor, to deal rationally with a subject…" but because of the various uses and meanings "not only in [Korea] but also in other countries…" he decides it is "better not to undertake the very complex task of defining it."[305]

The Unexpected (Im)Perfection

The "uniqueness" of Korea is a topic and preoccupation for Korean scholars that reflects two eras in the history of Korean art scholarship. The first era may be characterized as one of relative obscurity, before the late nineteenth century's treaties and the world's conscious awareness of Korea as anything little more than an extension of China, both culturally and geographically.

[304] Kwon, Young-Pil. "Humor, an Aesthetic Value in Korean Art: Especially as expressed in scholarly painting," *Korea Journal*, (Spring 1997), 68.
[305] Chŏng, Pyŏng-uk. 'Humor in Ancient Korean Poetry and Songs', *Korea Journal*, (May 1, 1970),15.

At the height of Koryŏ celadon production, they were the envy of imperial China, indicating their appeal and shared appreciation for intricate and well-balanced decorative patterns, refined techniques, and graceful, elegant forms.

Later in the Chosŏn period, the celadons gave way to the more irregularly formed, less elegant punch'ŏng wares and white porcelain, along with genre paintings, as already mentioned. The punch'ŏng and porcelain wares of the late Chosŏn reflect the aesthetic tastes of the period. More recently they are described as possessing a "warmth" that is not accorded to Koryŏ celadons. In the National Museum of Korea's guidebook from 1964, the transition from Koryŏ wares to those of the Yi (Joseon) dynasty is described as: "The delicate and refined and beautifully colored Koryŏ ware gave way to the rather simple, robust forms and direct and unsophisticated style of the Yi."[306]

Fig. 3.7

Rice bale-shaped bottle
15th c.
P'unchŏng stamped chrysanthamum pattern, Gimhae-daero(Buwon-dong), Gimhae-si, Gyŏngsangnam-do

[306] *Guide Book from the National Museum of Korea* (Seoul: Samhwa Printing Co., Ltd., 1964). 10.

Fig. 3.8

Jar, white porcelain, h. 37.5 cm, Chosŏn period (1392-1910), second half of 18th century, The Harry G. C. Packard Collection of Asian Art, Metropolitan Museum of Art (1979.413.1)

Chung Yang-mo's description of white porcelain "moon jars" is another example of how Yanagi's initial attempts at identifying Korea's sorrowful aesthetic character in its ceramics has since been dispensed with by Korean scholars. "White jars are generous," Chung counters, "with an air of luxury. They are as bright as the full moon, but have the charm of being a bit incomplete…. There is a sense of an all-encompassing warmth that embraces all things."[307] The "charm of being a bit incomplete" found in the white porcelain moon jars was applied to genre paintings nearly fifty years prior to Chung's article, and it is in this context that "charm" conveys a more humorous connotation. In the catalogue that accompanied the 1957 exhibition of Korean art in Washington D.C., a comparison was made between Koryŏ and Chosŏn period aesthetic tastes: "The cherished formality and technical excellence

[307] Yang-mo Chung, "Jars That Reflect the Sentiments of Korean Mountains and Rivers: White Moon-Faced Porcelain Jars," *Koreana Quarterly*, no. Spring (2000): 72.

of Koryŏ was transformed into the informal spontaneity of the Yi, full of charm and humor, simple yet refined."[308]

Warmth, incompleteness, and simplicity are coming to mean humor. They were encountered earlier, as individual qualities given to different works, but they now carry the connotation of humor in addition to their original meanings. There are numerous examples of the increased application of these and their synonyms to Korean art and literature that is produced in the late 20th century. Through repetition and consistency, terms like naïve, natural, and spontaneous, also come to be understood as possessing a humorous quality.

Fig. 3.9

Jar
Porcelain with underglaze copper-red decoration of grapevine
18th century
h. 25.6 cm
The Metropolitan Museum of Art
(1979.413.2)

The incised fish design on the bottle above is undoubtedly in keeping with how Robert J. Moes described Korean art at the Brooklyn Museum. "When free from the need to imitate Chinese models, Korean art abounds in vitality, directness, strength, joy, and a beguiling naiveté. Unpretentiousness, directness, ruggedness, spontaneity, and joy are the qualities that give Korean art its compelling appeal as well as its

[308] "Masterpieces of Korean Art: An Exhibition under the Auspices of the Government of the Republic of Korea," 1957, 20.

uniqueness."[309] In a description of a 17th c. storage jar with a dragon decoration, he describes the dragon as: "naïve and whimsical, yet strangely moving, awesome, and spiritual."[310] The tension Moes touches on between the spiritual and whimsical, naïve and awesome qualities in a single piece points to the challenge scholars face in identifying a Korean art aesthetic. Moes's perspective suggests the possibility that when art appears to be conceived without self-consciousness it is attractive at a very basic level. There is an inherent familiarity and informality that allows the viewer to connect with a work immediately. The level of intimacy this affords may be compared to the ease with which a child experiences the world; guileless and free. Moes draws a similar conclusion: "The irresistible freedom and naïveté of the iron-brown dragons has led some scholars to suggest that they were painted by children."[311] Of course children were not the creators of such works, but the point Moes makes is clear, and resonant.

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[309] Robert J. Moes, *Korean Art from the Brooklyn Museum Collection: From the Land of Morning Calm: Korean Art at the Brooklyn Museum* (Brooklyn, NY: The Brooklyn Museum, 1987). 20. Museum Director Robert T. Buck wrote of Moes, then curator of Oriental Art at the Brooklyn Museum, in the Foreword: "In 1985 Mr. Moes was recognized by the government of South Korea for his 'valuable contribution to acquainting the American public with Korean culture and promoting friendship between the two countries." Buck's words illustrate the political intentions behind the exhibition, and the desire of the South Korean governmet to strengthen the visibility of its material culture as well as fortify its relationship with the United States.
[310] Moes (1987), 157.
[311] Moes (1987), 157.

Fig. 3.10 *Lidded Jar*, (with detail), white porcelain with dragon and cloud design in under glaze iron brown, 17th century, Leeum Samsung Art Museum.

Moes's comments continue the lineage of language used to describe Korea's art that was set forth by Yanagi and his theory of "sorrow," some fifty years prior in two ways. First, as the Korean scholars before him focused on ethnicity and cultural singularity up to, and immediately following liberation from Japan, Moes's sensibilities focus on the contrast between Korea's violent history[312] and the

[312] Moes writes of the late Chosŏn period, "The external calm of 18th-century Korea was not matched by the internal situation. Destructive factionalism within the government bureaucracy continued unabated. Shifts in power from one of the major

seemingly "whimsical" appeal of the ceramic décor of a lidded jar. Second, he shares Yanagi's appreciation of punch'ŏng wares, and intimates that their beauty is, perhaps, not as easy to recognize. In comparison to the widely admired Koryŏ celadon wares, the "beauty of other forms of Korean art is much more challenging to Westerners. It is a rugged kind of beauty, never obvious, never merely pretty, and it represents the true artistic expression of the Korean people."[313]

In a departure from the Chosŏn dynasty, but still maintaining the lineage of terminology, Kim Won-yong's Art and Archaeology of Ancient Korea (1986) surveys Korea's artifacts from pre-historical cultures up to the Three Kingdoms Period (37 BCE – 935 CE). A Paeckche Buddha Triad from Sŏsan is featured on a rock face. The central figure of the standing Buddha has a "face…full and round with a hint of a smile."[314]

Fig. 3.11

Rock-cut Trinity
Paekche Kingdom
ca. 650
h. (center Buddha) 2.8 m.
Sŏsan

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factions to the other and back again during the 18th century cost the lives of some four thousand officials (17)."

[313] Moes, *Korean Art from the Brooklyn Museum Collection: From the Land of Morning Calm: Korean Art at the Brooklyn Museum*.

[314] Won-yong Kim, *Art and Archaeology of Ancient Korea* (Seoul: The Taekwang Publishing Co., 1986), 303.

Kim notes the open face "with wide open eyes and the expression has a strong impact because of the naturalistic rendering."[315] The "naturalism" and the smiling expression make the image of the Buddha approachable, more human. The "human" element is heightened with the smile, linking the human approachability with friendliness in a "boyish…amused expression."[316]

The terminology of Korean art is becoming established by now through repetition and increasing recognition of the works described. The next chapter will look at humor in the new millennium, as well as old and new trends in Korea's cultural identity.

[315] Ibid.
[316] Ibid.

Chapter 4
Humor and Korea in the New Millennium

The current era includes Korean scholars who rejected the scholarship initiated and carried out during the Colonial period. Eager to establish and define their own cultural heritage for themselves, dismissal of Japanese innovations and initiatives were common and frequent. More recently, in response to those rejections, there are Korean scholars who acknowledge, accept and integrate the work done by the Japanese. Nationalist sentiment and the need to establish one's art and culture within a "unique" framework is less earnest, more tempered, but still persists.

Chosŏn Genre Painting and the 2002 World Cup

More recently, contemporary Korean art scholarship still incorporates humor as a significant characteristic inherent in Korean art. In the spring of 2002, the National Museum of Korea presented a "Special Exhibition of Joseon Dynasty Genre Paintings."[317] In an article published to commemorate the exhibition, the curator of the museum at the time, So Jae-gu, wrote that the genre paintings in the National Museum's collection "best reveal the unique characteristics of Korea's traditional culture and arts."[318] He went on to say that the paintings "highlight the Korean people's views of life, their optimistic, warm and forward-looking nature as well as the morals and etiquette which have guided their lives over the years."[319] Neatly

[317] The New Romanization is used for "Joseon" (Chosŏn) for consistency with the published article in *Koreana Quarterly*, Spring (2002).
[318] Jae-gu So, "Special Exhibition of Joseon Dynasty Genre Paintings," *Koreana Quarterly*, no. Spring (2002): 90.
[319] So, "Special Exhibition of Joseon Dynasty Genre Paintings," (2002), 90-91.

embedded in these brief excerpts, one can find a residual and resounding response to the last hundred odd years of Korean art historical and archaeological scholarship. The "Special Exhibition of Joseon Dynasty Genre Paintings" was done to commemorate the 2002 Korea-Japan World Cup, held jointly in Seoul and Tokyo.

Once more, the emphasis of the Chosŏn period, and especially its paintings, continues to endure when it comes to promoting Korea to an international audience. As with the 1988 Olympics, the image the Korean government wanted to project to the world was one of warm and friendship, represented in Hodori. Returning to So's article for a moment, at one point he states, "Genre paintings reached their high point in the late 18th century, a time when there was an awakening among the people regarding the inner workings of society while the culture of the common people became more important."[320] It is hardly surprising to find that along with Koryŏ celadons, late Chosŏn genre paintings are now the most easily recognized as being quintessentially Korean. What is of interest here is that Korean celadons and genre paintings represent very different aesthetic tastes and periods within Korea's history. The refined grace and delicate lines of Koryŏ celadons contribute to the "dignified" aspect of Korean art, as well as the "naturalness" of form and line. On the other hand, genre paintings embody the "spontaneity" and "charm" of Korean art – in a word, its humor. That was the image the organizers of the exhibition wanted to promote to international visitors who would be arriving for the World Cup – it was the image Korea wanted to show the world.

[320] So, "Special Exhibition of Joseon Dynasty Genre Paintings." 91.

Fig. 4.1 South Korea's National Football Team
2002 World Cup *The New York Times*

The partnership between Korea and Japan as cohosts to a huge international sporting event was an opportunity for healing the rift between them. Both Korea and Japan projected a positive image of cooperation and benevolence throughout the tournament, but when Japan was knocked out in the early rounds, and Korea's national team continued to the semi-finals, the fever-pitch enthusiasm of the Korean fans packing the stadiums was no doubt fueled, at least to some degree, by the glee in realizing their past occupiers were defeated, and they were not.

***Spring*, 2006**

The "unique characteristics" of Korean art and culture were commonly sought by both Westerners and Asian scholars at the end of the nineteenth century after Korea signed the Kanghwa Treaty in 1876, which ended the "Hermit Kingdom"

days.[321] Korea's "Hermit Kingdom" days are all but forgotten, or so it would appear these days. According to a CIA report on the Republic of Korea's economic state, it has demonstrated impressive growth and integrated itself into the global economy to become "a high-tech industrialized economy."[322] Korea's interest in promoting its global image is also seen in the urban landscape.

In September 2006, Claes Oldenburg's sculpture entitled *Spring,* was erected in Cheonggye plaza in the heart of Seoul's financial district. The sculpture stands out among the sleek corporate buildings that surround it, punctuating the urban landscape at 20 meters in height with a spiral cone of bright blue and red. The shape is identified as the shell produced by marsh snails, and is typical of Oldenburg's work, which is known "for being amusing, simple, light and banal in theme and spectacular in scale."[323] The contrast of the brightly-colored and unexpected shape in the otherwise minimalist monotony of office buildings makes the experience of encountering it a delightful surprise.

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[321] Keith Pratt and Richard Rutt, *Korea: A Historical and Cultural Dictionary* (Surrey: Curzon Press, 1999). 496.
[322] https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ks.html; a complete report on South Korea's economic state in 2004.[accessed April 2015]
[323] Hong Kal, *Aesthetic Constructions of Korean Nationalism: Spectacle, Politics and History* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 112.

Fig. 4.2

Claes Oldenburg
Spring
2006
Cheonggye Cheong Plaza
Seoul
(author photo credit)

Its position on the intersection of a major north-south and east-west intersection at Cheonggye stream marks a modern era for the stream and the city. In choosing to place such a sculpture in this specific setting, the Seoul government was keenly aware of the visual impact it would make, as well as the historical significance and commentary it implies. The Cheonggye stream is a historically significant feature of the city. It divides Seoul north and south and was buried during the instability of the 1950s. In 2002, Mayor Lee launched a restoration initiative to bring back the stream and revitalize the neighborhoods along the Cheonggye stream. The project began in July 2003 and was completed by September 2005.[324]

Oldenburg's *Spring* sculpture coupled with the stream embody the Seoul government's objective to connect the city to the international market. In describing

[324] Hong Kal, *Aesthetic Constructions of Korean Nationalism: Spectacle, Politics and History* (New York: Routledge, 2011),105.

the sculpture, Hong Kal notes that "Like the stream, *Spring* lends a cheerful atmosphere to its surroundings with a message of harmony between nature, people and the city."[325] She also describes its "playfulness, softness and banality" as appropriate, and in keeping with the meaning of the restored stream and the whole city, "which has been trying to make a connection with common people through everydayness and creative pleasure…"[326] These descriptive values applied to *Spring* and Cheonggye stream have a familiar ring to them. Indeed, they are the very same terms used to describe the genre paintings of Kim Hong-do. Is it any coincidence that his most popular and best loved paintings also happen to be those that depict the "everydayness and creative pleasure" of the "common people"?

Fig. 4.3 *Chonggye Chon* Seoul, 2009

Author photo credit

[325] Hong Kal, *Aesthetic Constructions of Korean Nationalism: Spectacle, Politics and History* (New York: Routledge, 2011),113.
[326] Ibid.

What is also important to note is the emphasis made by Kal on the projected image the Seoul government desired to convey to the world. Rather than a stuffy, boring cityscape, city officials were looking for something extraordinary that would make urban living more enjoyable, more "fun."[327] *Spring* is now a major landmark in the city and a symbol of entrepreneurial creativity, urban vitality, and modern development. In all these things, the citizens of Seoul may take a national pride and identity.

Historical Preservation to "K-Pop": From *P'ansori* to "Gangnam Style"

The traditional music performance called *p'ansori* dates back to the late 17th century as a form of entertainment among commoners.[328] Typically performed outdoors in public spaces, *p'ansori* were generally attended by commoners During the 18th century, *p'ansori* grew into a recognized and popular art form, comprising of different melodies and rhythms that were skillfully combined to tell a long and intricate story with dramatic flair.[329] As their popularity grew, their audiences became more impressive, as nobles and even members of royalty were entertained.

Chunhyangga = a love story across social classes

Simchongga = self-sacrifice and salvation

Hungboga = greed and materialism

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[327] Hong Kal, *Aesthetic Constructions of Korean Nationalism: Spectacle, Politics and History* (New York: Routledge, 2011),113.
[328] Kim Kee-hyung. "History of Pansori," in Yong-Shik Lee, ed., *Pansori*, Korean Musicology Series 2 (Seoul: The National Center for Korean Traditional Performing Arts, 2008), 3.
[329] Kim Kee-hyung. "History of Pansori," in Ibid. 4.

Sugungga = wisdom of a ruler and the ruled

Jokbyokga = based on the Chinese novel Sanguozhi yenyi; heroic feats, trials and suffering of commoners/soldiers

The stories told in *p'ansori* performances share an optimism in the form of a positively presented protagonist "and a balance of humor and tragic beauty."[330] They "display oral modes of composition exploring the sound effects of the vernacular. This exploration brings out the intended humor, pathos, and satire and shows a predilection for the colorful use of vulgarism, argot, obscenity, and scatology."[331]

The fact that traditional *p'ansori* has been designated "as an Intangible Cultural Asset by the Korean Ministry of Culture in 1964 and was also proclaimed as one of the UNESCO Masterpieces of Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity in 2003"[332] indicates its importance, not just in Korean culture, but the culture of the world. The art of *p'ansori* is also of particular interest here because of its close association with, and inclusion of, humor. This fact, coupled with its Intangible Cultural Asset status, brings the theory of humor being a quintessential characteristic of Korean art and culture that much firmer to bear. So-called "new" *p'ansori* arose shortly after the colonial period,

[330] Kim Kee-hyung. "History of Pansori," in Lee, *Pansori*. 4.
[331] Peter H. Lee, ed., *Oral Literature of Korea*, Korean Studies 31 (Gyeonggi-do: Jimoondang, 2005), viii.
[332] Kae-kyung Um, "New 'P'ansori' in Twenty-First-Century Korea: Creative Dialects of Tradition and Modernity," *Asian Theatre Journal* 25, no. 1 (Spring) (2008): 26.

and incorporated patriotic, religious and sociopolitical themes.[333] Given the source of their inspiration, the new *p'ansori* is characteristically more somber in tone, compared to more traditional themes like romance. The *p'ansori* of the 21st century, however differs from 20th century *p'ansori* in that "humor is greatly emphasized…" and it incorporates Western elements of pop culture like computer games and science fiction.[334] The incorporation of international elements and pop-cultural references along with contemporary vernacular and everyday casual attire for performances, mark the new millennium *p'ansori* in sharp contrast with its classical roots.

> The various new *p'ansori* themes are derived from urban, popular, translocal, and transnational cultures. The resultant literary, musical, and visual representations produce new intertextuality in which parody, satire, and irony can be fully understood through the dialects of tradition and modernity at both local and global levels.[335]

The growing popularity of this new form of "street performance" has prompted contests and more performers promoting themselves through personal websites and social media.

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[333] Kae-kyung Um, "New 'P'ansori' in Twenty-First-Century Korea: Creative Dialects of Tradition and Modernity," *Asian Theatre Journal* 25, no. 1 (Spring) (2008): 27.
[334] Kae-kyung Um, "New 'P'ansori' in Twenty-First-Century Korea: Creative Dialects of Tradition and Modernity," *Asian Theatre Journal* 25, no. 1 (Spring) (2008): 32.
[335] Kae-kyung Um, "New 'P'ansori' in Twenty-First-Century Korea: Creative Dialects of Tradition and Modernity," *Asian Theatre Journal* 25, no. 1 (Spring) (2008): 34.

What does "new *p'ansori*" have to do with the global K-pop sensation Psy and his single mega hit "Gangnam Style?" In a word: humor. More immediately, perhaps, is method by which both have acquired their popular: technology. The internet is an instant global stage for anyone with access and a camera. The official "Gangnam Style" music video was entered in the Guinness Book of World Records for most the most-watched video on YouTube with over 2.41 billion views in 2012.[336]

Fig. 4.4 Photo still from *"Gangnam Style"* video by Psy
Huffington Post, UK, 12 December 2012

The humor is undeniable in Psy's dance moves, which have been parodied and attempted by millions, including the likes of U.K. Prime Minister David Cameron and U.S. President Barack Obama, to name just two. Korean-American author Euni Hong (*The Birth of Korean Cool: How One Nation is Conquering the World Through Pop Culture, 2014)* points out that Psy's success was an exception to the Korean pop-

[336] "Gangnam Style." https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gangnam_Style. (accessed July 2015)

culture "machine" that produces the majority of k-pop songs. Psy also does not fit the typically groomed, young, slim, K-pop cultural icon image, and as a self-taught singer and songwriter, he is not a product of the "machine" that is usually responsible for producing pop stars. Against all current conventions for a Korean pop idol: age, physique, and method of promotion, Psy's is an underdog story and represents a fringe community in the world of K-pop. In this regard, his phenomenal success may be deemed subversive, as it runs contrary to the rule. To put it another way, "Gangnam Style" is incongruent with current convention, and took K-pop culture and the world by surprise…and by storm.

Moving Trends: Humor, "Cool," and "Han"

Korean culture and art are diverse and difficult to simplify in absolute terms, as many scholars have already determined. No culture can be reduced to simple terms and still be accurately described or completely understood. The fact that humor has persisted in scholarship and discussions of art, particularly from the 18th century, presents questions, the answers to which have yet to be agreed upon. The 21st century has seen Korea's status rise on the global stage, with an increasing international presence in the pop-culture sectors.

On a recent podcast hosted by Rick Steves (Travel with Rick Steves™), one of the topics was titled "The Birth of Korean Cool." The guest, Euni Hong, discussed the phenomenon of Korean pop culture's global rise and popularity. Korean food, film, fashion, television dramas, k-pop songs, and street dancing comprise the pop cultural package that is deliberately marketed to the world as "Korean Cool" in what Hong

calls “a national PR campaign.”[337] The end goal, she continued, is to create a “national brand” the world can consume. The “machine” that manufactures “Korean Cool” culture is comprised of numerous private industries, but behind it all, according to Hong, the government is backing everything produced.

In addition to “K-Pop” and “Korean Cool”, “Han” is a Korean mindset that Hong defines as a “culturally specific form of rage that you can only have if you’re Korean.” Evidence of *han* can be found in Korean vigilante films, most notably, *Oldboy* and the *Lady Vengeance* series. They are manifestations of pent- anger, absorbed over “millennia.” The shadows of past invasions from other countries are the source of inspiration painter for one contemporary Korean artist. Paris-based painter Kim Tchang-Yeul (1929-) is known for his water drop paintings, and is one of the most sought-after Korean artists still active today.

Fig. 4.5 김창열 Kim Tschang-yeul (1929 -)
물방울 (Waterdrops) 2013
Oil on canvas, 23.01 x 55.4 cm
Private collection

[337] “The Birth of Korean Cool; Pico Iyer in North Korea.” Narr. Rick Steves. *Travel with Rick Steves.* www.ricksteves.com. Web. 19 July, 2015.

In discussing his work, Kim once said the water drops can symbolize "tears of joy, sadness, relief, rainfall or even holy water."[338] More recently the artist has cited the history of the Korean War as inspiration behind his water drops. "Painting water drops is to melt all the anger, anxiety and fear into them and return them to 'nothingness' and 'emptiness,'" he said in an interview for the Korea Herald in 2010.[339] His latest works are a departure from the water drops and instead feature messages in Chinese characters. Kim says of these messages that he only selects "positive" ones. In so doing, Kim underscores another characteristic that is cited across all media: optimism. *Han* is still an element, but Kim's art is not based in revenge, but rather catharsis and hope.

[338] "Jimmy D. Robinson Now Brokering Kim Tchang-yeul Greatest Paintings," http://www.prweb.com/releases/2013/7/prweb10922368.htm (accessed March 2015)

[339] "Largest-ever Showing of Water Drop Paintings." http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20101010000288 (accessed March 2015) (accessed March 2015)

Concluding Remarks

This thesis was an attempt to examine the subject of humor and its relationship to Korean art and culture. It began by questioning the persistence of humor and its close association to Korean art when compared to the art of China and Japan. While examples of humor can be found in China and Japan's art and literature, it is not the first characteristic that comes to mind with regard to either countries' cultural identity. Herein lies the roots of humor's connection to Korea; the consistency of its supposed presence in Korean art helped forge an identity apart from China and Japan. This discovery occurred at a time when Korea was eager to define itself anew in the wake of a devastating war that was preceded by almost forty years of colonial rule.

As Korean art scholarship has expanded, the terminology used to describe it have evolved to connote humor and been consistently accepted without challenge or question. Through repetition and ever-increasing expansion of research, those same terms have gradually been applied not just to art and artifacts from the Chosŏn period, which is where the majority of the earliest examples originated, but to all periods and areas of Korean art and culture. In 2012, the catalogue accompanying the exhibition, *Korean Funerary Figures: Companions for the Journey to the Other World*, described the aesthetics of Kokdu figures as "unrefined," "unbalanced," and possessing "a strong sense of simplification and exaggeration."[340] *Treasures from Korea: Arts and Culture of the Joseon Dynasty, 1392-1910* (2014) was a collaboration involving the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, and the National Museum of Korea. One of the "principle

[340] *Korean Funerary Figures: Companions for the Journey to the Other World*, the Korean Cultural Centre UK, as part of *All Eyes On Korea*, 100 Day Festival of Korean Cultures, 11 July-8 September 2012, 13.

motives" behind the exhibition was reiterate the "essential point" art mirrors the culture that created it, and that Korean art and culture, while growing in "prominence globally…[remain] less well known in [the United States] than they should be."[341] The art and culture of the Chosŏn (Joseon) dynasty are once again the focus, "distinguished by their simplicity, aesthetic rigor, and sensitivity to the nature of materials…"[342] There are some familiar adjectives included in the above description, and they all "[bear] repeating…"[343]

The seeds of this trend were planted early on, when *Masterpieces of Korean Art* was reviewed in 1957. The "spontaneity" and "playful" aspects that were found then, turned to "natural" and "human" with respect to ceramic forms and narrative literature. These are just some of the terms that have, collectively and individually, come to mean humorous. The result has led to an erroneous broad generalization that all Korean art and culture is humorous. There are obvious problems in making such assumptions, which can be seen as soon as one begins to test them. Inevitably, exceptions are found. What humor has done is served as a step in the history of developing Korea's self-identity.

The national identity crisis Korea experienced during the first half of the 20th century compelled Koreans of all stripes, from government officials to artists, to promote a national image. Humor contributed to this effort and was reinforced by the West and Korea. What came to be more recognized as scholarship in Korean art and

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[341] Timothy Rub, Michael Govan, and Gary Tinterow, "Forewords," in *Treasures from Korea: Arts and Culture of the Joseon Dynasty, 1392-1910*, ed. Hyunsoo Woo (Philadelphia : Los Angeles : Houston : Seoul : New Haven: Philadelphia Museum of Art ; Los Angeles County Museum of Art ; The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston ; National Museum of Korea ; in association with Yale University Press, 2014), viii.
[342] Ibid.
[343] Ibid.

interest in national identity continued to develop was the interchangeable uses of humor and humanity.

Today, the presence of humor is still felt in Korea's popular culture, but it is being eclipsed now by technology and "cool" culture. Korean tech and auto industries are now global leaders; Korean popular culture is the "cool" currency in Asia and is making significant inroads in Western culture through the music and film industries. It would appear that the need for humor (if there ever was one to begin with) is no longer required in identifying Korea. Or perhaps it has just been joined by these other trends, which, when combined all together, make up the complex, contradictory, and dynamic whole that is Korean art, culture, and nationalism.

The beginnings of Korean art scholarship were examined first in Chapter 1, along with the search for early terms used to describe Korean art and culture that indicate humor, and early encounters made by Westerners were examined. Korea's colonial period under Japan's occupation from 1910-1945, was also discussed in terms of the excavation of the land conducted by the Japanese government, and the subsequent discoveries of Korea's tombs and the artifacts recovered therein, which initiated the systematic cataloguing and registering of Korea's artifacts, monuments, and historic sites. Yanagi Sōetsu and native Korean scholar Ko Yusŏp were discussed as key figures from that period, both of whom have lasting legacies in characterizing Korean art. The Japanese government's interest in conducting these excavations have been a topic of fierce debate among Korean historians and art historians. Recent opinions made by native Korean scholars like Hyung-il Pai are included who refuting the long-held popular belief that Korea was a passive victim under the Japanese imperial regime.

Chapter 2 examined South Korea's early international exhibitions and the marketing of its culture as a political measure to strengthen its image as a stable and independent nation. The interest in establishing a national identity and the role art had towards that objective was also discussed. In addition, the terminology applied to Korean art by Western perspectives was traced and discussed as it began to build a lineage of terms used to describe art that indicate humor.

Chapter 3 continued to follow the terminology applied to Korean art and the issues surrounding its cultural identity. The increased interest in Korean art was discussed and explored from the 1970s – 1990s with the development of humor and its various forms and interpretations. The development of Korea's international presence and national identity was explored through an examination of the 1988 Seoul Olympics and the significance of its selected mascot, Hodori.

Chapter 4 discussed Korea in the new millennium and its continued growth and prominence in the global market. The issue of national identity was discussed in terms of the "K-Pop" phenomenon and the unlikely international sensation, "Gangnam Style," and its links to traditional *p'ansori*. The subject of humor was still found to be of cultural interest, as the Cheonggye stream restoration project illustrated. It also revisited the Western theories of humor and the way it operates, specifically in the case of Oldenburg's *Spring* sculpture, the importance of context and the element of surprise. Chapter 4 also revisited the significance of history and its inspiration and influence behind the art of contemporary Korean artist Kim Tschang-yeul.

This thesis just begins to address some of the issues surrounding Korea's identity and relationship with humor. There are vast gaps that remain in my research, which I hope to fill in the future. Had time allowed, a more detailed discussion of the

history of Korean exhibitions in the west, especially Europe, would be included, and further discussions on contemporary Korean culture would be covered. I am grateful for the opportunity to present my work thus far, and I look forward to continuing my research, and discovering the work of others in the field. This thesis began with Kang U-bang's statement, declaring that the Korean sense of humor was aesthetically the result of imperfection…and what is more human than that?

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Courtesy Colgate University Library
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Detail from *Chōjū Giga The Frolicking Animals Scroll, one of four fascicles known as Chōjū Jinbutsu Giga (Funny Pictures of Birds, Animals and People*
Handscroll, ink on paper, 12th and 13th c.
1149.6 cm x 30.6 cm
Kōzan Temple, Kyoto

Fig. 2.16 121
김제 Kim Che (1524 – 1593)
Boy Pulling a Donkey
Ink and colour on silk
Ho-Am Art Museum

Fig. 2.17 122
정선 Chŏng Sŏn (1676–1759)

Panoramic View of Kŭmgang Mountains
1734
Ink and light colour on paper 130.7 cm × 94.1 cm
Ho-Am Art Museum
National Treasure No. 217

Fig. 2.18 124
김 홍도 (단원)Kim Hong-do (Danwŏn) (1745 - ca.1806)
Album of Genre Paintings by Danwŏn,
벼타작 byŏtajak (Threshing rice)
ink and light color on paper
National Museum of Korea
Treasure No. 527

Fig. 3.1 129
Jar with Tiger and Magpie motif
stoneware with copper red glaze, 28.7 x 25.1 cm
late 18th c.
Japan Folk Crafts Museum

Fig. 3.2 131
Pyŏn Sang-pyŏk 변상벽 (1730 - ?)
Myojakdo 묘작도 (Painting of Cats and Sparrows)
ink and color on silk, 93.7 x 42.9 cm.
National Museum of Korea

Fig. 3.3 132
Dog
Kyŏngbok Palace, Seoul." (Warch, 2006. JPEG)

Fig. 3.4 132
Tiger
Kyŏngbok Palace, Seoul." (Warch, 2006. JPEG)

Fig. 3.5 141
Magpie-Tiger Door Guardian
ink and color on mulberry paper, 55cm x 90cm
19th century
Samshin Hoegwan Teaching Center (formerly the Emille Museum)
Songni-san National Park
Republic of Korea

Fig. 3.6 144
The 1988 Seoul Olympics Mascot, Hodori
Designed by Kim Hyun (wearing a traditional Korean hat, a 상모*(sangmo)* and the Olympic rings around his neck)
http://www.olympic.org/seoul-1988-summer-olympics (accessed April 2015)

Fig. 3.7 147
Incense Burner, celadon with open work design
Koryŏ period, 12th century
National Museum of Korea
National Treasure No. 95

Fig. 3.8 148
Jar
white porcelain, h. 37.5 cm
Chosŏn period (1392-1910)
second half of 18th century, The Harry G. C. Packard Collection of Asian Art
Metropolitan Museum of Art (1979.413.1)

Fig. 3.9 149
Flattened Bottle, p'unchŏng ware with incised fish design, Chosŏn period, 15th century, National Treasure No. 178, National Museum of Korea
(Warch, 2009. JPEG)

Fig. 3.10 151
Lidded Jar
white porcelain with dragon and cloud design in under glaze iron brown, 17th century, Leeum Samsung Art Museum
(Warch, 2009. JPEG)

Fig. 3.11 152
Rock-cut Trinity
Paekche Kingdom
ca. 650
h. (center Buddha) 2.8 m.
Sŏsan
http://www.arirang.co.kr/Tv2/TVCommon_NoStaff_Archive.asp?sys_lang=Eng&PROG_CODE=TVCR0744&MENU_CODE=101976&view_seq=16115&cnt=1
(Accessed September 2015)

Fig. 4.1 156
South Korea's National Football Team
2002 World Cup
http://www.telegraph.co.uk/sport/football/teams/south-korea/6596894/South-Korea-team-at-World-Cup.html

Fig. 4.2 158
Claes Oldenburg
Spring
2006
Cheonggye Cheong Plaza, Seoul
(Warch, 2009. JPEG)

Fig. 4.3 159
"Cheonggye Cheon"
Seoul
(Warch, 2009. JPEG)

Fig. 4.4 163
Photo still from *"Gangnam Style"* video by Psy
http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2012/12/12/december-21-mayan-end-world-gangnam-style-psy-nostradamus_n_2285027.html. (Accessed August 2015)

Fig. 4.5 165
김창열 Kim Tschang-yeul (1929-)
물방울(Waterdrops)
2013

Oil on canvas, 23.01 x 55.4 cm.
Private collection
http://www.christies.com/lotfinder/paintings/kim-tschang-yeul-5751534-details.aspx
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