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Hung-son Tae-Won-Kun
1866-1873

by

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THE KOREAN RESEARCH CENTER

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TRANSLATION MATERIAL

- Park Che-Hyong, *Political Mirror of Modern Korea*, Vol. 1 (III) 65
朴齊炯, 近世朝鮮政鑑 卷之上



A STUDY ON THE REGIME OF HUNG-SON TAE-WON-KUN (1864-1873)

by

Prof. Hong Soon-Ok*

I. Introduction

From the tenth year of Kojong (1873), the modern history of Korea came to be connected with international society and became a part of world history with the conclusion of the Korea-Japan and Korea-America treaties of comity, commerce and navigation. During the first ten years of Kojong's reign the Tae-Won-Kun was in power, and this period can be called the "Pre-reactionary Era", during which period Tae-Won-Kun reorganized and gave cohesion to the loose royal system of the preceding 470 years of the Yi dynasty. Therefore, the purpose of this article is to observe this period as an introduction to the modern history of Korea.

Tae-Won-Kun restored the declining power of the King, abolished the political influence which had been held by the king's maternal relatives since King Sunjo, reorganized the disorderly Samjeong (triple administration) which had frequently caused riots, reconstructed Kyong-Bok Palace to enhance the royal dignity, suppressed Roman Catholicism as a perverse religion, and played up the national isolation policy through the Byong-In and Sin-Mi incidents. Thus, the traditional Yi dynasty policy was firmly formulated at that time.

Yi Ha-Eung, who made his twelve-year-old second son the twenty-sixth king of the Yi dynasty, created a specific political era by utilizing his title of Tae-Won-Kun, which was conferred on a king's living father, and through the support of Dowager Queen Cho.

Without any official government post, Tae-Won-Kun exercised the sole political power, which was an unprecedented event in the history of the Yi dynasty. As examples of those who were not kings but seized power, Su-Yang-Tae-Kun was in the post of Yong-Eui-Jeong before he became king. There were several occasions when regents and empresses attended to the affairs of state. An-dong

* Professor of Politics, Tong-Kuk University.

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Kims and Pung-yang Chos had made coalition governments many times since the twenty-third King Sun-Jo.¹ However, these were quite different cases from the dictatorship of Tae-Won-Kun.²

Tae-Won-Kun's orders were called Tae-Won-Kun's Instructions, and these were carried out throughout the country like the King's commands, and placed pressure on government officials and the people.³ During the ten years when Tae-Won-Kun was in power, the people were terrorized and nobody dared express opinions on court affairs.⁴ This shows an aspect of Tae-Won-Kun's dictatorship. Because of his dictatorship, Tae-Won-Kun was defeated by his political enemies. In this point, his dictatorship was different from that of others who seized power as the King's maternal relatives.⁵

II. Establishment and Character of Tae-Won-Kun's Regime

When Chol-Jong, the 25th King of the Yi dynasty, died at 33 on December 18, in the 14th year of his reign (1863), Chol-Jong had only one surviving daughter, Princess Yung-he, who was the fourth daughter out of five sons and six daughters, and could not designate his successor.⁶

At that time the Kings were the offspring of Sato-Seja (the son of Yong-Jo), but the four sons of Sato-Seja were killed in connection with the rebellions of (Eun-Eon-Kun, Eun-Sin-Kun, Eun-Chun-Kun) except King Jong-Jo, and their offspring were powerless. Chol-Jong, the grandson of culprit Eun-Eon-Kun, became the adopted son of King Sun-Jo and was enthroned.

Under such a situation, the offspring of Nam-Yeon-Kun (Ku) who was adopted by Eun-Sin-Kun was the only candidate among the descendants of King In-Jo, who were almost annihilated. Fortunately, Nam-Yeon-Kun had four sons and seven grandsons. Among them, the fourth son, Hung-Son-Kun (Ha-Eung), had two sons. Chae-Myon, the eldest son, was in a government post⁷ and Myong-Bok, the second son, was a boy of twelve years old and there was a bastard, Chae-

-
1. In the days when the An-dong Kims were at the zenith of their power, there were twelve mansions to which many guests made visits with bribes. *Mae-Chon Ya-Rok*, Vol. 1, p. 20.
 2. Hong Kuk-Yong exercised dictatorial power for a short time during the earlier part of the reign of Cheong-Jo.
 3. *Mae-Chon Ya-Rok*, Vol. 1, p. 3, 9.
 4. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
 5. *Seh Do Ka*.
 6. *Mae-Chon Ya-Rok*, p. 2.
 7. According to *Seung-Jeong-Won's Diary* dated August 11 and 13, 1866, the third year of Kojong, Chae-Myon was once adopted by his uncle Heung-Wan-Kun, but came back to Tae-Won-Kun.

1870

Year	1870	1871	1872	1873	1874	1875	1876	1877	1878	1879	1880
Population	1,000,000	1,050,000	1,100,000	1,150,000	1,200,000	1,250,000	1,300,000	1,350,000	1,400,000	1,450,000	1,500,000
Area (sq. miles)	36,000	36,000	36,000	36,000	36,000	36,000	36,000	36,000	36,000	36,000	36,000
Density	27.8	29.2	30.6	31.9	33.3	34.7	36.1	37.5	38.9	40.3	41.7

1880

Year	1880	1881	1882	1883	1884	1885	1886	1887	1888	1889	1890
Population	1,500,000	1,550,000	1,600,000	1,650,000	1,700,000	1,750,000	1,800,000	1,850,000	1,900,000	1,950,000	2,000,000
Area (sq. miles)	36,000	36,000	36,000	36,000	36,000	36,000	36,000	36,000	36,000	36,000	36,000
Density	41.7	43.1	44.4	45.8	47.2	48.6	50.0	51.4	52.8	54.2	55.6

1890

Year	1890	1891	1892	1893	1894	1895	1896	1897	1898	1899	1900
Population	2,000,000	2,050,000	2,100,000	2,150,000	2,200,000	2,250,000	2,300,000	2,350,000	2,400,000	2,450,000	2,500,000
Area (sq. miles)	36,000	36,000	36,000	36,000	36,000	36,000	36,000	36,000	36,000	36,000	36,000
Density	55.6	56.9	58.3	59.7	61.1	62.5	63.9	65.3	66.7	68.1	69.4

Seon. The transitional government power was held by Dowager Queen Cho who was the wife of the late Crown Prince Hyo-Myong (father of Ik-Jong who became Mun-Jo later, and Heon-Jong). She undertook the Imperial seal and decided on Myong-Bok as successor, upon consultation with the ministers. According to her instructions, Myong-Bok became the adopted son of Crown Prince Hyo-Myong.⁸

He was given the title of Ik-Seon-Kun, and the premier Kim Chwa-Keun was ordered to bring him to court. Thus, the ceremony was held on the 12th day, and on the 23rd day he acceded to the throne at In-Chong-Mun of Chang-Dok Palace, and became the 26th King. Since the King was too young to deal with national affairs, it was decided that Dowager Queen Cho would assist him in conducting national policies. Thus the political power was to be exercised by Ko-Jong and Dowager Queen Cho.⁹

However, it seems that the actual power was gradually transferred to Ko-Jong's real father, Hung-Son Tae-Won-Kun (this title was given to him after Ko-Jong's enthronement). According to *Ko-Jong Sil-Rok* (Records of Ko-Jong era), dated December 13, 1863, Queen Cho said that the conferment of Tae-Won-Kun's title was the first case in the national history, and the treatment of the living Tae-Won-Kun was discussed. Minister Chung Won-Yong proposed to hear the opinions of others, and Kim Heung-Keun said that it was not necessary to do so.

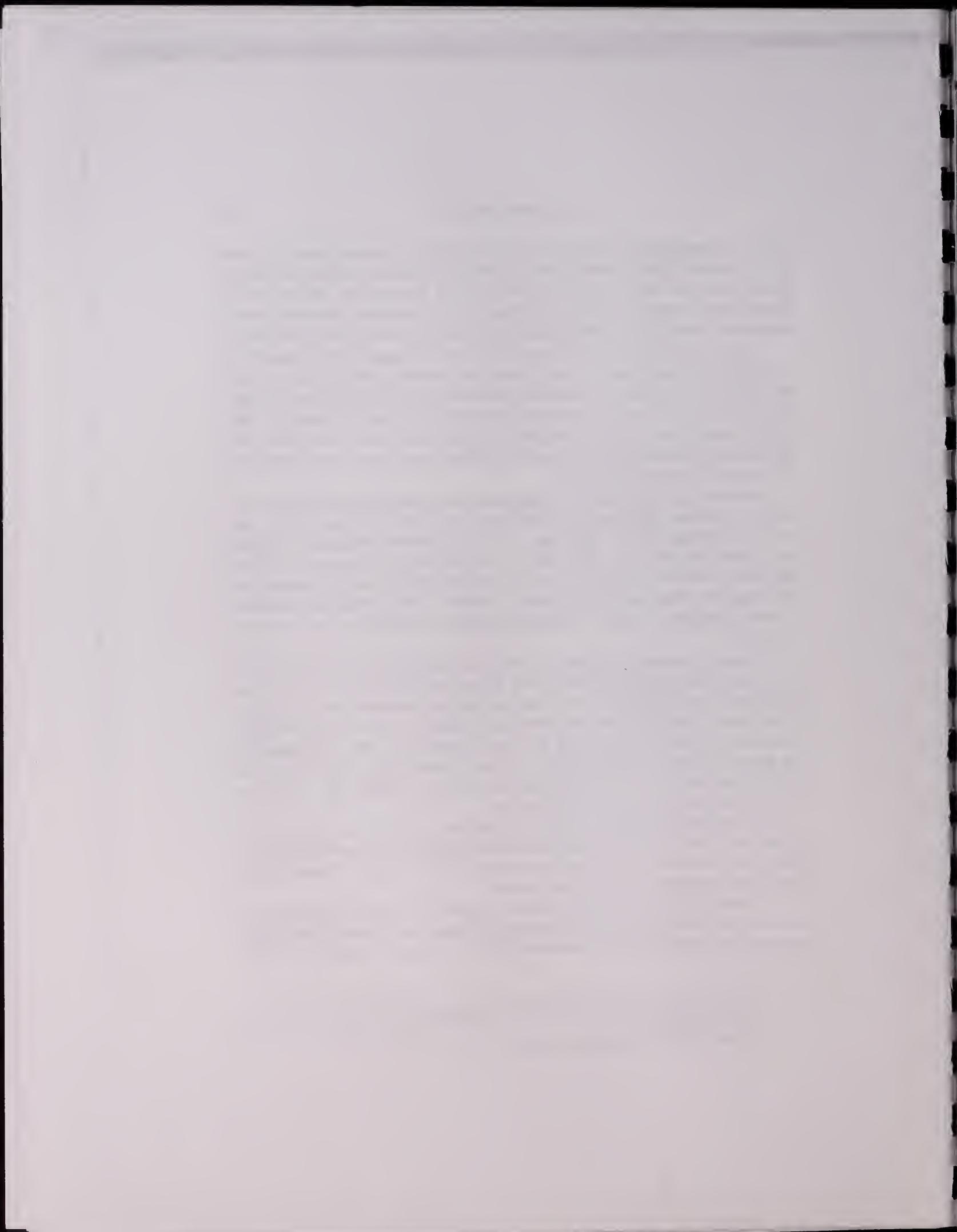
However, according to *Keun-Se Chosun Jong-Gam*, pp. 11-13, Kim Chwa-Keun said, "Even though Tae-Won-Kun is the real father of the King, there should not be two kings in a country, but he must not be treated just as a subject. In the court he shall not bow and must not be called by name before the king. At the time of his trips he should be escorted by soldiers. He shall dress like the king. He must be respected with a special formality. The king should visit him at Un-Hyon Palace at the beginning of each month to greet him. However, he shall not participate in government affairs."

Kim Heung-Keun agreed with this opinion. Cho Tu-Sun opposed this opinion and said, "The King succeeded King Ik-Jong, and Tae-Won-Kun is a subject. So he should not be treated and entitled like the King." Minister Chung Won-Yong suggested to follow this opinion.

To this, the Dowager Queen replied, "I know the reason, but the king is too young to control and supervise government affairs, and I do not have enough knowledge to administer the government affairs. However, there are so many

8. He was adopted as Dowager Queen's son, and not as Choljong's son. This was a great threat to the An-dong Kims, who were Heonjong's and Choljong's wife's and mother's families.

9. *Kojong Sil-Rok*, dated October 13, 1863.



important national affairs to be decided. Therefore, Tae-Won-Kun must assist the king to control and supervise government affairs. If Tae-Won-Kun is placed in this very high position, it would not be easy for him to hear the opinions of subjects. So he should be treated as a minister, but he should not be called by name in front of the King."

The ministers, were surprised at her reply, and Kim Chwa-Keun and Kim Heung-Keun asserted that such treatment of Tae-Won-Kun was not reasonable. According to *Tae-Han Kae-Nyon-Sa*, the King's real father, Hung-Son-Kun, was named Tae-Won-Kun as a title of respect. He participated in government affairs and was not treated as a subject.

According to *Mae-Chon Ya-Rok*, p. 2, Tae-Won-Kun tried to participate in government affairs from the next year.

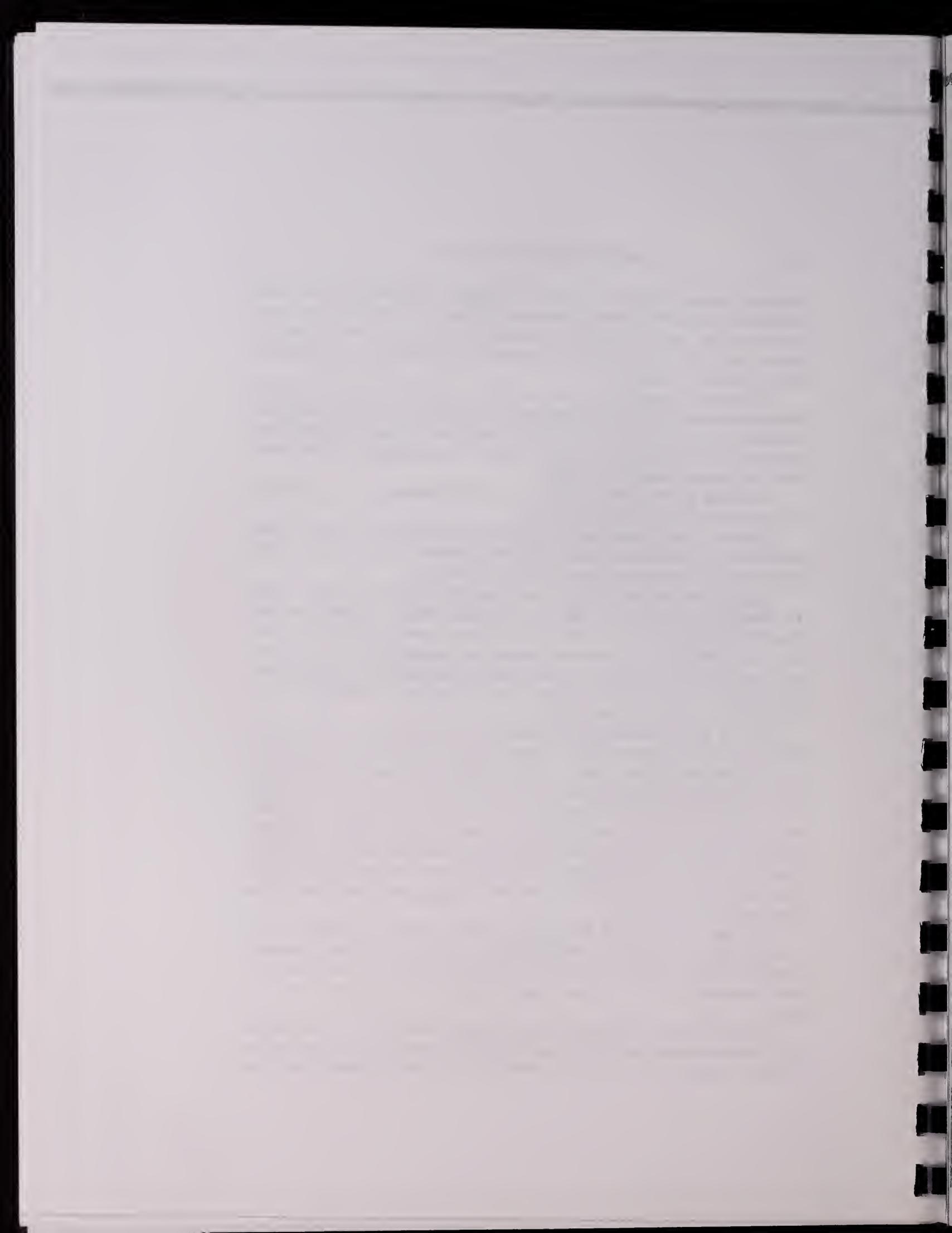
However, Kim Heung-Keun asserted at the court that the King's father should return to his home to enjoy wealth and pleasure for the rest of his life. However, all the power was grasped by Tae-Won-Kun.

Judging from the above facts, it seems that the decision was made to allow Tae-Won-Kun to control and supervise government affairs. Although the An-dong Kims seemingly respected him, they tried their utmost to prevent Tae-Won-Kun from participating in government affairs, but Dowager Queen, Cho Tu-Sun and Chung Won-Yong cooperated to let Tae-Won-Kun participate in government affairs. Here, we can see the collision of political interests of Dowager Queen, Tae-Won-Kun and the An-dong Kims.

First of all, the An-dong Kims had held the political power for more than fifty years as the maternal family of three Kings: Sunjo, Heonjong, Choljong, from the 12th year of Sunjo (1812). Dowager Queen, Cho In-Yong, Cho Byong-Hyon could be in government posts among the Kims for only six or seven years from the seventh year of Heonjong, but Cho Byong-Hyon and his son Ku-Ha were banished in the 13th year of Heonjong, and were given poison as penalty. The Chos could not get any government positions thereafter. As for Tae-Won-Kun, he suffered all contempts to save himself while the poor royal families were decimated by the Kims one by one for conspiracy, and made visits to the Kims as if he were a fool.

Dowager Queen adopted King Kojong as son to restrain the Kims, and cooperated with Yi Ha-Eung to hold the Kims in check. Yi Ha-Eung contacted Chu-Won, Cheon-Eui-Kam, Sa-Bo-Seo, Cheon-Seol-Sa, Che-Jo of Cho-Ji-Seo, etc., and communicated with Dowager Queen to let his son, Myong-Bok, enter the court.

Since the living Tae-Won-Kun was an unprecedented factor, it was natural that they tried to exclude Tae-Won-Kun from participating in government affairs. However, those who tried to oust Tae-Won-Kun from the government were not



just, and according to the intention of Dowager Queen, Tae-Won-Kun seized power for the first time in Korean history.

Tae-Won-Kun's participation in government affairs was realized by Dowager Queen's instructions¹⁰ that all government officials should first submit their documents to Tae-Won-Kun for approval, and at the government council meeting Tae-Won-Kun's seat was separately prepared above the seats of ministers.¹¹

On January 11th of the first years of his reign, King Kojong went to Un-Hyon-Kung to greet his father. It is supposed that Tae-Won-Kun seized all power from that time.¹² Thus, all government affairs were decided at Tae-Won-Kun's residence, and every document was submitted to Tae-Won-Kun at Un-Hyon-Kung for approval. The same phenomena happened when he seized power for the second and third times on June 9, 1882 (19th year of Kojong after Im-O Kun-Ran) and June 22, 1894 (when the pro-Japanese cabinet was formed during the Sino-Japanese War).

Un-Hyon-Kung, Tae-Won-Kun's residence, became the general headquarters for administration and politics; high officials visited the Un-Hyon-Kung to greet him, and a great many solicitations and petitions were submitted.

Tae-Won-Kun's government was a reactionary regime against the political system operated by the king's mother's families and was an abnormal system, compared with the normal system topped by the king.

III. Tae-Won-Kun's Political Achievements

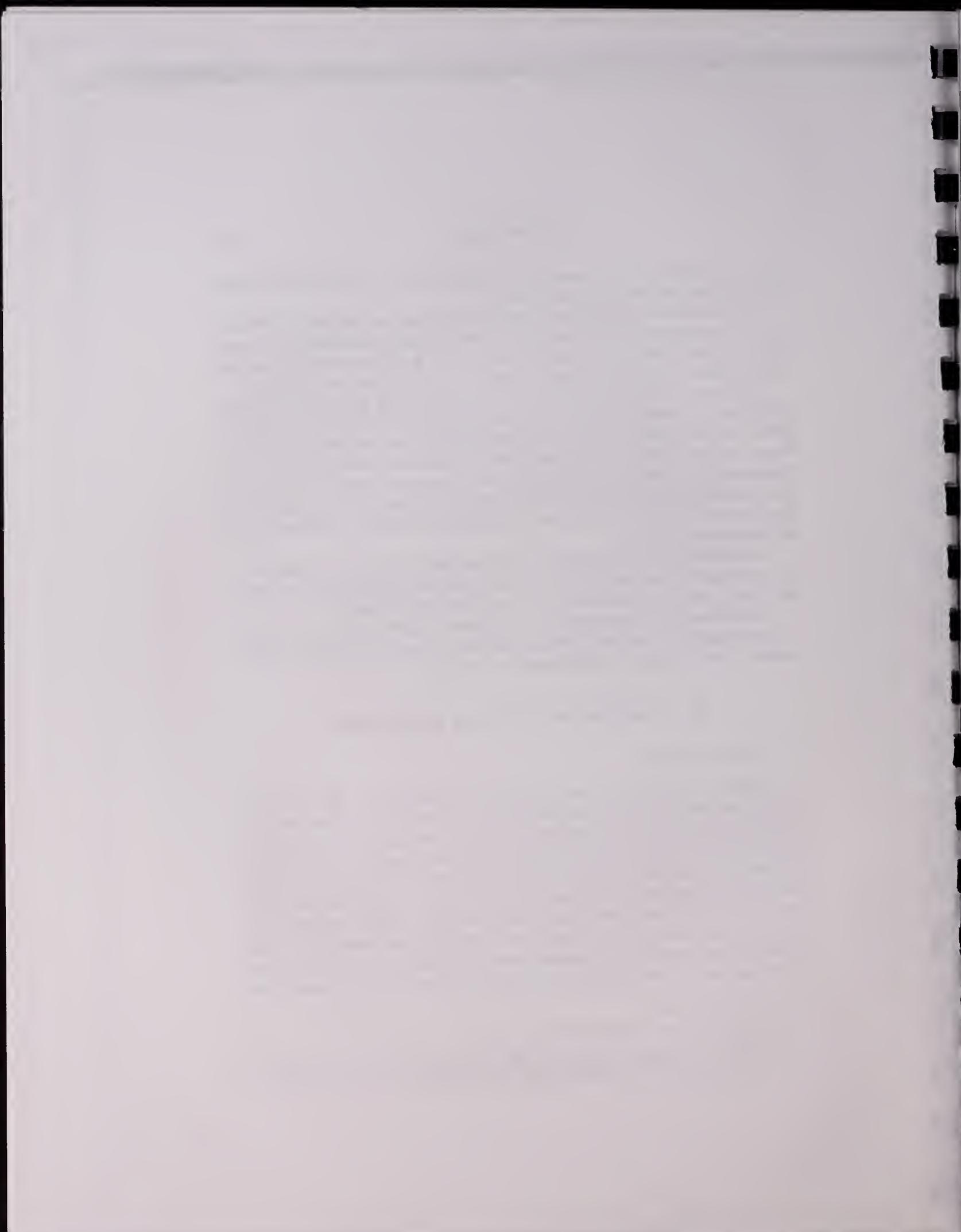
1) Use of Persons

With the formation of Tae-Won-Kun's dictatorship, the reign of government by the An-dong Kims was demolished, and the political power was concentrated in the hands of Tae-Won-Kun. Since the An-dong Kims belonged to the No-Ron faction, the so-called No-Ron World was changed in its aspect, and the Nam-In (a political faction) could occupy government posts for the first time in ninety years, since the reign of King Sukjong. Yu Hu-Jo became under-premier for the first time since Che Je-Kong, and Han Ke-Won succeeded him. As for the Puk-In (a political faction), Im Paek-Kyong and Kang Ro were also appointed under-premiers. Cho Seung-Kyo who belonged to Nam-In was appointed Tae-Jae-Hak for the first time since Kwon Yu, but later the position was

10. *Keun-Se Chosun Cheong-Gam*, Vol. I, p. 13.

11. *Ibid.*

12. *Ibid.*, and especially for King's greeting to his father. Gates were constructed at Keum-Ui Yong and Un-Hyon palaces. *Kojong Sil-Rok*, dated June 6, 1864.



given to Kang Ro, who belonged to Puk-In.

In addition to these, many persons who belonged to Nam-In or Puk-In were appointed, because Tae-Won-Kun belonged to Nam-In, since Tae-Won-Kun's sixth ancestor, Im-Pyong Tae-Kun-Ja (a grandson of King Injo), was connected with the treason plotted by Huh Kyun, a bastard of Huh Jok who belong to Nam-In. Tae-Won-Kun united the poor Cheonju Yis to make them his fence, and appointed them to government posts. Thus, at the family meeting, about ten thousand persons gathered.¹³

Some systematic components of Tae-Won-Kun's dictatorship were as follow:

Private secretaries at Un-Hyon-Kung

Chon Hcui-Yeon, Ha Chong-Il, Chang Sun-Kyu, An Pil-Ju (the so-called Chon-Ha-Chang-An), and Yi Sung-Eop, Yu Jae-So were best known among Tae-Won-Kun's private secretaries, and even the higher government officials flattered them. Especially, Chang Sun-Kyu cooperated with Po-To-Cheong (the metropolitan police bureau) to find new tax resources.

Court

The elder sisters of Chon, Ha, Chang, and An were Sang-Gung (court-ladies). Yi Min-Hwa was Nae-Si of Kong-Sa-Cheong. All of them were favored by Tae-Won-Kun, and they informed Tae-Won-Kun of every movement of the court.

Ministries

Hyungjo-Chipri, Oh To-Yung, Hojo-Chipri, Kim Wan-Jo, Kim Suk-Jun, Pyongjo-Chipri, Pak Pong-Rae, Ijo-Chipri, Yi Ke-Hwan, Yejo-Chipri, Chang Sin-Yung, Eui-Chung-Pu Pal-Do Chipri, Yun Kwang-Suk.

These persons were very clever, and assisted Tae-Won-Kun, who heeded their advice. Ministries and Yuk-Kyong (six boards) alternated with each other in the morning and evening, and they were assisted by I-Seo under the direct control of Tae-Won-Kun. Therefore, they only signed the documents for approval. Among them, Yun Kwang-Suk, Oh To-Yung, and Chang Sin-Yung distinguished themselves, and Yun Kwang-Suk was said to be an excellent man.¹⁴ The situations of each provincial government office was similar to those of the Central Government. Among them, two brothers, Paek Rak-Seo and Paek Rak-pil of Cholla provincial government and Seo Eun-Ro of Kyong-sang provincial government were very famous, and even the governors were afraid of their powers. These persons were, like Chang Sun-Kyu of Un-Hyon Palace, Tae-Won-Kun's

13. *Mae-Chon Ya-Rok*, p. 4, 9.

14. *Keun-Se Chosun Cheong-Gam*, Vol. 1, pp. 18-19.

15. *Ibid.*



tools to secure the needed finances, and were hated by the people.¹⁵ As an example of Yang-Ban, Kim Se-Ho, Governor of Kyong-Sang Province, and Chung, Hyon-Deok, Mayor of Tong-Nae City, served for seven years, and An Tong-Jun, teacher of Japanese studies, engaged in diplomatic relations with Japan for ten years.¹⁶

2) *Reconstruction of Kyong-Bok Palace and Government Office Building*

In order to enhance the dignity of the royal family, Tae-Won-Kun planned to reconstruct Kyong-Bok Palace, which had been burnt down at the time of the Imjin invasion by Japan. The reconstruction had been planned at the time of King Heon-Jong, but was given up for fear of public suffering. In April of the second year of Kojong (1865), the Construction Office was established, and Cho Tu-Sun and Kim Byong-Hak were appointed To-Je-Jo (Superintendents), and Yi Kyong-Ha was appointed Je-Jo (Supervisor). The peoples were then mobilized for construction work. In order to secure the great amount of needed funds and materials, taxes were imposed on paddy-fields, persons and traffic; and good lumber and stone were collected from all parts of the country.

After the unfortunate fire disaster, even forests in the personal possession of the nobility were exploited, and compulsory contributions were collected, stirring complaints from the people. Thus, the construction work was completed in November of 1867. The reconstruction of the government office building for six ministries was completed in July 1868, and the King moved to the new building. They were proud of its splendour. This construction work was performed by Tae-Won-Kun's bold enterprise, which is common to all dictators.

3) *Opposition to Wicked Religion and National Isolation Policy*¹⁷

Tae-Won-Kun brought great pressure on "the wicked religion," Roman Catholicism, which had been a problem since Cheongjo, and arrested thousands of Catholics in 1866 including nine French priests out of twelve to massacre them (about twenty thousand persons). In response to the report of Father Ridel, who had escaped, the French Indo-Chinese fleet came to Korea for retaliation, creating a Pyong-In Yang-U, a national crisis. The French fleet came up to Seo-

16. *Mae-Chon Ya-Rok*, p. 13.

17. Watanabe Katsumi, *A Study on the Opening of Korea*.

Kang along the Han River, and Kang-Hwa-Do fell into the hands of the enemy. Tae-Won-Kun requested all the people to repulse them, and the French fleet was repelled. In the meantime, an American merchant ship, the General Sherman, was burnt in the Tae-Dong River. Oppert, a German national, had visited Korea twice with his ship, and in the fifth year of Kojong (1868) he came to Korea for the third time and was found while he was digging in the tomb of Tae-Won-Kun's father. He was repulsed while attempting to land at Yeong-Jong Island.

Tae-Won-Kun's national isolation policy was unique. China was opened to European countries in 1842, and Japan in 1854, but only Korea in the northwest corner of the Pacific maintained a national isolation policy, and repulsed the French fleet (since they came to Korea at the decision of the French Minister in Peiping and the commander of the fleet without approval of the French Government, they were short in force and had no exact information). This was a mysterious victory in the Orient.

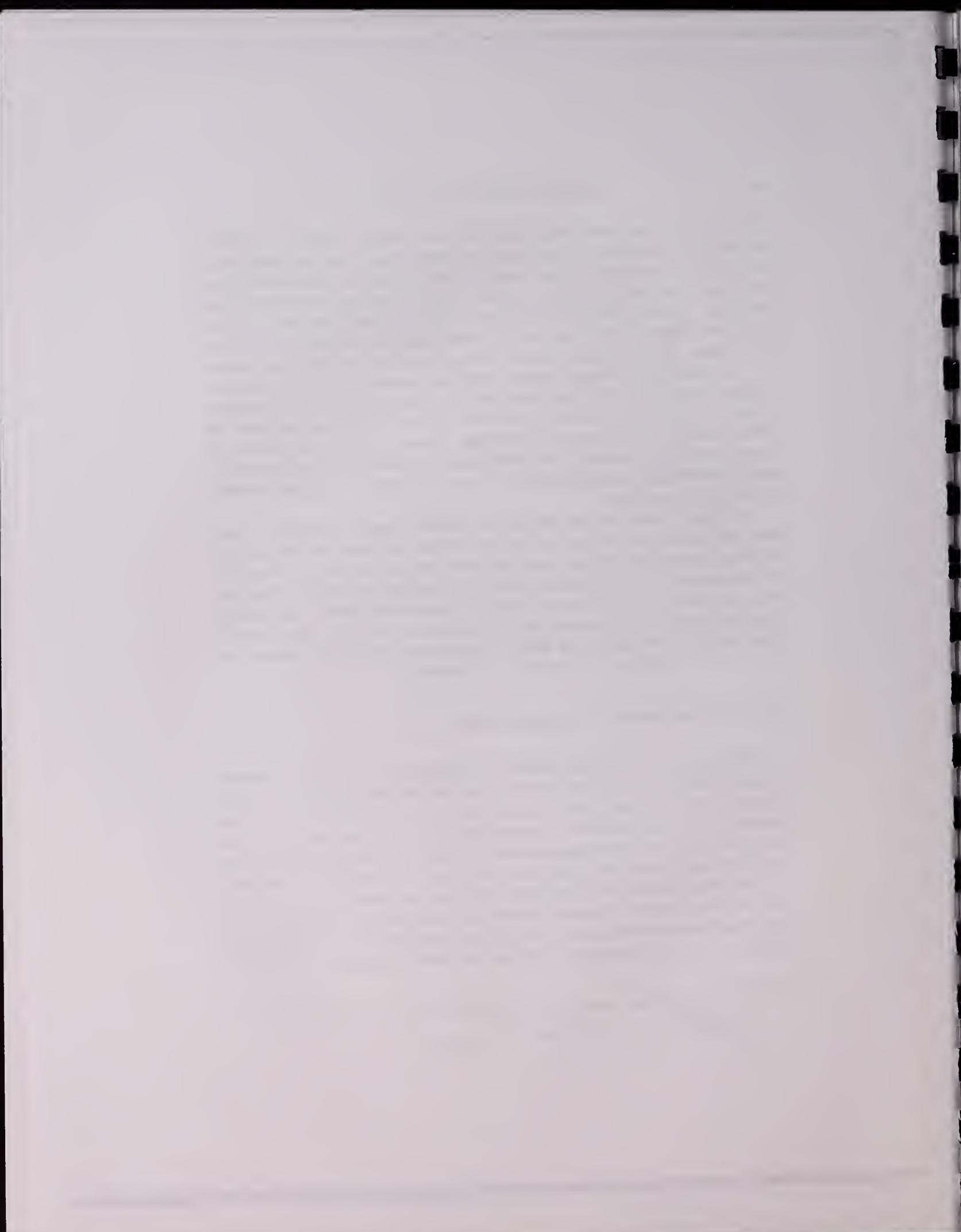
Moreover, Korea did not respond to America's proposal for trade several times, refused Japan's request for normal relations, and even refused to accept the letter for ten years for the reason that Japan had violated the agreement. (As aforementioned, Chung Hyon-Deok, Mayor of Tong-Rae City, and An Tong-Jun, teacher of Japanese studies, were in charge of relations with Japan). Even though Tae-Won-Kun's complete national isolation policy was intended to keep the traditional policy of the dynasties of Korea, it made Korea fall behind international society. Thus, he was only a stubborn old politician.

4) *Rearrangement of Internal Policy*

During his ten-years tenure of office, the rearrangement of the three branches of administration was Tae-Won-Kun's main political achievement. The riot which occurred in the Sam-Nam area in the last year of Chojong was caused by the disorder of the three branches of administration.¹⁸ Even the dead and babies were listed in the tax list for national defense. This was called Kwi-Rok (ghost list) and Hwang-Ku-Se (tax imposed even on babies) for the purpose of taxation.¹⁹ The tax owned by those who had fled was imposed on their families or fellow villagers. The amount of national defense tax was gradually increased to a big sum. Tae-Won-Kun corrected this and imposed taxes on the unit of village and collected two Yang (a monetary unit) from each adult, regardless of social posi-

18. *Chojong Sil-Rok*, Report by the Yeong-Nam Seon-Mu-Sa, Yi Cham-Hyon, dated June, 1862.

19. *Hankuk Tong-Sa*, Vol. II, Chapter 4: Tax Reform.



tion to secure the national finance, and thereby obtained double effects.

As for the lending of rice, reimbursement could be made with money to avoid the enticement of interest. He ordered them to remit the collected sum to the Central Government. He also established a social system to lend two Yang to each household and to receive rice for repayment. This rice was kept by the respective villagers for loan to be made in spring, to be redeemed with rice in autumn.

Furthermore, Tae-Won-Kun consolidated the shrines and lecture-halls scattered throughout the country into only forty-seven places. From the abandoned shrines and lecture-halls he got land and persons on whom taxes could be imposed. He also examined the warehouses of local government offices, and ordered compensation of lost goods. Thus, the national treasury was filled, and the national finance was sufficient to sustain expenses for ten years when he left the government.²⁰

IV. Ideological Contradiction in Tae-Won-Kun's Administration

From the beginning, Tae-Won-Kun filled an historically heterogeneous role in the clear tradition of the Chosun government system, for which the code of laws was well established, but during his dictatorial exercise of political power he started an interesting ideological struggle. This is related to his consolidation of lecture-halls and shrines, especially to his withdrawal of Man-Tong-Myo and repulsion of invasions by the French and the American fleets. The Korean scholars who had been deeply affected by Celestialism since King Taejo, especially since the 17th King, Hyojong, attacked Tae-Won-Kun with strict theory. The heavy burden imposed on the people to construct Kyong-Bok Palace was of secondary importance in this argument. We will first study here the consolidation of lecture-halls and shrines in detail.

1) Consolidation of Lecture-Halls and Shrines

Tae-Won-Kun initiated discussion as to the method of consolidating the lecture-halls and shrines scattered across the country in July of the first year of Kojong (1864).²¹ This was a great shock to the scholars, and there was strong opposition. This became a point of conflict during his tenure of government,

20. For an example of Pyong-Jo (Ministry of National Defense), refer to the *Seung-Jeong-Won Jeong-Su Diary* dated March 5, 1875.

21. *Kojong Sil-Rok*, dated July 27, 1864.

The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records. It emphasizes that proper record-keeping is essential for ensuring the integrity and reliability of the data collected. This section also outlines the various methods used to collect and analyze the data, highlighting the challenges faced during the process.

Methodology and Data Collection

The methodology employed in this study involves a combination of qualitative and quantitative techniques. Data was collected through a series of interviews and surveys, designed to explore the experiences and perceptions of the participants. The data analysis phase involved identifying themes and patterns within the responses, which were then used to inform the conclusions of the study.

Results and Discussion

The results of the study indicate that there are significant differences in the way that different groups of people perceive and experience the phenomenon being studied. These findings have important implications for the development of effective interventions and policies. The discussion section explores the reasons behind these differences and offers suggestions for further research in this area.

and had a great effect on his political downfall. However, there was an objective reason to consolidate lecture-halls and shrines. There had been many orders to forbid the random establishment of lecture-halls and shrines, and according to the records the evils of such lecture-halls and shrines had been great. Especially the riots which occurred in many places in the last year of Choljong, were partly caused, according to the report submitted by Yi Cham-Hyon who was Seon-Mu-Sa (Commander-in-Chief of the government army), by the evils of such lecture-halls and shrines.

As the biggest cause the reimbursement of rice was cited. A small town possessed 100,000 sok of rice, of which about 100 sok could be distributed to every household. But not a single crop of substantial rice was distributed. As for Kun-Po (tax for national defense), all adults related to shrines and tombs of the nobility evaded taxes imposed on them. This evaded portion was distributed to others, and one person might bear the burdens of four or five persons, and one household the burdens of more than ten persons.²² In the case of the approved lecture-hall, each was granted three Kyol of field and seven servants, as well as many books. The field and servants granted to the lecture-hall were exempted from taxes. As for the unlicensed lecture-halls, the same custom was followed. The acreage of field possessed by the lecture-hall was enlarged due to the contribution of land by county chief, governor, scholars and rich men. All this was exempted from taxes, leading to a substantial decrease in government income.

According to *Po-Mun-Ko-Bi-Ko* and *Yeon-Ye-Sil-Ki-Sul*, there were 594 shrines were so-called licensed shrines.²³ According to *Tae-Han-Ke-Nyon-Sa*, permission for more than one thousand lecture-halls was withdrawn, and the fields attached to them were returned to the government.²⁴ The number of servants attached to the lecture-halls were also decreased, and the burden borne by the people was thus greatly lightened.

In addition to the above mentioned economic evils, there were considerable political and social evils. The shrines and lecture-halls were originally established to honor loyal ancestors and to teach people, but later the number of those shrines and lecture-halls was greatly increased, and the scholars in local areas utilized lecture-halls to conspire against the central government, or to form political factions and to expand their influence through cooperation with other lecture-halls. Sometimes, they made arguments to harass local government officials. Thus, the lecture-halls became the nest of corrupt scholars.

22. *Choljong Sil-Rok*, dated June, 1862.

23. Yi Hong-Ryol, "Establishment of Lecture halls in Chosun", *Cheong-Gu Hak-Cheong* No. 30, p. 14.

24. *Tae-Han-Ke-Nyon-Sa*, Vol. 1, on lecture-halls.

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For example, Hwa-Yang Lecture-hall issued Muk-Pae (an emblem or badge) to force contributions for sacrificial rites, and compulsorily collected repair expenses from people in such remote places as Cholla province.²⁵ The consolidation of lecture-halls was done by the Dowager Queen's instructions on July 27 of the first year of Kojong (1864), The Myo-dang (mausoleum or shrine) was ordered to prepare the measures for it, and on August 27th, paddy-field and land, servants and goods owned by Sa (shrines) and lecture-halls in excess of regular amount or number were consolidated, and the establishment of Sa-Won (shrines and lecture-halls) without permission was prohibited as the first step.

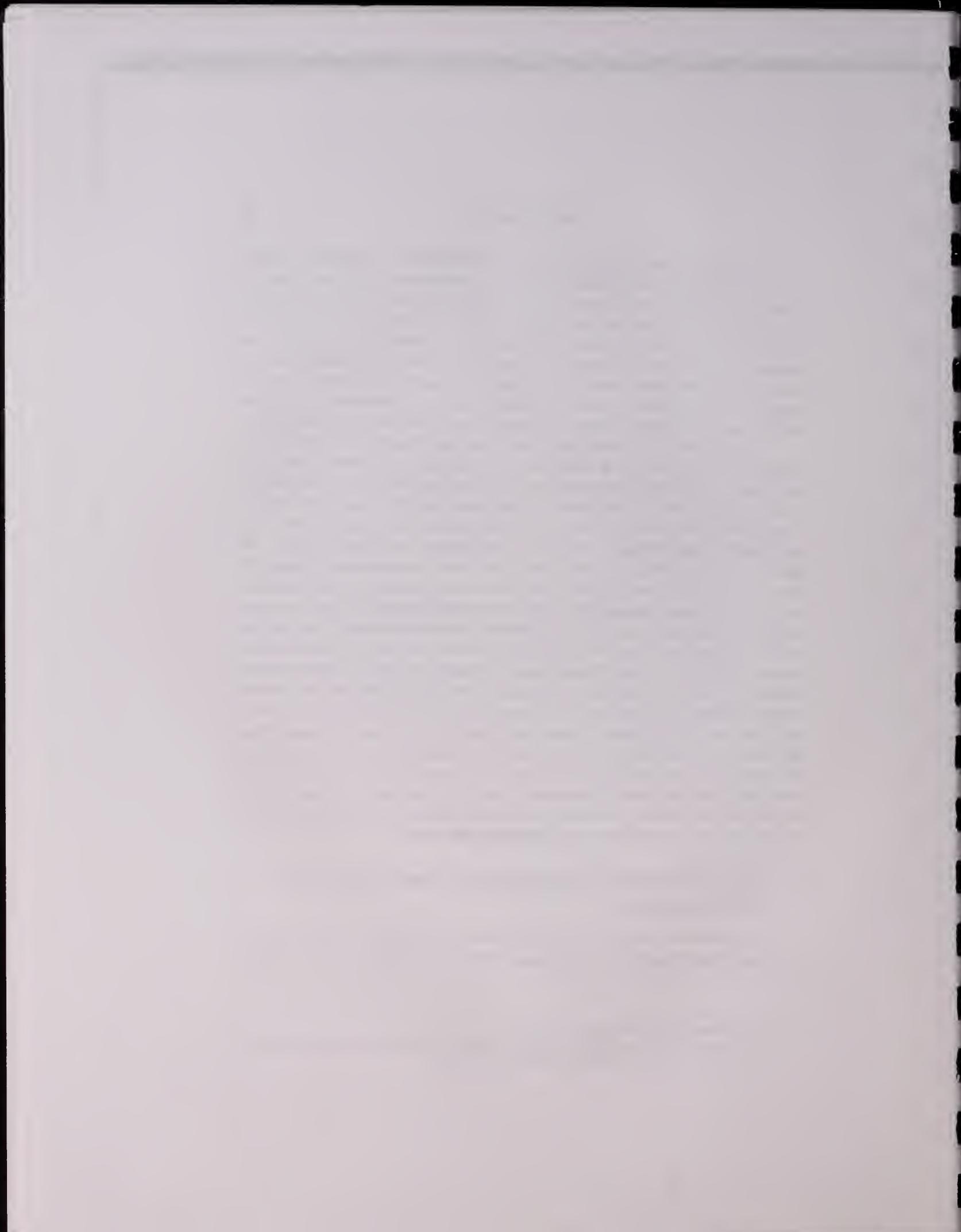
On March 29 of the next year (1865) the Man-Tong-Myo, in which King Sinjong and King Ik-Jong of Ming were memorialized, was moved from a remote place (Chong-Chon Myon, Koe-san Kun, Chungbuk Province) to Tae-Bo-Dan in the northern yard of the palace. Thus, Man-Tong-Myo was closed. It was a great shock to the society at that time. On September 3 of 1868, the unlicensed lecture-halls were abolished. Thus, the consolidation proceeded rapidly. On March 9 of 1871, only one lecture-hall per person was permitted among the allowed lecture-halls, and detailed plans had to be submitted to Tae-Won-Kun. On the 18th, it was announced that only lecture-halls operated by those who were engaged in Mun-Myo (school) (18 persons in all) were allowed, and the rest were to be abolished. On the 20th, Ye-Jo Pan-Seo (Minister of Education and Foreign Affairs) Cho Byong-Chang prepared a list of 47 shrines and lecture-halls remaining. Thus, the abolition of lecture-halls was begun from the 5th year of Kojong (1868), and the unlicensed lecture-halls were abolished initially, after which the rest of the licensed lecture-halls, except for 47, were abolished from March of 1871. On August 16 of the same year, notice was given to governors and county chiefs through Ye-Jo (Ministry of Home-Affairs) to the effect that those who failed to abolish lecture-halls would be punished. This fact reveals that it was very difficult for local government officials to abolish lecture-halls in provincial areas according to the government instructions.²⁶

2) *Split of Celestialism (suppression of Man-Tong-Myo and Anti-Europeanism)*

In the above we reviewed the consolidation of lecture-halls. A hot discussion arose when Man-Tong-Myo was suppressed. The Man-Tong-Myo was not a shrine in which loyal subjects were deified, but an imperial tomb in which emperors

25. *Pi-Byon-Sa-Dung-Rok*, March 25, 1862.

26. *Kojong Sil-Rok* dated July 27, August 17, 1864, March 29, 1865, September 3, 1868; March 9, March 19, March 20, March 25, 1871.

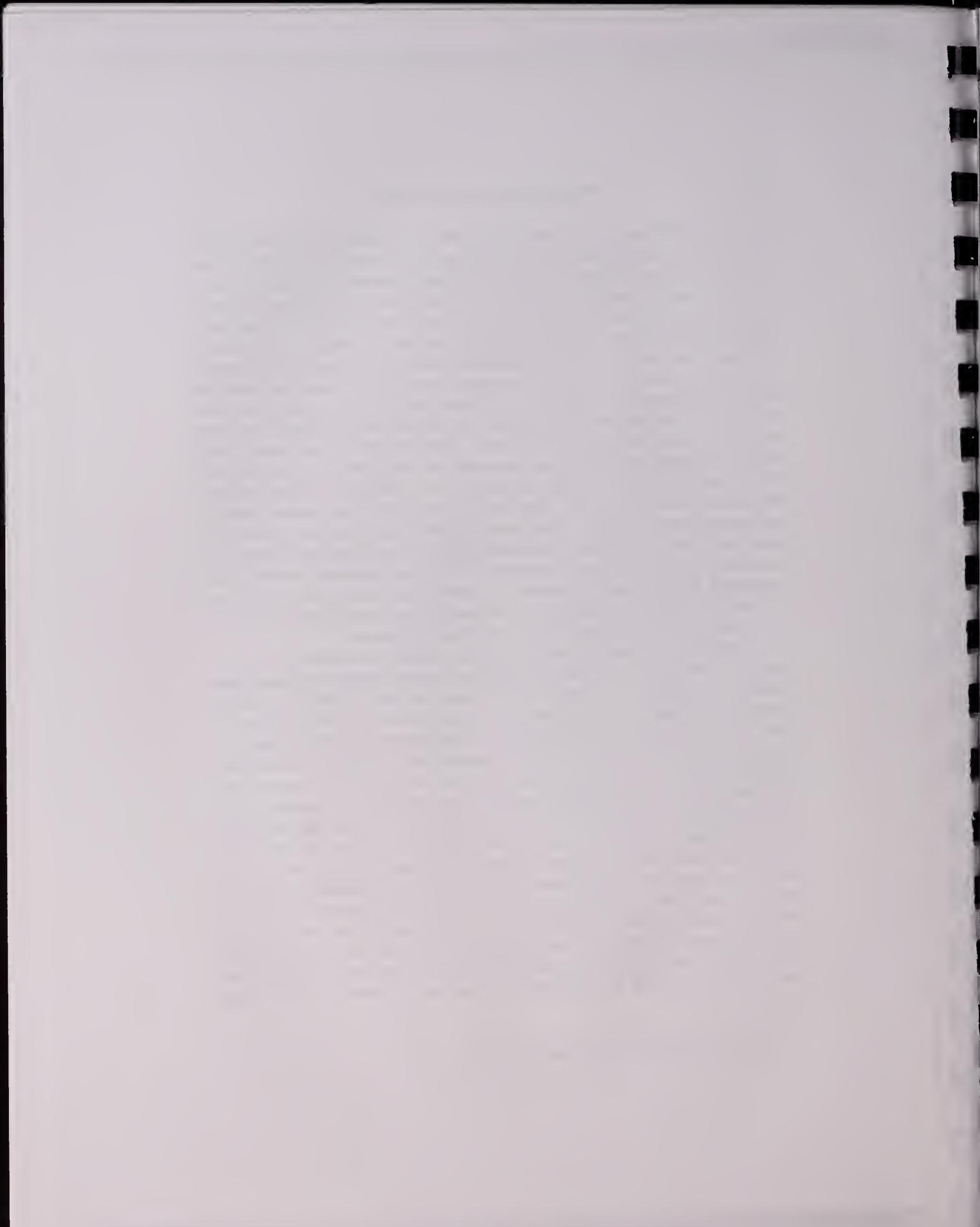


Sin-Jong and Ik-Jong of Min were deified, and it was much valued. Man-Tong-Myo was the symbol of the *zeitgeist* of Chosun in her later period. At the time of Im-Jin Wae-Ran, Chosun was assisted by Ming (Emperor Sin-Jong) to overcome the Japanese invaders. Therefore, for two hundred years Korea adopted an especially subservient attitude to Ming in gratitude. Thereafter, Korea and Ming (Emperor Ik-Jong) yielded to Yeo-Jin who rose in Manchuria. According to Celestialism, Ming was the Celestial Empire and the protector of the peace of Korea. In fact, the amicable relationship between Korea and Ming was an unprecedented peaceful relationship in Korean and Chinese histories. On the other hand, Man-Chin was a savage tribe of Yeo-Jin, which attacked Korea, but was defeated and brought tribute to Korea. The Yeo-Jin invaded Korea in the year of Cheong-Myo (1627), and retreated with the promise of brotherhood. In the year of Pyong-Ja (1636), the king of the tribe called himself emperor and invaded Korea, upon which Injo declared war against them, but the defeated, and surrender was compelled. Those who had opposed the surrender opposed the peace even after the surrender. Thus three scholars were killed, and Kim Sang-Heon and Sin Ik-Seong were kidnapped. Even though they were released after submission, Korean scholars continued to esteem Ming and oppose Ching until the end of Yi-Chosun. This historical fact was derived from Chu-Ja-Hak (Chu-Ja's teachings) which stressed justice and moral obligations.

At the time of Pyong-Ja Ho-Ran (Ching's invasion into Korea), King Hyojong (then Pong-Lim Tae-Kun) was kidnapped to Ching with the Crown prince, Sohyon, who planned to conquer the "northern savages" (Ching) for revenge upon returning home. This plan was made by government ministers Cheong Tae-Hwa, Hong Myong-Ha and Kim Ik-Heui; civilian officials Song Si-Yol, Song Jun-Kil; and general Kuh In-Hu,²⁷ and the armaments were prepared to a considerable degree. However, the King died suddenly ten years after his enthronement, and the plan for conquering the north was not realized. In memory of this plan Song Si-Yol requested his disciple, Kwon Sang-Ha, to erect Man-Tong-Myo in his death-bed injunctions. Thus, Man-Tong-Myo, in which the benefactors of national reconstruction, emperors Sinjong and Ikjong of Ming, were deified was erected near Hwa-Yang Lecture-hall in 30th year of Sukjong (1704), on the 60th anniversary of Ikjong's death.²⁸ Hyojong's descendants succeeded to the throne until Choljong, and Kojong was a descendant of In-Pyong Tae-Kun, a younger brother of Hyojong, from Hyojong's family line. Furthermore, Chuja-Hak (Chuja's teachings) were continuously respected, and the No-Ron faction was the main power of the government. Therefore, the prestige of Man-Tong-

27. *Ki-Cheon Chip*.

28. *U-Am Chip. Tae-Ilan Ke-Nyon-Sa*, Vol. I.



Myo was absolute, and Hwa-Yang Lecture hall (established by Song Si-Yol) was prosperous. Under the pretext that it was a discourtesy to place such a shrine in a remote place, Tae-Won-Kun decided to move Man-Tong-Myo to Tae-Bo-Dan (a shrine for Sinjong and Ikjong, built after the erection of Man-Tong-Myo) in the northern court of the palace in March of the second year of Kojong (1865), and on April 22, the Chi-Bang (a sacred paper) was brought. Of course, this was carried out as part of a series of consolidations of lecture-halls and shrines, but astonished many scholars who relied for their power on lecture-halls throughout the country.

From the above we can see that the suppressing of lecture-halls in local areas, which had flourished all over the country for 160 years, was an authoritarian measure for the absoluteness of Tae-Won-Kun's authority. The scholars demanded the restoration of Man-Tong-Myo, since they had lost the spiritual base from which they dominated the nation. This became an important reason for Tae-Won-Kun's political downfall.

Then, in the following year, the French Indo-China Fleet invaded Kang-Hwa to retaliate for the massacre of Roman Catholic priests, and the foreign troops marched into the island and into the capital city. This was the so-called Pyong-In Yang-U (the European invasion in the year of Pyong-In, 1866), which occasioned a flare-up of anti-Europeanism. On August 13, a reconnoitering party of the French fleet landed at Kap-Chen on Kang-Hwa and two ships came up to Seo-Kang along the Han River on the 17th. On the 16th Ki Cheong-Jin, a famous scholar, submitted a petition to oppose appeasement of the invaders as follows: "As for national defense, the assertion was composed of six points. Relations with foreign countries will bring forth wickedness in the nation. Korea is the only pure nation, and they want to associate with us to subordinate us. Once we establish any relation with them, then all the subjects will be westernized, and the King will lose his loyal subjects. Therefore, such a danger should be avoided well in advance to leave no reason for repentance. These days the Korean people are fond of western goods and clothes. This is a sign that the pirate has invaded Korea. Therefore, western goods should be searched and burned publicly, and those who bring such western goods into Korea should be punished as criminals who are in communication with enemies, so that the people can follow the right way."²⁹

When Kang-Hwa City fell into the enemy's hands on September 8, 1866 Yi Hang-Ro, the leader of the scholars, was appointed Tong-Yeol Seong-Ji to help him cooperate with the Government in overcoming the national crisis.

29. *Seung-Jeong-Won Jeong-Su Diary* dated August 16, 1868.

[The page contains extremely faint and illegible text, likely bleed-through from the reverse side of the paper. The text is too light to transcribe accurately.]

He came up to Seoul in October, and in November he submitted his resignation,³⁰ in which he stated as follows: "Now is the time of national crisis when the western pirate is invading Korea. Public opinion is split into two: for fighting and for retreat. The normal way of defense is fighting, and if the King's will is directed for fighting with the enemy, the ministers and the loyal subjects will fight with the enemy until the last man for the King. Therefore, the King should clearly express his will, should hear public opinion, should appoint a brave general for the war against the enemy, should appoint officials who will recruit soldiers in all eight provinces, and should appoint another general to organize the militia to cooperate with the regular army. The King and the subjects should be united together, and the King should do his best to get the support of the people. The King should hear public opinions for good government. Then all the subjects will be united for national defense. First, compulsory labor for public works should cease; second, the exploitation of the people should be stopped; third, luxury should be prohibited; fourth, the royal family should be frugal; fifth, the food should be simple; and sixth, clothes should be thrifty. If the King cares for the welfare of the people, the subjects will regard the King as their father, and then the western pirate can be repulsed and the nation can be safe. If the government loses the support of the people, the nation cannot be saved, even if there are hundreds of brave generals and good staffs."³¹

To the above petition, expressed in his resignation, the government gave an affirmative reply, and on the 16th the government's decision to declare war was conveyed to military men and civilians. However, Tae-Won-Kun warned him against his mentioning public works and the probable problem of Man-Tong-Myo, when Tae-Won-Kun promoted him to Kong-Jo Cham-Pan on the 14th. Again, Yi Hang-Ro submitted his third resignation as Kong-Jo Cham-Pan, in which he asserted that the western goods should be collected and burned to show the right way to the people, which was similar to the declaration of Ki Cheong-Jin mentioned previously.³²

On October 2, when he was appointed Tong-Ji-Eui-Keum Pu-Sa, he again proposed the suspension of public works and exploitation of the people, as well as the prohibition of the western goods.³³

From the above petitions submitted by Ki Cheong-Jin, Yi Hang-Ro and other scholars we can see that the opposition against Ching was turned against

30. When a scholar was appointed to a government post, it was customary that he should express his opinion on the government together with his resignation. If the government needed his advice, he was promoted and ordered to come up to Seoul.

31. *Hwa-Seo-Chip*, Vol. III.

32. *Ibid.*

33. *Ibid.*

[The text in this section is extremely faint and illegible. It appears to be a list or a series of entries, possibly organized in a table with multiple columns. The content is too blurry to transcribe accurately.]



the "Western pirates", and western goods were denounced as a symbol. The use of western goods was prohibited several times.³⁴

The petition for restoring Man-Tong-Myo was submitted by Yi Hang-Ro on October 7th (his disciple, Yang Heon-Su, won a victory at Yeon-Jok Mt. Castle and the French Fleet retreated in May). A scholar, Song Nae-Heui, who was engaged in the Seong-Kyun-Kwan, submitted a petition on May 13, 1865 calling for continuation of the Man-Tong-Myo immediately after the order for its suspension, but it was disregarded. The summary of Yi Hang-Ro's petition was as follows: "He mentioned the friendly relations with Ming from the time of Yi-Taejo, their assistance in repelling the Japanese invasion of Korea, the Ching's invasion of Korea, Hyojong's plan to conquer the north, and the history of Man-Tong-Myo, concluding that Man-Tong-Myo had made a great contribution to the friendly relations with Ming, to the repulsion of foreign enemies, and to the attainment of Hyojong's will. The attainment of Hyojong's will was to continue friendly relations with Ming. The loyalty to the King and the friendly relations with the Celestial Empire were the proper course to be followed. Then, why should the Man-Tong-Myo be placed in the court yard and not among the people. The people could not understand the reason. The petitions of government officials and the opinions of scholars appealed for righteousness. Therefore, the King should order the restoration of Man-Tong-Myo to make his subjects understand the meaning of celestialism, and to make the western pirates afraid. Morale would thus be enhanced to overcome the three forces."³⁵

From the above we can see the theory that celestialism meant opposition to "savages", and the existence of the Man-Tong-Myo shrine symbolized the spirit which resulted in repulsion of the French fleet, while abandonment of the shrine would be tantamount to recognition of foreign enemies. Thus, theoretically Tae-Won-Kun was driven into a corner. When Yi-Hang-Ro, who was 75 years old, submitted this last petition and left the government, the people deplored. Ex-Hecn-Nap Pak Yeong-Un, and Pu-Ho-Gun Yi Kyu-Seo appealed to the royal court to restrain him, but the royal court refused their appeal. However, the petition could not become a great political issue. (Yi Hang-Ro died two years later in the fifth year of Kojong.)

Later, Tae-Won-Kun suffered again from the invasion of the American fleet into Kang-Hwa in 1871. At that time Tae-Won-Kun erected monuments opposing appeasement in major cities. On the monument was written in big letters, "The Western enemies invaded Korea. We oppose appeasement without war. Appeasement is the betrayal of the nation." They wrote in small letters,

34. For example, on July 30, October 18 and 30, 1866.

35. *Hwa-Seo-Chip*, Vol. III.

"This monument was erected in the year of Pyong-In to warn the generations." On the rear of the monument was written, "The monument for protecting justice and opposing evils."³⁶ The protection of justice meant celestialism, and the opposition of evils meant the opposition to enemies. At the time of erecting these monument, the thought of Man-Tong-Myo might have passed through Tae-Won-Kun's head. Furthermore, Tae-Won-Kun ordered the ink-stick manufacturing plant to inscribe on their products: "The Western enemies invaded Korea. We oppose appeasement without war. Appeasement is the betrayal of the nation" and on the front surface of Ink-stick "for protecting justice and opposing evils" on the back, to propagandize opposition to appeasement.³⁷ Thus, there was no decline in allegiance to celestialism, but Tae-Won-Kun placed emphasis on the practical issue, while the scholars placed emphasis on their respective interests. Therefore, celestialism and the opposition to enemies were not quite equal in a strict sense, and the words had broader meaning.

V. The End of Tae-Won-Kun

The position of Tae-Won-Kun, who had held absolute power like a dictatorial emperor and carried out the revolutionary policies mentioned above,³⁸ began to decline because the Mins, kinsmen to the Queen, who created a force antagonistic to Tae-Won-Kun, and attacks from the learned men severely denouncing his consolidation of lecture-halls. Thus, in November 1873 he resigned his dictatorial post under the pretext of illness. Since he had not been appointed by the Government, no formal resignation was necessary, and his withdrawal to the Sam-Ke-Dong mountain villa (which he seized by force from Kim Heung-Keun)³⁹ was sufficient to express his resignation.

1) Formation of Antagonistic Force and Growth of King's Power

According to *Chosun Cheong-Kam*, Tae-Won-Kun had grasped power pursuant to the instructions of the Dowager Queen. February 13 of the third year of Kojong (1866), the political instructions of the Dowager Queen was abolished, and on the 28th the ceremony was held to enable Tae-Won-Kun to control and supervise the Government affairs for an indefinite term. If the period during

36. *Tae-Han Ke-Nyon-Sa*, Vol. I, p. 8.

37. *Ibid.*

38. *Hankuk Tong-Sa* (Korean History) Vol. III, Chapter I. Tae-Won-Kun's Regency.

39. *Mae-Chon Ya-Rok*, pp. 2-3.

MEMORANDUM

TO : [Illegible]

FROM : [Illegible]

SUBJECT : [Illegible]

[Illegible text block]

RECOMMENDATION

[Illegible text block]

[Illegible text block]

[Illegible text block]

which Dowager Queen supervised Government affairs with the King and Tae-Won-Kun can be called the period of triumvirate, the period after the abolition of Dowager Queen's supervision may be called the period of joint rule of the King and Tae-Won-Kun.

The reason that Tae-Won-Kun grasped power was that the King was too young to make any decision, and had to be assisted by his close associates. The close associates were formed at the time of the King's wedding ceremony. This fact is systematically described in Pak Eun-Sik's *Korean History*⁴⁰; the details are as follows.

In March of the third year of Kojong (1866), the King, who was fifteen years old, married a daughter of the late Min Chi-Rok. The wife of Tae-Won-Kun was a daughter of Min Chi-Ku, and she and the Queen were same sixth generation of Min Chi-Jung (father of Queen In-hyon, wife of Suk-Jong). Thus, the Queen was a younger sister of Min Seung-Ha, an elder brother of the wife of Tae-Won-Kun. This marriage was made at the request of Tae-Won-Kun's wife to the Dowager Queen.

Tae-Won-Kun at first opposed this marriage, because his sister-in-law would thus become a brother-in-law of his son; but he finally approved it at the suggestion of Dowager Queen.⁴¹ It was reported that Tae-Won-Kun, who had been tired of government by maternal relations, wanted to choose the queen from a poor family. As for Min Seung-Ho, the Queen was his adopted sister and Tae-Won-Kun's wife was his real sister, and he could rise in power at once. Among the Mins, there were Tae-Ho, Kyu-Ho and Kyom-Ho, but all of them were young. However, they grew up by and by. The Queen was versed in the Chinese classics and history, and even Tae-Won-Kun called her a woman-scholar (blue stocking) and disliked her. Min Kyu-Ho was very clever and obtained access to the King. He made a list of names on pink paper and handed it to the King, so that the King might order Yi-Jo (Ministry of Home affairs) to appoint them with his unofficial note. The personnel affairs were handled by the Yi-Jo, and the candidates were nominated by Yi-Jo, of which the high-ranking officials requested appointment of a certain person with unofficial notes. The King became to be aware of the source of power, and this was one of the important reasons that he demolished the Tae-Won-Kun regime. The Queen exerted herself to appoint her kinsmen to high posts in the government to enhance the dignity of her family.

Dowager Queen was on good terms with Tae-Won-Kun in the beginning. However, she became tired of his dictatorial manner, and Min Kyu-Ho and Cho-

40. *Hankuk Tong-Sa*, Vol. II, Chapter 10.

41. *Kcun-Se Chosun Cheong-Gam*, p. 23.

Yeong-Ha, a nephew of Dowager Queen, induced Tae-Won-Kun's eldest son, Chae-Myon, to advise King Ko-jong to carry out the government affairs by himself. Tae-Won-Kun was not on good terms with his elder brother, Choe-Eung. His eldest son, Chae-Myon, passed the civil service examination in the latter part of King Chol-jong's era and was conferred the title of Kun, but Tae-Won-Kun did not execute this, and when he wanted to be a general Tae-Won-Kun did not allow him to do so. Thus he held a grudge against his father. Min Seung-Ho, Tae-Won-Kun's brother-in-law, and Cho Kyong-Ho, Tae-Won-Kun's son-in-law, both held grudges against Tae-Won-Kun, because he did not allow them to become higher government officials.⁴² Thus when Kojong was twenty-two years old, he combined with the Queen Min to form a political force.

2) *Direct Imperial Rule and Public Opinion*

Separately from the abovementioned alliance of Mins and Chos, there was opposition from learned men. After Yi Hang-Ro's petition for the reconstruction of Man-Tong-Myo, Choe Ik-Hyon (Yi Hang-Ro's disciple) who had been appointed Sa-Heon-Pu Chang-Ryong after completing the mourning for his mother, submitted a petition for stopping public works and exploitation of the general public, for reforming taxation, and for abolishing gate tax on October 10, 1873, and his petition was accepted by the King. To this petition Sa-Kan (an advisor) Kwon Chong-Rok of Tae-Won-Kun's faction counterattacked that the public works were already finished, that the taxation was readjusted, and that the gate tax was a kind of traffic regulation, and that the petition had been submitted in accordance with the instructions of Yi Hang-Ro, who was Choe's teacher, to enhance the fame of Yi.

To such an assertion the King replied, "I already accepted his petition, and even though there are some improper expressions in his petition, I am not in a position to punish him." However, Choe was censured later.⁴³ On the 18th, when Choe was appointed Ton-Nyong-Pu To-Cheong by the King, his teacher, Yi Hang-Ro, made an excuse for his plot to enhance his fame, and expressed his opinion on domestic and foreign policies, at which the King expressed his appreciation. Thus, Tae-Won-Kun's misgovernment was denounced by Yi Hang-Ro and later by Choe Ik-Hyon. The denunciation was protected by the King, but was reprimanded by Tae-Won-Kun. In this fact we can see the King's increased participation in government affairs. In the tenth year of Kojong, the

42. *Mae-Chon Ya-Rok*, p. 9, 17.

43. *Myon-Am-Jip*, Appendix, Vol. I, pp. 13-14.



King abolished the gate tax, and for these merits Choe Ik-Hyon was appointed Seung-Cheong-Won Tong-Pu-Seung-Ji, and on October 10th was ordered to come up to Seoul. However, on the 16th at Pocheon he submitted his resignation, in which he denounced the corruption of the Government, to attack the one-man dictatorship. Since Tae-Won-Kun's seizure of power, there had been many discussions among learned men. Their opinions could be summarized as follows: "This is a matter related to the King and his father, and it is awkward to mention it." Thus, for ten years thereafter, the learned men refrained from expressing their opinions on this matter. Thus, the Government became corrupted and the public outrage became severer. Therefore, the King attempted to establish new government policies, and sought a turning point.

It seems that the King appointed Choe Ik-Hyon as Tong-Pu-Seung-Ji and expected his resignation for such purpose. Just as the King thought, Choe Ik-Hyon denounced Tae-Won-Kun's dictatorship and the corruption of the Government in his resignation. However, Choe's resignation was not directly forwarded to the King. Kim Jae-Hyon, then Governor of Kyong-Gi Province, opened and read the resignation, and it was shown to Tae-Won-Kun, who became furious at Choe's resignation. Thus, the resignation was sent back to Kim Jae-Hyon, who forwarded it back to Pocheon in fear.

The rumor was widely spread in Seoul that Choe Ik-Hyon had submitted his resignation. The King heard this rumor. Since there was no response from Choe for a long time after his appointment, the King ordered his attendants to report to him the true facts several times a day, and the ministers and secretaries didn't know what to do. Tae-Won-Kun, who was angry sent a messenger to Choe Ik-Hyon and his friend, the Keum-Hi-Tae-Jang (General) Yang Heon-Su to tell them that Choe's resignation could not be accepted as it stood and Choe had to modify the reason of his resignation to illness or personal reason, or otherwise there would be an uneasiness around the Government. Choe Ik-Hyon, however, refused to modify the reason of his resignation, despite of the threat from Tae-Won-Kun. Since the King had promoted Choe Ik-Hyon to Chwa-Pu-Seung-Ji, and then degraded him to Tong-Pu-Seung-Ji, this fact shows how the King was desirous to receive a petition from him. The Seung-Cheong-Won urged the delivery of the resignation which Choe Ik-Hyon had submitted, and sent messengers three times a day. In the meantime, Choe Ik-Hyon stayed home, and moved to Keum-Kok-Jeon in Yang-Joo, where he made a copy of his resignation to hand it to a messenger for his submission of the copy to the King. This petition was submitted to the King on the 25th, and was accepted by the King as a reasonable petition as follows: "You made a petition from your loyalty, and it is very

instructive. It is noteworthy that you described the peaceful and glorious eras of the great kings in the past. I appoint you Ho-Jo-Cham-Pan (Vice Minister of Justice and Home Affairs). Those who oppose this honest petition will be only narrow-minded men."

From this we can see that Tae-Won-Kun and the King took quite different views on Choe Ik-Hyon's petition. The ministers and other officials who had been denounced for their incompetence and negligence submitted their resignations, and attacked Choe Ik-Hyon by pointing out his use of the words "the death of morality," and appealed for punishment of Choe Ik-Hyon for his indiscreet plot to raise his reputation. To this the King sent his reply to the ministers, that Choe Ik-Hyon's petition was presented out of his loyalty, and the ministers should not blame him too much.

The King dismissed or reduced salaries of higher government officials. Hyong-Jo Cham-Eui (Vice-Minister of Justice) An Ki-Yeong, the former Cheong-Eon (Advisor) who recommended the punishment of Choe Ik-Hyon, was banished. The students of Seong-Kyun-Kwan who had gone on strike were put on good behaviour. Choe Ik-Hyon once more submitted his resignation as Ho-Jo Cham-Pan, in which he explained the violation of the traditional laws and morality in detail, and requested the political neutrality of Tae-Won-Kun to return to the normal government system. This was first summarized in five points as follows: (1) The abolishment of Hwang-Myo (Man-Dong-Myo) had loosened the bonds between the King and subjects, (2) The abolishment of lecture-halls had disturbed the morality between the teacher and students, (3) The adoption of a son after death had hindered the filial piety between father and sons, (4) The pardon of traitors had taken advantage of the social disorder, (5) The use of Chinese (Ching) currency has blurred the difference between the Celestial Empire (Ming) and the savage (Ching). These were then explained in detail. At the end he added that this was not the fault of the King, but was the result caused by the minister in charge (Tae-Won-Kun), and advised the King to clarify and clear up this matter and prevent Tae-Won-Kun from participating in government affairs.

As to this petition, the To-Seung-Ji, Kim Po-Hyon, asked the King how he should handle it, because significant matters, including the Man-Tong-Myo, were mentioned in the petition. The King replied that the petition should be submitted to him. After he read the petition he made the comment that the matter of Man-Tong-Myo was related to the Dowager Queen, and nobody should argue about it, and since Choe used so many threatening words, he should be banished. The criticism against Tae-Won-Kun's misgovernment and the proposal for ouster of Tae-Won-Kun from the government administration were the extreme words which



broke the taboo. Therefore, the King himself could not officially agree with Choe. However, the petition for interrogation submitted by Sam-Sa (joint proposal of Sa-Hun, Sa-Kan and Hong-Mun), and by the senior-minister Hong and his group, was rejected, but at the court meeting held on the 5th, the interrogation was decided. On the same day Choe was arrested by (police) Yang Heon-Su, who was Choe's friend, with orders to arrest him. But this was the King's care for protecting his life (because there was a rumor that the Tae-Won-Kun side was going to kill him). On 8th there was the interrogation and on 9th there was the ordinary questioning. The King ordered Choe's banishment to Cheju Island for punishment. However, the Si-Won-Im Tae-Sin and Sam-Sa (ministers) opposed the King's decision for the reason that it was too light punishment, but they were overruled.⁴⁴

3) *Unpublished Declaration of Direct Imperial Rule and Ouster of Tae-Won-Kun*

While there were such severe attacks by Choe Ik-Hyon and defenses by Tae-Won-Kun's faction, the King ordered announcement of his direct imperial rule. However, next morning the King cancelled it for the reason that direct imperial rule had been known to the public since the abolition of the Dowager Queen's participation in government affairs on February 13, 1866, and the announce would be redundant.⁴⁵ Even though the announcement of the direct imperial rule was cancelled, the political power was completely returned to the King. As mentioned before, on November 11th Si-Won-Im-Tae-Sin was discharged, and on the 13th Yi Yu-Won was appointed as the first premier of the new cabinet. Thus the Queen and the Min Seung-Ho faction who had worked behind the scenes could enjoy the victory. Yi Hang-Ro's faction availed themselves of the custom that one should hint once at resignation when appointed to a post, and thus could express an opinion on political affairs to eliminate Tae-Won-Kun's dictatorship. However this plot was designed by a group of the King's maternal relatives, and the political power was to be seized by them. If it had been done by the general government officials, the normal political system could have been expected. Thus, Tae-Won-Kun, who had been a King without crown, was overthrown by the tactics of the King, the Queen and the group of the King's maternal relatives, and retreated to Sam-Keh-Dong Mountain Villa which had been owned by Kim

44. *Ibid.*, pp. 19-30.

45. *Seung-Jeong-Won Jeong-Su Diary* dated November 5, 1875.

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Heung-Keun. Nobody asked him in the decision of political affairs. One year later, he returned to the site of the tomb at Deok-San, where his father, was buried in Chung-Chong Province, and never came back to Seoul, but went to his villa in Chik-Kok at Yang-Ju to enjoy the scenery. In June of 1875, however, he returned to Un-Hyon Palace according to the Dowager Queen's request.

4) *New Phase*

The Yong-Don-Nyong, Hong Sun-Mok; the Chwa-Eui-Jeong, Kang Ro, the U-Eui-Jong, Han Ke-Won, were discharged for their opposition to the amnesty of Choe Ik-Hyon. Yi Yu-Won, who had been hated by Tae-Won-Kun, was appointed Yeong-Eui-Jong (Premier), Pak Ke-Su was appointed U-Eui-Jong, Yi Choe-Eung was appointed Ho-Ui-Dae-Jang, and Cho Yeong-Ha was appointed Keum-Ui-Dae-Jang, which was later changed to To-Tong-Sa of the newly established Mu-Ui-So. Min Kyu-Ho was appointed Yi-Jo Cham-Pan (Vice-minister of Home Affairs). Min Seung-Ho was appointed Pyong-Jo Pan-Seo (Minister of National Defense). Chung Hyon-Deok, who had been in charge of relations with Japan, was discharged. The same teacher of Japanese Studies at Tong-Rae-Pu was banished and was later hanged. Man-Tong-Myo was restored on February 13, 1874. Choe Ik-Hyon was released on February 9 of the next year. As for relations with Japan, Pak Je-Kwan was appointed Tong-Rae-Pu-Sa and the anti-Japan policy was softened to remove the embargo on cotton. The idea of rapprochement was expressed to Owe-Kwan, which was continued until the Kang-Hwa Amity Treaty concluded in 1876.

VI. Conclusion

As mentioned above, the Tae-Won-Kun Regime, which had lasted ten years was an unconstitutional and dictatorial system, contrary to the normal political system (bureaucracy with the King on top) of the Yi Dynasty. Thus this period can be distinguished from others. In fact, in the earlier period it was Dowager Queen who participated most actively in government affairs, but later, from the third year of Kojong, his dictatorship grew in power after the end of Dowager Queen's participation in government. Thus, Tae-Won-Kun was absorbed in political power and lost the proper opportunity to refrain from political affairs, and as a result, the government was turned over to the hands of the Mins who were the King's maternal relatives, whom Tae-Won-Kun had hated so much. Choe Ik-Hyon's petition which attacked Tae-Won-Kun's unconstitutionality and

Section 1

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Section 2

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misgovernment was representative of the new political force. With regard to the Celestialism, Tae-Won-Kun utilized it for his foreign policy to oppose aliens, while the learned men utilized it to attack the theoretical contradictions of Tae-Won-Kun's internal and external policies in connection with his internal policy (including that of the Man-Tong-Myo).

Tae-Won-Kun had a remarkable theory in his administration. His financial reform and preparation for national defense were excellent. Although his reconstruction of Kyong-Bok Palace and government buildings was criticized, there was merit to it. If he had been able to find a proper opportunity to retire from political affairs, he might have prevented the revival of government by the King's maternal relatives, and could perhaps have renewed the glory of the royal family. In his foreign policy, he would have done better to have established amicable relations with western countries with the same decisive measures he had shown in many other cases.

