Literary Gatherings and their Paintings in Korea

AHN, Hwi-joon*

The origin and functions of kye in Korean society have been examined from various socio-economic standpoints. Regarding the origin of kye, in particular, numerous, divergent views have been presented by both Korean and foreign scholars in the field of socio-economic history. These views include the theory of primitive communal society, the theory of religious ceremony, the theory of village organization based on territorial ties, the theory of natural origin, the theory of friendly meetings and the theory that kye resembles the game of kabae from the Silla dynasty. These theories share the common notion that the origin of kye reaches back to antiquity and that kye entails such utilitarian functions as mutual dependence (sangbu sangjo).3

However, the aim of this article lies not in examining the commoner’s kye as seen from the angle of socio-economic history, but in analyzing the kye of the ruling literati class, whose purpose lay in aesthetic enjoyment and fostering friendship. Although we cannot rule out the possibility that the literati’s kye meetings received some kind of stimulation from the fashion of the commoner’s kye, it is certain that the two differed considerably in their nature and purpose. We can confirm from written records that among literati kye, the Meeting of the Elders (kirohoe), in particular, has no substantial relation to the ordinary kye.

*Professor of Korean Art History, Seoul National University

1 Kye in Korean may include various forms of social gatherings such as fraternity, benefit club, and mutual assistance association and may not be translatable in a single term in English

2 A game played in the court on Harvest Moon Day during King Yury’s reign (24-57 A.D.) of Silla.

3 See Kim Sam-su, Han’guk Sahoegyongsasa Yon’gu—kye-ūk yon’gu (Pagyongsu, 1984) for a comprehensive study on kye in Korea that includes a critical reading of the various socio-economic theories
Based solely on documentary evidence, literati kye meetings seem to have started during the Koryŏ dynasty and enjoyed great popularity in the Chosŏn period. During the Koryŏ and Chosŏn dynasties, literati kye meetings took place among friends, such as colleagues in government bureaus or men who had passed the civil service examination in the same year or who were of the same age. They usually took place outdoors in the mountains or rivers on sunny days in the spring or fall, though occasionally they would be held indoors. The typical Chosŏn dynasty scholar-official would go through numerous kye meetings in his lifetime, attending such a gathering each time he was relocated to a different government department. Thus, the literati kye meetings of this period can be seen as having been closely related to the lifestyles and social ties of the literati of the period.

It was customary during the Chosŏn period to have artists paint such literati kye gatherings to record and transmute them as commemorative events. Each participant of a kye meeting received a copy of the painting, which was kept within the family generation after generation.

In most cases, paintings of kye gatherings not only provide an illustration of the actual scene, but also the title and the colophon which tells who were present, which, in turn, provides a basis for dating the paintings. Thus, these works contribute greatly to the study of the history of Korean painting, a field lacking in dated works. During the early Chosŏn period, kye hanging scrolls with a distinct tripartite composition flourished: on the top the title was recorded in seal style characters, in the large mid-section the gathering was illustrated against a landscape background, and on the bottom the colophon was provided, which listed the participants’ names, birthdates, the dates of qualification of the civil service examination, their ranks, and government positions. This type of hanging scroll composition is a uniquely Chosŏn conception, not found in Chinese or Japanese paintings, and was applied to pictures recording court events as well. In the mid-Chosŏn period, however, the hanging scroll format gradually changed to the album format, which enabled easier documenting, viewing, and storing.

Since paintings of kye meetings portray many aspects of the lifestyles of the time, they exhibit strong tendencies toward genre painting. For this reason, the literati kye gatherings and illustrations of those from the Koryŏ and Chosŏn periods merit a close examination. However, since the socio-economic aspect of kye meetings is not a part of the writer’s discourse, it will not be included in this discussion. In addition, it should be noted that any explanation of kye gathering paintings that have already been dealt with in previous articles will only be quoted briefly here.

The literati kye groups of the Koryŏ and Chosŏn dynasties can be divided into two
groups: the Meeting of the Elders (*kirohoe* or *kiyŏnghoe*), which comprised virtuous literati men of seventy years of age or older who had held government positions beyond the second rank, and a general literati *kyehoe* consisting of colleagues or alumni. The nomenclature of the second group, the general literati gatherings, varied depending on the members' government affiliation. Compared to the highly exclusive nature of *kirohoe* or *kiyŏnghoe*, which consisted of aged literati, the general literati *kye* gatherings tended to be less strict in their conditions for membership qualification. Both of these types of *kye* groups gained popularity in the Koryŏ period. We will first examine the Meetings of the Elders.

The first Meeting of the Elders of the Koryŏ dynasty was the *Haedong kirohoe* (*Kirohoe* of the "East of the Sea," i.e. of Korea) formed by T'aewi Ch’oe Tang (1135-1211). Ch’oe left his government position before the age of seventy, built a study called the *Ssangmyŏngjae* beside a beloved tree on a steep mountain peak to the south of the Sungmun’gwan (Noble Literary Pavilion). There he indulged in lute-playing, the game of go, poetry, and wine (the four virtues of gentlemen) with eight other aged and virtuous high officials of the time.4

*Haedong kirohoe*, comprising Ch’oe Tang, his younger brother Ch’oe Sŏn, and seven other literati, was based on Chinese prototypes, such as Tang Dynasty poet Po Chu-i’s Gathering of Nine Elders of Loyang and Northern Sung Dynasty’s Wen Yen-po’s True-Naive Gathering. They began to meet in 1203, gathering everyday and enjoying poetry, wine, games of go, and lute-playing. These meetings were recorded in Yi Chŏn’s *A Painting of the Haedong Kirohoe*.5 The members of *Haedong kirohoe* are as follows: Chang Cha-ch’i (age 78), Ch’oe Tang (77), Yi Chun-ch’ang (77), Paek Kwang-sin (74), Ko Hyŏng-jung (74), Yi Se-jang (71), Hyŏn Tŏk-su (71), Ch’oe Sŏn (69), and Cho T’ong (64). Except Ch’oe Son and Cho T’ong, the members were all aged literati over seventy years of age, and their rank within the group was based on age rather than their former government affiliations. In addition, all members besides Cho T’ong were retired officials. Therefore, it can easily be ascertained that membership in *Haedong kirohoe* was limited to men over seventy who had served in high positions as ministers or above. According to the *History of Koryŏ*, the members of *Haedong kirohoe* were referred to as “Immortals on Earth” by their contemporaries because of their carefree nature.6

---

4 “Ssangmyŏngjaegu,” (16b-18b) in volume 65 of *Tongmunson*
5 We can deduce the circumstances surrounding the formation of the group from volume one (1b-5a) of Ch’oe Tang’s *Cholgo ch’ŏnbaek* and volume 84 (19b-22a) of *Tongmunson*
6 Volume 12 (3b-4a) of the biographies of the *History of Koryŏ*, volume 99
Kwon Kūn (1353-1409), who lived during the early part of the Chosŏn dynasty, provides a more detailed account of Ch’oe Tang’s Haedong kirohoe. According to Kwon’s Hu kiyŏnghoe sŏ, Ch’oe Tang formed the Haedong kiyŏng chi hoe (or kirohoe) along with other aged gentry from the high period of the Koryŏ dynasty. They met once every ten days, indulging in wine and poetry only, and avoiding any unwise conversation. Kwon Kūn also notes that kirohoe meetings continued even after Ch’oe Tang died, but he laments that these meetings, having changed into gatherings to worship Buddha, insisted on the old men bowing to the ground only to make them lose their strength and sense of the heavenly will as well as their ability to enjoy a carefree life.7

From Kwon’s record, we can deduce that Ch’oe Tang’s Haedong kirohoe was a friendly gathering which met regularly for the sole purpose of enjoying aesthetic pleasures. Furthermore, we learn that in Kwon’s writing, “kirohoe” and “kiyŏnghoe” still held the same meaning. As we will see later, from the latter half of the fifteenth century, the two terms appear to diverge slightly in their meanings.

The fact that Ch’oe Tang’s Haedong kirohoe was recorded in paintings can be confirmed from several literary sources. According to the section entitled “Haedong hu kirohoe sŏ” in Tongmunsŏn, a dilettante painted A Painting of the Haedong kirohoe, and Cho T’ong, one of the members, recorded the event. When Ch’oe Sŏn, nearing seventy, retired from his government position and joined the kirohoe, his portrait was added to the painting, and Pak In-sŏk recorded it.8 Thus, we learn from this literature not only that Ch’oe Tang’s Haedong kirohoe was painted, but also that each time a new member joined the club, his portrait was added on to the painting, and the event was recorded.

Illustrations of the Haedong kirohoe seem to have been carved onto stone for preservation and transmission, in addition to being painted on silk and paper. This can be verified in two records: in History of Koryŏ, whose section on Ch’oe Tang notes (in explaining his kirohoe) that “[the members’] images were carved onto stone and transmitted to the world”; and in “Ssangmyŏngjaegi” of Tongmunsŏn, which says, “a painter was ordered to execute A Painting of the Haedong kirohoe, and it was carved onto stone to transmit to the world.”9 It can be concluded that

7 We can see from “Hu kiyŏnghoe sŏ” (12a-13b) in volume 19 of Kwon Kūn’s Yangch’ŏnup that the character of kirohoe changed in the latter half of the Koryŏ period. This change can also be detected in the kirohoe of Yu Cha-ryang and Ch’ae Hong-ch’ŏl, which we will examine later on.
8 See n 5
9 See n 4 and 6
Ch'oe Tang and his friends wished to commemorate and record their gatherings, and that their kye club greatly influenced the aged gentry of later times.

The name of the painter of *A Painting of the Haedong kirohoe* and its content is revealed by Yi In-ro (1152-1220), who was close to the members of the *Haedong kirohoe*. In his colophon on the *Painting of Haedong kiro* by Yi Chŏn, he explains the now-lost painting.

As I behold Yi Chŏn's *A Painting of Haedong kirohoe*, I feel a sense of wonder in every part of it—from the thin faces, white hair, light clothing, the images [of the men] freely enjoying themselves, playing the lute and the go game, composing poetry and drinking wine, and yawnning and stretching. Since one can identify the participants without even looking at the cartouches, the painting more than aptly reveals their identity. That T'aewiko Ch'oe Tang should compose a poem and add to its worth! Yi Chŏn is the son of Yi Chon-bu, a high official, and he has become renowned in Haedong with this painting.

From this record we can glean the following information: first, the painter was Yi Chŏn, the son of Yi Chon-bu, a high-ranking official; second, the participants of the gathering were painted not in a formal manner as in the portraits of the Chosŏn period, but in free poses, enjoying poetry and wine; third, each member was painted largely and accurately enough for identification; and fourth, next to each painted person was a cartouche identifying him. From these points, it appears that *A Painting of Haedong kirohoe* differed greatly from the typical Chosŏn dynasty paintings of kye meetings. In its format, the painting may have been a handscroll—to best accommodate the portrayal of an aged men's carefree outing—rather than a hangingscroll or an album, which were the popular formats during the Chosŏn period. However, we have no way of knowing whether the figures were placed against a landscape background. In any case, it seems difficult to establish a compositional connection between the painting and the more typical illustrations of Chosŏn kye meetings.

No detailed information is known about the artist Yi Chŏn besides the fact that he was the son of a high official named Yi Chon-bu, and that he painted well. But from the line in “Ssangmyŏngjaegi” which reads, “a painter was ordered to execute *A Painting of Haedong kirohoe*,” it may be inferred that Yi Chŏn, unlike his father,

---

10 That Yi In-ro was close to Ch’oe Tang and others can be confirmed from a section in “Haedong kirohoeo” in volume 84 of *Tongmunsŏn*

11 Yi In-ro, “Colophon on a Painting of Haedong kiro by Yi Chŏn,” (1a-1b) in *Tongmunsŏn*, volume 102
was a court painter.

Summarizing the literature examined thus far, it appears that Ch’oe Tang’s *Haedong kirohoe*, the first of its kind during the Koryŏ dynasty, was based on Chinese models from the Tang and Sung dynasties, and, like the Chinese examples, was painted. However, the exact relationship between *A Painting of Haedong kirohoe* and the Chinese *kye* gathering pictures remains unknown.

We know from writings of Yu Cha-ryang (1150-1229) and Ch’aee Hong-ch’ŏl that the tradition of *kirohoe*, started by Ch’oe Tang, was continued by subsequent generations. Yu Cha-ryang records that he retired early, formed a *kirohoe* with other retirees and devoutly worshipped Buddha. Ch’aee Hong-ch’ŏl was also extremely fond of Buddhism and formed a *kirohoe* with eight senior statesmen.

The main difference between the *kirohoe* of Yu and Ch’aee and Ch’oe’s friendly gathering lies in the former’s emphasis on Buddhist rituals. Kwŏn Kŭn’s laments in his “*Hu kiyŏnghoe sŏ*” that *kirohoe* gatherings had turned Buddhist, making the old men bow to the ground and lose their ability to remain strong and unbewildered, knowing the heavenly will, and to enjoy a carefree life, seem to have been directed at the *kirohoe* of Yu Cha-ryang and Ch’aee Hong-ch’ŏl. We know, at least, that by the latter half of the Koryŏ period, *kirohoe* came to serve religious purposes. These later *kirohoe* meetings may have been painted as well, but there are no records to confirm this.

It appears that during the Koryŏ dynasty, the general literati *kye* meetings were popular along with the more conservative *kirohoe* of the aged gentry. But unfortunately, there is virtually no literature recording the former. The only records of literati *kye* gatherings are in *History of Koryŏ* of an organization formed by Yu Cha-ryang in his youth, and a poem about an alumni organization of Yi Saeck (1328-1396). Yu Cha-ryang is said to have formed a *kye* organization at the age of sixteen with other boys of Confucian families, and was able to avoid the trouble during General Chŏng Chung-bu’s rebellion because he had included in his *kye* (despite people’s objections) O Kwang-ch’ŏk and Mun Chang-p’il, members of the military class. From this record, it appears that the popularity of literati *kye* meetings reached such heights that even young boys in their teens were forming such groups. Moreover, judging from the poetry on Yi Saeck’s alumni organization,

---

12 The section on Yu Cha-ryang in volume 12 of the Biographies in *History of Koryŏ*, volume 99
13 The section on Ch’aee Hong-ch’ŏl in volume 21 of the Biographies in *History of Koryŏ*, volume 108
14 Volume 12 of the Biographies in *History of Koryŏ*, volume 99
in the latter part of the Koryŏ dynasty, *kye* gatherings of alumni of the civil service examination may have also enjoyed a certain amount of fame.\(^{15}\)

Even from these sketchy records, we can infer that during the Koryŏ period, both the aged gentry’s *kirohoe* and the general literati meetings were prevalent, and that paintings of such gatherings were occasionally made. This tendency seems to have been continued into the Chosŏn period.

The *kirohoe* and literati *kye* gatherings that were established in the Koryŏ period gained greater momentum in the Chosŏn period. The operation of *kirohoe*, in particular, began to be centered around the *kisa*, a place which housed an aged king or high-level scholar-officials founded by King T’aejo (r. 1392-1398).

When T’aejo turned sixty in 1395, the third year of his reign, he became the first king to be initiated into the *kisa*. From then on, the *kisa* acted as an important organization in which both the sovereign and his attendants could participate jointly, an elite entity from which other attendants were excluded. After T’aejo, King Sukchong entered the *kisa* upon turning sixty in 1719, the forty-fifth year of his reign, and King Yŏngjo in 1744, the twentieth year of his reign, at the early age of fifty-one, following the dictates of Ssu-ma Kuang’s precedence. The writings of these three kings were preserved in Yŏngsugak. King T’aejo showed his respect for the aged scholar-officials of the upper third or higher ranks not only by granting them membership into the *kisa* and hosting banquets for them, but also bestowing farm land and other resources.\(^{16}\) Thereafter, the status of *kisa* became solidified and its official events became extremely elaborate.

Thus, the *kirohoe* of the Koryŏ period, which had originally begun as a gathering of retired gentry officials over seventy years of age for the purpose of friendship and aesthetic enjoyment, had been transformed, by the early part of the Chosŏn dynasty, into an organization of respect for the elders supported by the royal court. The hereditary officials and military officials were excluded from membership into this system. While the treatment of the members and the official events of the *kisa* became cordial and entertaining, the spontaneity of the gatherings most likely dwindled. The institutionalization of the tradition of Koryŏ *kirohoe* into an official organization, the *kisa* represents a new phase in the history of literati gatherings.

We can glimpse something of the state of early Chosŏn *kirohoe* from Sŏng Hyŏn’s (1439-1504) *Yongjae ch’onghwa*:\(^{17}\)

\(^{15}\) Yi Saek, *Mogin shigo*, volume 29, p 7a

\(^{16}\) For information regarding the establishment of the *kisa* and the initiation of King T’aejo, Sukchong, and Yŏngjo, see *Ch'ungbo munhŏn bigo*, volume 215
Every third day of the third month and the ninth day of the ninth month, the court hosted a "banquet for the elders" (kiryŏnh) in the Poj eru pavilion and a kiyŏnghoe in the Traning Hall, and distributed wine to everyone with the playing of music. Members of the court above the upper third rank (前御堂上) participated in the former, while aged (over seventy) men of elite families in high government positions (above the second rank, those of the upper first rank, and readers of Confucian Classics above the upper third rank 經筵堂上) attended the latter. The Minister of Rites was responsible for overseeing the banquets, and the Royal Secretariat also was in charge of receiving orders. The participants would divide into teams and play a game of throwing arrows into bottles. The losers brought their glasses to the winners and drank the poured wine. The banquets included performances of ceremonial music as well as drinking, and drinks were offered to each member amidst the music of wind and string instruments; these events did not end until everyone was inebriated. They would stumble out supporting one another when the events were over. Everyone considered it a great honor to have participated in the banquets.

From this record, it can be surmised that during the reign of King Sŏngjong (1470-1494) and Yŏnsan'gun (1494-1506), when Sŏng Hyŏn was active, the terms "kirohoe" and "kiyŏnghoe" which had hitherto been used synonymously, now possibly held different meanings, that the place where each event was held differed, as well as the participating administrators point to their distinction. However, differences in specific details remain unknown. Judging from the fact that of the two gatherings, the kiyŏnghoe had as its participants seventy-year-old men of the second or first rank, it may have enjoyed a slightly higher status than the kirohoe.

The following account in the Veritable Records of King Sŏngjong regarding the kiyŏnghoe gathering centered around Han Myŏng-hoe (1415-1487) provides some significant information about the status of kiyŏnghoe: "While many of the members had held positions as State Councilors, only very few are of the second rank; thus, while it [the gathering] is called "kiyŏng," it is in fact a banquet for the State Council." 18 That is, it appears that the kiyŏnghoe of this time was a gathering centering around those who had served as Chief, Second, or Third State Councilors. In contrast, the kirohoe seems to have been a term (as is recorded in the Veritable Records of King Sejong) which came to be applied to a gathering of elders over seventy who had served in the upper third or higher ranks.

17 See Sŏng Hyŏn, Yongjae ch'onghwa, volume 9. The translation into modern Korean is in Kugyŏk Taedong yasimg (the Society for Promotion of National Culture, 1971), volume 1, p. 225

18 Veritable Records of King Sŏngjong, volume 40 in Veritable Records of Chosŏn Dynasty, volume 9, p. 94.
However, the kiyŏnghoe and kirohoe also shared similarities, in that the gentry class comprised both meetings and that they were held on the third day of the third month and the ninth day of the ninth month of every year. Banquets for the elders of the gentry class were organized by the Imperial Court, but the gatherings still retained the aesthetic flavor of the original kirohoe.

Besides the kisa that was institutionalized by King T’aegae during the early Chosŏn period, kirohoe or kiyŏnghoe in the fashion of Ch’oe Tang’s Haedong kirohoe of the Koryŏ dynasty also seem to have been spontaneously formed. The kiyŏnghoe of Kwŏn Hŭi (1319-1405), Yi Kŏ-yŏk (1348?-1412) and eight other members that is outlined in Kwŏn Kŭn’s Hu kiyŏnghoe só is an apt example. Following the tradition of Chinese gatherings of Tang Dynasty poet Po Chi-i and Northern Sung Dynasty’s Wen Yen-po and the Haedong kirohoe of Ch’oe Tang, this kiyŏnghoe was organized by ten well-respected men, and admitted as members virtuous men of seventy or older and those, regardless of age, who had served as the Minister of State. The format of their gathering followed Ch’oe Tang’s Kugyubirok. They strove to polish qualities of virtue, generosity, and sense of aesthetic refinement, shared mutual respect and enjoyed each other’s company. Their gathering also had as one of its important objectives the fostering of the spirit of the nation. According to the account in Hu kiyŏnghoe só, their meeting seems to have taken place in the third month of 1404. The names of the participants as recorded in the Hu kiyŏnghoe só are as follows: Kwŏn Hŭi (age 86), Kwŏn Chung-hwa (83), Yi Sŏ (73), Sŏng Sŏk-rin (67), Min Che (66), Kim Sa-hyŏng (64), Cho Chun (59), Ha Ryun (58), Yi Kŏ-i (57), and Yi Mu (50).

This kiyŏnghoe had the following rules:

- The hierarchy of the members is to be based on age and not their official (government) rank.
- All procedures of the meetings should be simple, the food should not exceed the five tastes [sour, bitter, salty, spicy, sweet], and the quantity of fruit and meats, dried or salted, should not exceed five receptacles. Wine should be passed around, each person pouring for himself and drinking regardless of amount.
- The host should not offer food or wine, nor should the guest decline any.

19 Kwŏn Kŭn, “Hu kiyŏnghoe só” (12a-13b) in Yangch’ŏn’yp, volume 19
20 According to an entry in the Veritable Records of King T’aejong, volume 3 (Veritable Records of Chosŏn Dynasty, volume 1, p. 232), Yi Kŏ-yŏk (1348-1412), one of the members of this kiyŏnghoe, had already formed a kirohoe in 1402. Whether this gathering that opened in 1402 was the same one as the kiyŏnghoe cited in Yangch’ŏn’yp is unclear
21 See n. 19
· When inviting guests for a few drinks only, the host should circulate one letter amongst the guests, the latter should respond by circling either “yes” or “no”, and need not send a separate reply.

Each member should take turns in hosting the monthly meeting, however, when the host is rendered unable, the next person should take over.

The members take turns every six months in calling the meeting.

· Anyone breaking these rules shall be penalized by drinking from a large horn cup.

As can be seen from these rules, this kiyŏnghoe was geared toward enjoying friendship and aesthetic pleasures. It sought to simplify the procedures as much as possible so as not to burden the participants. In addition, like the kirohoe of the past, the hierarchy of the members depended on age, diverging from the ranking practice of general literati kye meetings, which was based on the members’ official position. Thus, this kiyŏnghoe followed more faithfully the tradition of Ch’oe Tang, with a freer character than that of King T’aeg’o’s kisa. Such kirohoe or kiyŏnghoe of the early Chosŏn period probably served as examples for later gatherings.

During the Chosŏn dynasty, kirohoe or kiyŏnghoe (gatherings of the gentry class), and general literati kye meetings gained increasing popularity from early on. This can be confirmed from various writings of the literati of the period. However, despite a great number of extant poems on the general literati gatherings, their lack of specific descriptions makes it difficult to assess the details of the meetings. We can only surmise that its basic nature resembled that of the kirohoe in its emphasis on the pleasures of socializing. This character clearly surfaces in the following poem by Kim In-hu inscribed on the Painting of Yŏnbang dongnyŏn ilsi josa kyehoe:22

Those gentlemen who succeeded together to chunsa in the same year,
Passed the Erudite Examination, within around ten years,
Is this not new friendship born on the road to a government career?
Though our duties differ, we are all minor officials
Unable to achieve our true purposes each time we meet, we go in our spare moment seeking for lovely mountains and streams.
Temporarily freed from the constraints of worldly affairs, let us drink and laugh, sharing stories in abundance

From this one poem that relates the gathering of Kim In-hu and the Licentiate

---

22 For the original poem and translation into modern Korean see Yu Pog-nyŏl, Han’guk hoehwa taegwan (Mun’gyowon, 1969), p 90. For a discussion of the painting, see Ahn Hwi-joon, “Yŏnbang dongnyŏn ilsi josa kyehoe do sogo” (On the Painting of Yŏnbang dongnyŏn ilsi josa kyehoe), Yoksa hakpo 65 (March, 1975), pp 117-123
Examination alumni around 1542, we can easily read the nature-loving and high-spirited character of the literati kye meetings. This flavor can often be detected in other literati poems about kye gatherings and in paintings portraying such get-togethers.

It became customary from early on in the Chosön period to have kirohoe and general literati gatherings preserved in paintings. This can be confirmed from poems on kye meetings with such lines as “[having] the painter make a painting” and from extant paintings themselves.

All of the extant kye gathering paintings date from the sixteenth century and after; no earlier work is known. Of these, the earliest ones include the following: Toksŏdang kyehoe (ca 1531, fig. 1), Miwon kyehoe (ca. 1540, fig. 2), Hagwan kyehoe (ca. 1541, fig. 3), Yŏnbang dongnyŏn ilsŏ josa kyehoe (ca 1542, fig. 4), Hojo nanggwan kyehoe (ca. 1550, fig 5), and Yŏnŏng kyehoe (ca. 1550, fig. 6). Of these, the first four are hanging scrolls from the early Chosön period, exhibiting the style of the An Kyŏn school. On the very top is written the title of the painting, in the large middle painted space is depicted the scene of the kye gathering against a landscape backdrop, and on the bottom is listed the personal information of the participants, in the order of their official rank. These early Chosön paintings of kye meetings focus on the landscape, with the figures and the actual scene of the gathering portrayed only symbolically, in minute size, despite their significance. From this, we can guess the importance that the literati of the time placed on nature, the site of their liberation from worldly affairs.

Even from the small scale of the kye gathering scene, however, we can catch a glimpse of the strict Confucian regulations from the sight of formally dressed participants. On the other hand, the scene always includes a large wine jar next to the participants, thus communicating the delightful pleasures and the harmonious friendship that filled the gathering.

The tendency to focus on the landscape shifts to one in which the scene of the meeting and the landscape are equally proportioned, as can be seen in the works Hojo nanggwan kirohoe and Yŏnŏng kirohoe. The participants in the building are no longer represented small, but are drawn much larger and more clearly. Moreover,

---

23 For a discussion of the paintings Toksŏdang kyehoe, Hojo nanggwan kyehoe, and Yŏnŏng kyehoe, see Ahn, “16 segi chosŏn wanggo-ŭi hoehwa-wa tansŏn chŏnmyun” (Painting and tansŏn chŏnmyun in sixteenth-century Chosŏn dynasty), Chindan hakpo, 46/47 (June, 1979), pp. 223-27, and “16 segi chungyŏp-ŭi kyehoe- ŭl t'onghae pon chosŏn wanggo sudae hoehwa yangsŏk-ŭi pyŏnh'on” (The changes in painting style of the Chosŏn period seen through mid-sixteenth century paintings of kye gatherings); Misul charyo 18 (December, 1975), pp. 36-42. For information on Yŏnbang dongnyŏn ilsŏ josa kyehoe,
the scene of the gathering is no longer overwhelmed by the natural scenery, but in fact stands out more significantly.

This tendency most probably represents a major change that occurred around the middle of the sixteenth century. The later paintings are unlike the earlier ones and develop further the features seen in Hojo nanggwan kirohoe and Yŏnjŏng kirohoe. A major feature of the paintings after about 1550 is the prominence given to the interior scenery of the gathering and the participants, with the background landscape either omitted or rendered much less grandiose compared to the early Chosŏn works. This trend is clearly manifested in mid-Chosŏn kye gathering paintings such as Banquet at the kiroso of 1621, Sŏnjojo kiyŏnghoe of 1585 in the
Fig. 2. Anonymous, *Miwon jeohoedo* (detail), early Chosön period, 1540, ink on silk, 93 × 61 cm, private collection.
Fig. 3. Anonymous, *Hagwan kye hoedo* (detail), early Chosŏn period, 1541, ink on silk, 97 × 59 cm, private collection.

collection of the Seoul National University Museum (fig. 7), and Yi Ki-ryong’s *Namji kirohoe* of 1629 (fig. 8).24

In the late Chosŏn period, albums, rather than hangingscrolls, illustrating *kye* meetings became immensely popular. Moreover, the trends of mid-Chosŏn paintings solidified even more into compositions that focused completely on the gathering and the figures, as can be seen in the *Kisa kye* gathering album, painted in 1720 (fig.

---

24. For a reproduction of *Banquet at the Kiroso* by an anonymous painter, see Chosŏnja, Part 5, volume 1 (Japanese Government-General in Korea, 1933), p. 359, figure 11. For Yi Ki-ryong’s painting, see Ahn, ed., *Sansuhwa I*, Han’gukii mi 11 (Chung’ang Ilbo Kyegan Misul, 1980), fig. 42.
Fig. 4. Anonymous, Yönbang dongyön ilsi josa kyehoedo, early Chosón period, c. 1542, ink and colors on silk, 101.2 × 60.6 cm, National Museum of Korea.
Fig. 5. Anonymous, Hojo nanggwan kyehoedo, early Chosŏn period, c. 1550, ink and colors on silk, 121 × 59 cm, National Museum of Korea.
Fig. 6. Anonymous, Yŏnyŏng kyehoe, early Chosŏn period, 1550s, ink and colors on silk, 94 × 59 cm, National Museum of Korea
In this album, all the leaves are lacking in landscape scenery and concentrate solely on the meeting and the figures, thus exhibiting clearly the general tendency of kye paintings of the late Chosŏn period. However, it should be noted that despite this general trend, there are cases, such as Kim Hong-do’s Kiroseryŏn’gyedo (fig. 10), where the style is of the late Chosŏn period but the format follows the hangingscroll tradition of the early and mid-Chosŏn period.26

The change in the period style exhibited in the kye gathering paintings can also be glimpsed in contemporary pictures recording the various official events of the palace. Considering that the latter paintings, whose purpose lay in documentation of events, were always done by court painters, it seems logical that they should display

25. See Kisa kyech'ıp (Ewha Womans University Museum, 1976).
26. See Ch’oe Sun-u, Hoehwa, Han’guk misul chŏnjip 12 (Tonghwa Publishing Co., 1972), fig. 79; also see Yi Tong-ju, Uri Nara-ŭi ye’l karim (Pagyŏnsa, 1975), fig. 46.
similar changes in style.

(Translated by Lee So-young, Columbia University)

GLOSSARY

An Kyŏn 安堅
Ch’ae Hong-ch’ŏl 蔡洪哲
Ch’oe Tang 崔鏜
Ch’oe Sŏn 崔説
Chang Cha-ch’i 張自牧
Cho Chun 趙浚

Cholgo ch’ŏnbaek 擴稿千百
Cho T’ong 趙通
Chŏng Chung-bu 鄭仲夫
go 棋
Haedong kirohoe 海東耆老會
Haedong kiyŏng chi hoe 海東耆英之會
Fig. 9. Kim Chin-yŏ, Chang T‘ae-hang, Pak Tong-bo, Chang T‘uk-man, and Hŏ Suk (in collaboration), *Kyŏnghyŏndang sayŏndo*, a leaf from Kisa kye album, late Chosŏn period, 1720, ink and colors on silk, 43.9 × 67.6 cm, Ho-am Art Museum.
Fig. 10. Kim Hong-do, *Kiroseryŏn'gyedo*, late Chosŏn period, 1804, ink and colors on silk, 137 × 53.3 cm, private collection.