Introduction

The Author and Autobiographical Discourse

The Memoirs of Lady Hyegyŏng consists of four autobiographical narratives written by Lady Hyegyŏng, an eighteenth-century Korean noblewoman. She was born in 1735, a daughter of Hong Ponghan (1713–1778) of the illustrious P'ungsan Hong family. As a consequence of Korean custom of the period, her personal name remains unknown.[1] In 1744, she married Crown Prince Sado (1735–1762). They were both nine years old at the time, and consummation did not take place until five years later. On the day of consummation, Prince Sado was appointed prince-regent and assumed an official role in governing. However, his father, King Yŏngjo (r. 1724–1776), still made the most important decisions. Lady Hyegyŏng bore Sado two sons and two daughters, the Princesses Ch'ŏngyŏn and Ch'ŏngsŏn. One of her sons died in infancy; the other later became King Chŏngjo (r. 1776–1800).

On one hot summer day in 1762, King Yŏngjo ordered Prince Sado, then twenty-seven, to get into a rice chest. The chest was sealed, and Sado died eight days later. This tragic episode hung over the Chosŏn court for many years, inexorably shaping the lives of those who had been close to Prince Sado. Despite deep chagrin

and a professed desire to end her life, Lady Hyegyŏng lived on and lent support to her son who had been left vulnerable by his father's tragic death.

This decision, however, haunted her all her life. Although widows were not expected to follow their husbands to death in Chosŏn Korea (1392–1910),[2] this was a special case. Prince Sado's bizarre execution by his father was an attempt to avoid the appearance of a criminal execution, which would, under Chosŏn custom, have required punishment of his entire family.[3] Sado's son, the only remaining heir to the throne,[4] would have likewise borne the stigma of criminality, something the Chosŏn court could not afford. Had Lady Hyegyŏng chosen to die, her death could have been seen as a protest against the royal decision or, alternatively, it might have deepened the suggestion that Sado had been guilty. Neither possibility would have furthered Chŏngjo's legitimacy. Lady Hyegyŏng's maternal allegiance as well as her sense of public duty to dynastic security precluded her suicide. In the context of the Chosŏn mentality, which would have seen suicide as an honorable alternative, to be indebted for her life to the king who had killed her husband definitely left her in a compromising position.

The circumstances of Prince Sado's death became a focal point for severe political turmoil. The immensity of its political implications cannot be exaggerated. That the conflict was between a reigning king and an heir apparent was troubling enough; more troubling was that the heir's son became the heir apparent and was subsequently enthroned. In 1764, to lessen the impact of the incident of Prince Sado on Chŏngjo's legitimacy, King Yŏngjo made Chŏngjo a posthumously adopted son of Prince Hyojang (1719–1728), the deceased older brother of Prince Sado. This measure legally severed Chŏngjo from Prince Sado; it meant that Chŏngjo was not in any legal sense the son of one who might be called a criminal. Despite these benefits, the adoption made an already delicate issue far more complex.

Because of the sensitive nature of this situation, any discussion of Chŏngjo's legitimacy became taboo, but the issue lurked just beneath the surface, always ready to ignite another round of political furor. Royal and affinal relatives, powerful families, and officials were divided on the issue of Chŏngjo's acceptability and became involved in debilitating feuds. Hong Ponghan, who served as a

high-ranking minister on the State Council at the time of Sado's death, emerged as his grandson's principal protector, leading the faction known as *sip'a*, whereas the Kyŏngju Kim, the family of Queen Chŏngsun (1745–1805), King Yŏngjo's second queen, emerged as a major force in the opposing camp known as *pyŏkp'a*. In the post-Sado court of recriminating politics, Lady Hyegyŏng not only had to navigate with extreme caution for her own preservation but also had to witness attacks against her father and the decline of her family's political fortunes.

When Yŏngjo died in 1776, Chŏngjo succeeded his grandfather to the throne. He displayed a certain ambivalence toward his maternal family, and the Hong family did not fare well under him. In the first year of his reign, Hong Inhan (1722–1776), Hong Ponghan's younger brother, was suspected of disloyalty to Chŏngjo and was executed. This cast a terrible pall over the Hong family. Nevertheless, Chŏngjo was devoted to his mother, and after this initial shock, the Hong family was allowed to live for a time in peaceful retirement. If they entertained hope of returning to their former glory, it ended with the sudden death of Chŏngjo in 1800. The accession to the throne of Chŏngjo's son, Sunjo (r. 1800–1834), not yet eleven, necessitated the regency of Queen Dowager Chŏngsun, the archenemy of the Hong family. Soon the Hong family suffered another tragedy. In 1801, Hong Nagim (1741–1801), Lady Hyegyŏng's younger brother, was accused of having converted to Catholicism and was executed. With Sunjo's assumption of personal rule in 1804, Lady Hyegyŏng's trials finally seem to have ended. King Sunjo was attentive to his grandmother and did what he could to comfort her.

The four narratives that comprise *The Memoirs of Lady Hyegyŏng* were written from 1795 to 1805, a ten-year period spanning the end of Chŏngjo's reign and Sunjo's accession. Lady Hyegyŏng began writing when Chŏngjo was still on the throne and did not complete the last memoir until after Sunjo had personally assumed power. She lived for ten years after finishing her last memoir and died in 1815, at the age of eighty.

The Memoirs of Lady Hyegyŏng, known as *Hanjungnok* (Records written in silence) or *Hanjung mallok* (Memoirs written in silence), is viewed in contemporary Korea as a great literary masterpiece and an invaluable historical document. Rather than being composed in literary Chinese as were most writings by men before the modern

era, these memoirs were written in Korean, in *han'gŭl* script, making them accessible to the modern reader. To a certain extent, the reader's fascination is with the incident itself—a frightening story of a filicide. The fourth memoir depicts, in all its terror, the father-son conflict that culminates in Sado's death. It explores the sources of Sado's madness—and the aberrant behavior, uncontrolled rages, and violence that threatened the safety of the dynasty. The fact that a woman narrates this most public of incidents, an event that can be described as the ultimate in male power rivalry, makes *The Memoirs* unique in autobiographical literature. In the West until the modern period, autobiographies by women were a mere fraction of the total number of autobiographies. Moreover, the overwhelming majority focus exclusively on the private and domestic sphere of life.[5] There seems to have been even fewer women autobiographers in East Asia. Japan produced a few self-narratives by women, but they tend to be diaries, and thus introspective and fragmentary.[6]

The Memoirs of Lady Hyegyŏng is much more than a description of filicide, however. Of the four memoirs, only the last is devoted to that event; the first three focus on the author and the lives of people other than the central players in that incident. Although the four memoirs were conceived of and written as separate works on separate occasions for specific audiences in defense of specific individuals, they constitute an integral whole that moves from the personal to the public. The first, written in 1795, is a narration of Lady Hyegyŏng's life and, to a lesser extent, the lives of her natal family. Addressed to her nephew, the heir of the Hong family, it is an apologia for herself and her father, defending their choices to live on after Prince Sado's death. Each of the last three memoirs, which are addressed to King Sunjo, is increasingly public in subject matter and genre. The second memoir, written in 1801, is a defense of Lady Hyegyŏng's younger brother, Hong Nagim, and her paternal uncle, Hong Inhan, both of whom had been executed. The third memoir, written in 1802, describes the unrelenting obsession of her son, King Chŏngjo, with restoring honor to his father. The fourth and last memoir, written in 1805, finally recounts the history of the Sado incident—the tension in the Yŏngjo-Sado relationship, the son's mental illness and violent outbursts, and his death ordered by his father. Although the first three memoirs describe at length the emotional turmoil and political repercussions of the Sado in-

cident, the incident itself is referred to only cryptically. Hence, the last memoir functions almost as the resolution in a detective novel in that it answers many unanswered questions raised by the first three memoirs.

Written over a tumultuous ten-year period, these memoirs were in part prompted by external events such as Lady Hyegyŏng's sixtieth birthday or the execution of her brother. Writing a memoir was a very unusual activity for a woman at that time, and Lady Hyegyŏng had to surmount formidable cultural obstacles to do so. First, she had to overcome an inhibition against self-narration, and then she had to transcend, as she does in the final memoir, the reluctance to discuss the deficiencies and aberrant behavior of her husband and her father-in-law.

What motivated her? In the earlier memoirs, she was intent on justifying herself and her family. As her family lay in ruins, she felt it imperative to plead the causes of those members who had died in disgrace and to restore their honor, albeit posthumously. At some point, she decided that, for her and other members of her family to be judged fairly, their actions had to be seen in the proper perspective, which in turn required an accurate understanding of the Sado incident.

Lady Hyegyŏng also came to believe that the motives and actions of Prince Sado and King Yŏngjo, the central players in the incident, should be accurately portrayed and recorded. Discussion of the incident had been forbidden because it was against custom to mention royal misconduct. Moreover, it was hoped that silence would put those painful memories to rest. Instead, the silence only encouraged misrepresentation and misinterpretation. Exaggerated and distorted versions of royal motives and princely actions were whispered about and disseminated. Lady Hyegyŏng finally concluded that brushing the incident aside was not the answer. What had happened was horrible, but it would become even more monstrous in people's imaginations if left unexplained. She felt that the versions in circulation blamed or attributed willful misdeeds to one party or the other rather than seeing the event in the totality of complex human interaction, and she concluded that although she might not have been able to save them from their tragedy, she should at least rescue them from the more ignoble fate of being viewed as perverse villains by future generations. This required presenting them in their human complexity, caught between better

intentions and inexplicable impulses. This conviction led her to surmount a powerful reluctance to expose the failings in her husband or her father-in-law.

It was clearly difficult for her to present this relentlessly gloomy and terrifying tale—that was why she resisted writing it for so long—but she tells it with compassion as each player moves toward the tragic denouement. A special sympathy is reserved for her husband, Prince Sado, as she portrays his suffering and pain. She felt that by not following her husband in death, she left her conjugal duty unfulfilled. Writing this memoir was her way of seeking forgiveness.

The "imperatives of imaginative discourse"[7] that an author follows when transforming a life lived into a life recounted are not confined to what the author professes them to be. In the process of recounting, the author desires to "recompose" as much as to "discover" self.[8] Through the very act of writing, Lady Hyegyŏng was engaged in a quest to recompose and discover historical or human truth. She took great pains to reconstruct how it all happened, what each individual did, and in what order. But on a deeper, almost subconscious level, she searched for something more fundamental, some understanding that would explain the vagaries of human fate and the waywardness of the moral order.

Narrating Lives and the Sense of Self

Writing *The Memoirs* was a political act for Lady Hyegyŏng; the very act of writing them meant that she wished to testify for herself and the actors in her narration and to persuade others of her testimony. To be persuasive, she had to present causes and represent lives in accordance with the cultural grammar of her time.[9] What resources in the repository of tradition did Lady Hyegyŏng possess? What paradigms of autobiographical and testimonial writing were available to her? Can her memoirs be described as identifiably in the feminine mode? How is her writing related to her sense of self?

Traditional Korean literature includes various kinds of first person, nonfiction narratives that are, if not necessarily autobiographical, revelatory of the writer's interior life. These include

travel literature and *chapki* or *chapnok* (miscellaneous writings).[10] There are also straightforward memoirs, often with the title *mallok* (leisurely writing). Many powerful officials wrote reminiscences of their active service under this title. Most official memoirs, however, tend not to reveal anything remotely private in the lives of the royal family or the authors' own lives.[11] An interesting example is the memoir by Lady Hyegyŏng's father, Hong Ponghan, *Igikchae mallok*, which begins in 1733 when he was a young student and ends in 1748. He comments on his daughter's royal marriage in 1744, his passing the civil examination shortly thereafter, and the period when his career began to flourish. The memoir records several of his memorials[12] and various long conversations with Yŏngjo that were presumably indicative of his and the king's intellectual makeup and social stance. On the private or emotional life of either the king or himself, however, it is completely silent.[13]

Pei-yi Wu's study of autobiography in China underscores the enormous impact that biography had on autobiographical writing, which developed under its powerful and ubiquitous shadow. Wu argues that biography was conceived of as mainly fulfilling the historical function of transmitting moral principles; therefore it revealed only those facts deemed historically relevant, remaining silent about emotional and interior lives. Autobiographers had to overcome the inhibitions on self-expression imposed by the conventions of biography.[14]

In Korea, the biographies written in literary Chinese were in the same subgenres as those written in China, such as *chŏn/chuan* (biography), necrology, and *yŏnbo/nien-p'u* (life chronology).[15] Biographies of Hong Ponghan by his sons, for instance, give some indication of what topics were considered worthy of inclusion in works in that genre. One, a life chronology of Hong Ponghan by his oldest son, Hong Nagin (1730–1777), records his public career but makes no mention of his marriage or the birth of his children except for that of Lady Hyegyŏng.[16] The other, titled *Sŏnbugun yusa* (Memorable anecdotes from father's life), consists of reminiscences by his three younger sons.[17] This piece pays homage to his familial virtues, but the focus is on Hong Ponghan as a son and brother—the loss of his mother when he was six, his remembrances of her, his devotion to his stepmother, his generosity to his sisters and brothers especially when they were in need, and so on.

Very little is said of his immediate home life. Nothing is said of his marriage or his children, except for occasional admonitions by him.[18]

After the Korean script, *han'gŭl*, was devised in the mid-fifteenth century, the written culture, which had previously been composed exclusively in literary Chinese by men, greatly expanded its scope to include many more subjects, genres, and participants. The writing of a certain class of women, including court ladies, aristocratic *yangban* women, and some courtesans, came to constitute a special portion of the written culture in the latter half of the Chosŏn period.

Men continued to write in literary Chinese, except for letters to women, certain genres of poetry, and other incidental pieces that concerned mostly private aspects of their lives. Women wrote almost exclusively in Korean. They used the vernacular as a means of self-expression and communication as well as a mode of social and political empowerment. They wrote poetry, essays, and manuals of manners and housekeeping for other women. Letters were the most usual form of writing and generally fulfilled social obligations to kin such as greetings and condolence.[19] This custom changed the texture of social life by allowing women to play a distinct role in the written discourse, though within the limited sphere of domestic concerns.

Conscious attempts by women to seize control of the narratives of their own or others' lives also emerged, though tentatively. Epistolary form was occasionally resorted to for self-presentation.[20] In the royal court, palace ladies began to write about the lives of their mistresses in the form of romans à clef, which have been classified as "court novels" (*kungjŏng sosŏl*) but are increasingly viewed of late as documentary court literature (*kungjŏng silgi munhak*).[21] Recently, necrologies of men written by women in Korean have also come to light.[22]

It is commonly believed that writing in Chinese and writing in Korean were dichotomous traditions, separated, respectively, by the gender of author and audience (male versus female), subject matter (public versus private), and genre (classical versus vernacular). While this perception may be valid to some extent, there was a closer relationship between the two traditions than has been acknowledged, as well as a large area in which the two converged,[23]

at least when it came to the practice of writing about lives. The common thread binding these writings is adherence to a paradigm of virtue. Necrologies, court novels, and narratives of self present their subjects as paragons of familial or social virtue and arrange chronological details to construct the closest approximation to the ideal.

Lady Hyegyŏng's memoirs depart from this model. It is not that she renounces the paradigm. Though she confesses to a deviation from the ideal, she never eschews her wholehearted commitment to it. Nonetheless, her narration is informed by a realization that life does not allow one to live up to the ideal. In the first three memoirs, this inability is attributed to the multiple roles with which one must contend, each carrying its own demands that can and often do clash with the demands of other roles. In the fourth memoir, the conflict is no longer presented as stemming from external factors alone but from internal forces as well. True, the conflict is between father and son, but each is driven by his innermost dark forces. As Lady Hyegyŏng probes the human psyche, she accepts the imperfections and weaknesses of her subjects and allows space for autonomous interior life. In this, her memoirs clearly depart from standard paradigmatic representations of lives.

Her narration is imbued with poignancy and complexity. She accepts human imperfection and acknowledges the inability to live up to the ideal but maintains the Confucian belief in the perfectibility of humanity and the notion that social privilege should be based on moral renewal. She is acutely aware of the exacting demands that exalted position makes on her and the other highly placed persons in her memoirs. The tension of her narration derives from the fact that she is influenced by two seemingly opposing forces, to each of which she appears strongly committed. In other words, she unfolds her extraordinary tale as "an elaborate drama of honour,"[24] a drama of her class and milieu.

In studies of Western autobiography, it has been posited that a sense of the discrete self, a consciousness of self as an isolated being, is a precondition for writing autobiography.[25] Women autobiographers, however, are seen in a somewhat different light. The female sense of self, as opposed to the male sense of the discrete self, is defined by its relationships to the persons surrounding the self.[26] This is given as a reason why women sometimes appended a

short autobiography to long biographies of their husbands, as did Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, in the seventeenth century.[27] The English noblewoman, however, clearly wishes to assert her own identity.[28] She expresses a conscious desire to be different from the norm, declaring that she prefers writing to needlework and that this sets her apart from other women.[29] In contrast, Lady Hyegyŏng does not display the faintest desire to depart from the norm. Because of her exalted position, she seldom had a chance to speak of her own accomplishments in such skills as needlework, but she does boast of her mother's talent. In fact, her idea of being extraordinary was not to depart from but to adhere to and excel by the norm.

It is clear that Lady Hyegyŏng and Margaret Cavendish had different senses of self. One of the more obvious differences lay in the way they perceived the relationship between their private and public selves. Margaret Cavendish may sometimes express her sense of self through her relationship to other people around her, but there is no question that she regards her private self as distinct from and prior to her public self. In both, the private self is given a certain autonomy and space apart from the public self. In Lady Hyegyŏng's work, however, the space between private self and public self becomes quite small as the relationship between the two becomes ever more closely intertwined. She acknowledges the distinction between the private and public selves but feels that the redemption of her public self is indispensable to the integrity of her private self. Time and time again, Lady Hyegyŏng stresses the depth and acuteness of shame she felt for failing to live up to what she accepts as the legitimate demands of her multiple roles. She is convinced that only by feeling and confessing the acuteness of her shame, the degree of which should be proportional to the distance she has fallen from the ideal, can she be redeemed. She tries to atone for the failings of her public self by the intensity of the remorse of her private self, and in this way the interdependence between the two selves becomes complete. Even in the fourth memoir, though she allows space to the autonomous interior lives of Yŏngjo and Sado, she does not deviate from her belief in the close relationship between their private and public selves. For Sado, she merely replaces remorse with suffering. That is, she pleads for understanding of his public misconduct on the basis of the depth of his private suffering.

The Memoir of 1802

It has been almost sixty years since I came to the palace as a child. During that period, my life has been extremely turbulent; I have encountered countless adversities. In addition to that incomparably painful event, I have suffered such an endless succession of devastating trials and tribulations that it is not logical that I should have lived. I sustained my life because, given the fact that the late King served me with utmost filial devotion, I could not bear to end my life. Heaven detested me more as time passed, however, and I suffered that truly unbearable loss. It would have been natural for me to follow my son in death, but this odious life of mine is as stubborn as the earth or a tree. I was unable to kill myself. In my heart, I cherished the young King, my grandson, and so I grasped this thread of life. Life, though, became insupportable.

Even if an ordinary woman of humble station had, at seventy, lost her only son, her neighbors would pity her and offer condolences and sympathy. However, within several months of my losing the late King, insults were heaped upon my late father. Then it was charged that my third brother had instigated my abortive attempt to end my life. Within seven or eight months, using absurdly false charges, they banished him to a distant island to be confined to a house surrounded by bramble hedges. Soon afterwards, they executed him. In this way they transferred to my brother the punishment they wished to inflict upon me for my attempt to end my life. In this sense, the killing was not directed at my brother but at me.

Evil cliques are ascendant; they have turned their backs upon the

late King. In disdain for the youthful ruler, they have persecuted the mother of the late King. The decline of human morality and failures of ministerial propriety have never reached such extremes. Weeping tears of blood day and night, I desperately long to follow my son and my brother in death, yet I remain. My recent losses have left me with no support or anchor. Whether I wish to live or die, I can do neither. All is due to my horrendous sin and my miserable fate. I can do nothing but beseech Heaven and curse the ghosts. Since time immemorial, no queen or royal consort has suffered what I have in my life; no other family has been put to the trials that mine has met. The way of Heaven is all-knowing. The present King is benevolent and filial. I trust that, even if I were to die without seeing it, he will distinguish right from wrong; he will avenge my suffering and bitterness.

If I do not record events as they occurred, there is no way in which he will come to know of them sufficiently. Gathering my spent wits and my remaining strength, I will begin by describing the sagacious filial devotion with which the late King served me and the discussions he had with me. I will then move on to other points to elaborate and to clarify the issues. Who but I knows of them? Who else can speak of them? My life might end at any moment, and so I will entrust these writings to Lady Kasun that they shall be given to the present King after my death. If he were, someday, to realize the sadness of my life and the unjustness of my family's plight, and if he were to appease my thirty years of accumulated bitterness, my departed soul would be able to meet with the late King in the netherworld; mother and son would console each other on our great good fortune in having a virtuous son and a godly grandson who has fulfilled our lifelong desire. If there is the smallest fabrication or exaggeration in these writings, I would be deceiving the late King and deluding myself by misleading the present King, and I would be indulging in favoritism on behalf of my private parent. How could I not fear the immediate retribution of Heaven and Earth? I have experienced countless events in the course of my life and shared many thousands of intimate conversations with the late King. In my decrepitude, however, I remember but one word in ten thousand. I will also gloss over irrelevant issues, be they affairs of the state or family matters, and I will mention only the major points. Thus I am afraid that this record will not contain too much detail. Seventh month, *imsul* year (1802).

Although the most common of human relations is that of mother and son, the mother-son tie between myself and the late King was like no other. If it had not been for the late King, I would not be here today; had it not been for me, the late King would not have been protected and preserved. Having experienced hundreds of trials and difficulties and having been each other's support through these stormy years, mother and son both awaited a blessed old age when, in retirement, we could enjoy the peace and prosperity of the nation. For reasons I cannot fathom, august Heaven has deprived me of my son in midcourse. Beneath Heaven, since history began, there cannot have been a loss so heart-rending as this. That I did not die during the tragic incident of the *imo* year (1762) was only to protect the late King. When Father, bitterly frustrated in his attempts to demonstrate the unjustness of the vile slanders and accusations brought against him, died prematurely in the *imsul* year (1778), I wished to follow him, but I was dissuaded from it by the sincere filial devotion of the late King. Then I lost my son. Soon afterwards, I let my guiltless brother meet that cruel end. Thus I have become one who failed in loyalty [to my husband], affection [to my son], filial piety [to my father], and sisterhood [to my brother]. With what face can I remain in this world for even one more day? Because of my affection for the young King and because this odious life does not of itself end, I linger shamefully in this world. Can there be another as muddled, as stupid, as irresolute, and as weak as I?

The late King had an innately filial nature. In his later years his filial attentions grew even more thorough and careful, and he served me as though he could not do enough. When he made excursions, even within the city, in recognition of his mother's anxious concern he repeatedly dispatched messengers bearing notes and greetings. Trips to his father's tomb took days, but, considering my nervousness, he stopped his entourage on the road every two hours to send me his messages. Where can I go now for even one letter from him? Ah! Sadness!

The late King was extraordinarily endowed. He had a beautiful and dignified face, an exceptional carriage, and a magnificent physique. He learned to speak and to read at a very early age. From childhood, he was diligent and hardworking; except when he slept and ate, he was seldom without a book in his hand. His accomplishments were superior to those of the wise rulers of old. There

was nothing he did not know. Of all the rulers since the sage kings of antiquity, there was none to equal the late King in scholarship or composition, in sagacious virtue, or in wise administration. Even at nearly fifty years of age, burdened with myriad aspects of government, he finished a series of books each winter. In the winter of the *kimi* year (1799),* he finished the entire *Tso chuan* (Tso commentary). When he was a child, and he finished a book, I would prepare a special meal for him as a way of expressing delight and encouragement. On this occasion, recalling that old custom, I prepared a celebratory meal. The late King, appreciative of his old mother's gesture, ate and drank with abandon in the company of ministers and composed a piece to commemorate the occasion. It seems like yesterday. Who at that point would have imagined that the changes in the affairs of the world would reach such a point as they have at present?

The late King was peerless in benevolence and filial piety. It is impossible to satisfactorily record the faultless manner in which he complied with the wishes of His Late Majesty [King Yŏngjo] and the sincere filial devotion with which he served his parents. The thrust of his conduct in these matters is truthfully recorded in his official biography,[1] and so I will mention only several things. Before the *imo* year (1762), there were many difficult moments. Despite his youth, the late King comprehended the complexities of the situation. He took care of his conduct, never once causing dissatisfaction to His Majesty. So pleased was His Majesty with his grandson that, whenever he saw me, he sang his grandson's praises, speaking of his intelligence and his accomplishments. This would not have happened if the late King had been unable to touch His Majesty's heart with filial devotion and unimpeachable conduct.

From early childhood he was extraordinarily devoted to me. He ate only if I ate and slept only if I slept. On many tense occasions he was able to behave with the concern and maturity of an adult. He was of great help in many ways, much more than one would expect of a child. At the time of the tragic incident of the *imo* year (1762), he grieved like an adult. He was inconsolable. His sad bearing and his piteous cries moved bystanders; no one who saw him grieve or heard his wail could withhold tears. The pain of losing a father seems to have redoubled his devotion to his mother; he

* The last winter of Chŏngjo's life.

was unable, even for a moment, to relax his concern for me. When we were apart, he had difficulty sleeping. When we lived in separate palaces, he would not eat breakfast until he had received my letter of greeting. If I were slightly ill, he personally had medicine mixed and sent to me. These incidents revealed his extraordinary filial concern.

Oh! Grief! How can I bring myself to speak of that *kapsin* (1764) decision!* How can I record that pathetic scene—mother and son, stricken by dismay and sorrow, hugging each other desperately, wishing we were dead! The pain that the late King suffered has not been equaled by anyone in any ruling house. Out of his duty to the nation, he ascended the throne, but he was obsessed by the tragic image of his father, and as years went by that memory grew more intense. He had the Gate for Greeting the Sun and the Gate for Viewing the Moon constructed at the Kyŏngmo Shrine [for Prince Sado] and visited the shrine more than once or twice a month. Yet his longing heart still regretted that he could not pay respect to his father morning and evening. He served me with all the wealth and splendor available to the throne, yet he did not think it enough. With a pleasant expression and a joyous voice, he looked in on me four or five times a day and was always concerned lest he do something contrary to my wishes. In my old age, I have often suffered ill health and, on those two occasions when I was seriously ill, once in *kimi* (1799) and then during *kyŏngsin* (1800), the late King was so concerned and nervous that he completely gave up sleep, not even changing into bed clothes. He also personally tended to the medicine, boiling tinctures and extracts and, once done, offering them to me himself, not wishing to leave this to others. Though we were mother and son, my gratitude is inestimable.

The late King always had simple and plain tastes. In his later years, he grew even more austere and frugal in his habits. His residence had short eaves, his room was small and without polychrome decoration, and he did not permit frequent wallpapering or renovation. His quarters could not be distinguished from those of a poor, unemployed scholar. Except for the formal dragon robe of the sovereign, he did not drape silk on his person but chose roughwoven cotton instead, and he refused silk bedding. He lim-

* Yŏngjo's order making Chŏngjo an adopted son of Prince Hyojang.

ited the number of side dishes to three or four in his morning and evening meals and had them placed in small plates to regulate quantity. When I occasionally mentioned that he was a bit excessive in his frugality, he would eagerly denounce the vice of luxury, concluding that, "To uphold a frugal and simple life is not sparing wealth or foods but a way of cultivating good fortune." Thus, he chided me. I could not but admire him.

The late King was not blessed with a son until rather late. The absence of an heir caused concern for the dynasty. The birth of Munhyo in the *imin* year (1782) brought great joy, but the King suffered two terrible losses in *pyŏngo* (1786).* Grief-stricken and despairing, he suffered ill health; I became quite alarmed. Then, in the spring of *chŏngmi* (1787), he chose Lady Kasun as a consort.† She was benevolent and warm in her conduct, beautiful in appearance and carriage, and she possessed the style and restraint of a well-bred lady. Once she entered the palace, Lady Kasun served me with the utmost devotion and loyalty, and so I came to love her as my own daughter. She served the late King most beautifully and truthfully, not once going against his sagacious heart. The late King treasured and trusted her; often he seemed as if he were about to entrust her with a message of grave import. I now believe that he felt a certain presentiment.

With each passing day, I prayed more eagerly and ardently than the previous day that Lady Kasun would be blessed with a son. With Heaven's silent assistance and the invisible benefactions of ancestors, on the eighteenth of the sixth month of the *kyŏngsul* year (1790), at three o'clock in the afternoon, the blessed event took place at a house facing my residence. The present King was born. This was a blessing that consolidated the dynastic foundation for myriad years. Mother and son congratulated each other. We spent days in celebration and joy. Strangely, the newborn child

* Prince Munhyo died in the fifth month of 1786, followed by his mother, Lady Sŏng, who died in the ninth month of the same year. *Chŏngjo sillok* (hereafter *CS*), in *Chosŏn wangjo sillok*, 21:42b, 22:31b.

† Although Lady Kasun was definitely a secondary consort because Chŏngjo had a legal wife, Queen Hyoŭi, she was a *yangban* woman. Chŏngjo performed a formal marriage ceremony after a three-stage selection procedure. This made her different from the usual secondary consorts who, as a rule, started as ladies-in-waiting at the palace, were taken in without a wedding ceremony, and were not of *yangban* families. *CS*, 23:21a, 23:23b.

shared his birthday with me. The late King used to remark on it, saying, "The child's birthday is the same as Your Ladyship's. This is an extraordinary coincidence unprecedented in history. Your Ladyship's utmost sincerity and devotion have brought this on. Heaven did not casually produce this coincidence." I was not sure whether I deserved this encomium, but I was inclined to feel that when it came to devotion to the dynasty or the King, there was none more devoted than I. Would it not be wonderful if Heaven indeed made his birthday the same as mine out of sympathy?

In the spring of *kyŏngsin* (1800), the present King performed the capping ceremony and was invested as the Crown Prince. The late King counted the days to the arrival of the winter, when the three-stage selection procedure for his son's wife would be completed and he would gain a daughter-in-law, one of a virtuous and illustrious family. It saddens me to think that, with the late King's departure, I will witness the wedding alone.*

The late King had been aware all along that the site of Yŏngu Tomb† left something to be desired. Early in the *pyŏngsin* year (1776), my father strongly recommended reinterment, but because it was a matter of such grave import, the King could not come to a decision easily. In *kiyu* (1789) he had a geomancer select an auspicious site at Mount Hwa in Suwŏn city, and he carried out reinterment, changing the name of the tomb to Hyŏllyung Tomb.‡ The late King informed me, "According to the laws of the ancients, a plot of land such as this can be found only once in every thousand *ri*." He also said, "Now that I have moved him to a spot that had once been intended for King Hyojong,§ I have no regrets. In the two characters I selected, 'hyŏllyung' (illustrious eminence),

* The first selection in the three-stage selection procedure for Sunjo's wife took place in the second month of 1800. Five girls were selected. The second selection was completed in the intercalary fourth month of 1800, when three of the five were chosen. Chŏngjo's death led to the postponement of the final selection of his son's bride and his wedding. The third selection took place in the ninth month of 1802, and the wedding ceremony was performed in the following month. *CS*, 53:41a–b, 54:19b–20a. *Sunjo sillok* (hereafter *SS*), in *Chosŏn wangjo sillok*, 4:33b–34a, 4:37a–39a.

† Prince Sado's original tomb.

‡ The reinterment was carried out in the tenth month of 1789 in an elaborate ceremony. Chŏngjo was quite emotional on the occasion. *CS*, 28:15b–33a.

§ Hyojong (r. 1649–1659) was the eighteenth king of the Chosŏn dynasty and Chŏngjo's fifth-generation ancestor.

the world will ascertain my unspoken wish." I cannot begin to describe how wholeheartedly the late King devoted himself, day and night, to overseeing the reinterment.

After the reinterment, his remembrances of his father grew more intense. He had his own portrait hung in the pavilion beside the grave to symbolize his wish that he be there always, tending his father's grave. He made provision that every five days the grave would be thoroughly put in order. In the first month of every year, he visited the tomb and paid respect to his father. In addition, each spring and autumn, he sent out such exhaustively detailed instructions concerning the shrubbery and plantings that it was almost as if he himself had landscaped it. He asked the inhabitants of the old town to move to the new city of Hwasŏng.* Subsequently, as a way to protect the tomb and to maintain its glory, he had city walls and a splendid detached palace built.

In the spring of *ŭlmyo* (1795), he took me to the Prince's tomb and together we paid our respect. Afterwards he held a great feast at Pongsu Pavilion to which he invited male and female relatives and civil and military officials as well, causing them to enjoy themselves drinking and eating until the small hours of the morning. The aged were offered drink at Nangnam Pavilion and the poor were given rice at Sinp'ung Pavilion. Joyful spirits and the sounds of merriment filled the air from Hwasŏng to the capital.† All this was but to express his filial affection to this old mother. Who among the officials and subjects of the entire nation did not admire him and sing his praises?

Out of duty to the dynasty, the late King remained on the throne, laboring diligently in his role. However, with the ineradicable pain in his heart, he did not enjoy that position and resolutely refused honorary titles.‡ He always entertained a hope that one day

* Suwŏn city was renamed Hwasŏng. *CS*, 37:4b–5b.

† See figure 5 for a representation of this feast. Also see note 25 of *The Memoir of 1795*.

‡ Chŏngjo received no honorary title *(chonho)* while he was alive. Although this followed the pattern of many earlier kings of the Chosŏn dynasty, it set him apart from his immediate predecessor, Yŏngjo, who received five eight-character honorary titles while he was on the throne. See JaHyun Kim Haboush, *A Heritage of Kings: One Man's Monarchy in the Confucian World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 62.

he would be able to relinquish his throne. He then begat a sagacious son to whom he could entrust the dynastic mission. He built the city of Hwasŏng magnificently so that it was second only to the capital in splendor and conferred such names as Nonae Hall (Hall for approaching old age) and Mirohan Pavilion (Pavilion of leisure for the not so old) upon the new pavilions. He said to me, "I have occupied the throne not because I coveted it, but because I had to for the nation. In the coming *kapcha* year (1804), my son will reach his fifteenth year, and I will be able to abdicate to him. I will then be able to fulfill my greatest wishes. I will retire to Hwasŏng with Your Ladyship to the task of rendering to Prince Sado the supreme honors that I could not grant from the throne. I could not do this because of His Majesty's order.[2] It was extremely distressing [that I could not offer such honors to my father]. Nonetheless, that was the right way for me. The right way for my son is to comply with my request by honoring his grandfather as I could not, fulfilling my wish. Because of these considerations, the right way for the ministers and officials of my court is to refrain from honoring Prince Sado. Once the new King ascends, the right way for them will be to comply with the new King's wish. The right way is not unalterably fixed; rather it changes with circumstances and time. How would it be if we, mother and son, having survived what we did, were to receive such glory and care from our descendants in accordance with the way of filial piety?"

I felt a great surge of pity for my son. I thought of the overwhelming duties of rule and silently wept. He, too, grew sad. In tears, he said, "Were I to go to the netherworld to meet my father after accomplishing that task [of honoring him] through my son as I could not myself, what more could I wish for?" He often pointed at his son and said, "This child wishes to know about Prince Sado. He is quite mature. I could not bring myself to speak of that incident, and so I asked his maternal grandfather to tell him. But his maternal grandfather also said that he could bring himself to tell the Prince only the main points." The late King said of the present King, "This child was born to accomplish that task for Prince Sado. He came as an answer to that wish. It must have been an expression of Heaven's will."

In the early *ŭlmyo* year (1795), when he conferred honorary titles upon his ancestors, he was able to confer an eight-character hono-

rary title on Prince Sado.* Afterwards he said to me, "Kim Chongsu, who has been so opposed to the measure, now says, 'Please offer him the jade scepter, a gold seal, and an eight-character title.' Now everything is done except for one character [the king (*wang*)]. For that let's wait for the new king." He then recited the eight characters of the title, "*Changyun yungbŏm kimyŏng ch'anghyu* (Manifest humanity, eminent pattern, fundamental decree, auspicious blessing)." Being an ignorant woman, I did not hear it correctly and asked, "*Kimyŏng ch'anghyo* (Auspicious filiality)?" The late King smiled and said, "As for the character *hyo* (filiality), it will be used in a title designating him as *taewang* (great king) some day, and so I have not used it. Besides, in our dynasty the custom is not to use *hyo* in honorary titles."†

I had in my possession a red cloth with gold thread woven into it, and he said to me, "At the conferral ceremony of royal titles, I expect Your Ladyship to wear the phoenix-embroidered robe of the queen.‡ So please don't discard this cloth. Take good care of it. With the filial piety of your grandson, you will someday use it." In his last years, the ceremony that he was planning for *kapcha* (1804) took on such central importance in his consciousness that nothing he planned, did, or said could escape being done with that event as a reference point. Though I remained somewhat incredulous that it would be realized, I could not help thinking what a splendid conclusion of rulership it would be. I half expected to actually see this unbelievably rare event realized in my long sojourn in this world.

My family has been slandered and vilified by the envious since *kyŏngin* (1770). By *pyŏngsin* (1776), that vicious calumny reached its peak, and my family suffered calamities and reversals of fortune. I cannot describe the depths of my bitterness and pain. I went down to a lower house§ and, determined to die, I wailed and cried night and day. The late King, however, consoled me with heartfelt sympathy. I thought that his Heaven-endowed benevolence and

* Chŏngjo had already conferred upon his father a four-character honorary title on two occasions, in 1783 and in 1784. *Chosŏn wangjo ŭi chesa* (Seoul: Munhwaje kwalliguk, 1967), 108.

† *Hyo* was used in honorary titles for queens, but not for kings.

‡ If the title of king was to be conferred upon Prince Sado, the title of queen would be conferred on Lady Hyegyŏng on the same occasion.

§ Quarters usually reserved for servants or those of low rank.

filial piety glowed with divine radiance, that a temporary occlusion of his intelligence by cunning ministers was like a darkening of the sky by fleeting clouds that pass without diminishing the true brightness of the sun and moon. Surely, he would eventually see the sincere loyalty of my father and the unjust treatment of my uncle. Lest his [reputation for] filial piety suffer if I were to give up life, I pushed myself and decided to continue this wretched life of mine. Ghosts and spirits were witness to the truthfulness of my sentiment, but I could not help but feel ashamed in my heart of hearts.

As expected, the late King indeed repulsed that evil crowd.* Deeply remorseful over the way he had treated Father, he admitted that he had been excessively harsh to him. He often said, "I told them that I had witnessed it with my own eyes. It was not Grandfather who had 'that thing'† sent in, but they insist that he was guilty. Isn't it ridiculous!"

I answered, "Their position, according to what I heard, is this. The first one, from the outer kitchen of the palace, had been brought in before Father entered. But they say it was he who suggested the one from the Palace Guard, the one that was used! What an unconscionable calumny this is!"

The late King replied, "What could they have known? That man from the Palace Guard also came in before Grandfather reached the palace. That thing from the outer kitchen was found to be unusable, and so they brought another one from the Palace Guard because it was nearby. Munjŏng Pavilion is inside Sŏnin Gate, and the eastern station of the Palace Guard is located just outside of Sŏnin Gate. The situation became terrible at about three o'clock and had turned utterly hopeless by five. His Lordship came to the palace only after the curfew gong was struck.‡ I saw this myself and

* Hong Kugyŏng, who wielded great power in the early years of Chŏngjo's reign. In 1780 Hong was expelled to the countryside. He died in 1781.

† The rice chest in which Prince Sado was confined to die. During Chŏngjo's reign, the question of who suggested that Prince Sado be locked in a rice chest and who had the chest brought in became a heated political issue, giving rise to a witch hunt.

‡ The curfew gong was struck at 9 P.M. According to a historian's journal, Hong Ponghan came into the palace much earlier than Chŏngjo asserts here. But he was with several other high-ranking ministers and they were promptly ordered to leave the scene of the father-son confrontation. Hong came back, but he was with other ministers. See Haboush, *Heritage*, 219–30.

so I know it very well. Grandfather had nothing to do with the fact that those two things were brought in from different places. In my reply to Chŏng Ihwan's memorial, I reluctantly referred to the phrase that I find difficult to use in order to clarify [maternal] Grandfather's innocence.* The whole world knows of it."

I asked, "Then what is the charge against Father now?"

The late King said, "Perhaps it can be compared to Ch'oe Myŏnggil's criticism of those who held high positions under King Kwanghae†—at a time of national crisis, they, as senior ministers, failed to die. This is an extreme though logically tenable position. But His Lordship succeeded in protecting me, and he thus secured the dynasty. History will surely acknowledge the crucial service he rendered to the dynasty. However, propriety does not permit me to declare on the throne that his protection of me was right, when discussing right and wrong in the affairs of that time. So I am letting them do and argue as they wish. That is why I am unable to commend Grandfather. But when my son ascends the throne, how can he fail to praise and honor the loyal heart that protected his father and secured the dynasty?" The late King pointed to his son and said, "During the reign of that child, Grandfather will be exculpated and Your Ladyship will enjoy even greater filial devotion than during my reign."

From the winter of *sinhae* (1791), the late King collected my father's writings on the administration of government, his memorials, and his discussions in royal audiences. He entitled the manuscript "Collected Memorials" (*Chugo*) and personally edited it

* Soon after Chŏngjo's accession, Royal Secretary Chŏng Ihwan sent a memorial denouncing Hong Ponghan for three crimes. One was that Hong had suggested that the rice chest at the Royal Guard be brought in. In his reply, Chŏngjo defended Hong, saying, "This is something I find difficult to bring up between the ruler and the minister, and between the superior and the inferior. On the seventh day of the second month in the *sinmyo* (1771), His Late Majesty said to me, weeping, 'If someday an official were to bring up to you the issue of these two words ["that thing"], he would not only be disloyal to me but also impure to you. The reason I punished Han Yu and Sim Ŭiji was that they brought up the matter of these two words. Hong Ponghan had nothing to do with it. The thing arrived while Ponghan was still waiting outside. Outsiders don't know, but they think that Ponghan recommended it to me. But the truth is different.'" *CS*, 1:9a–10a.

† Ch'oe Myŏnggil was one of the key people who joined in the successful coup of 1623 that dethroned King Kwanghae and installed King Injo. The meritorious ministers of the new regime maintained a deeply critical stance toward those who served under Kwanghae.

piece by piece. In the twelfth month of the *kimi* year (1799), after almost a decade of labor, the manuscript was put in order. It contained about sixty pieces that the late King composed as prefaces to various writings of my father.[3] One day the late King came in accompanied by the present King and read some pieces to him. He showed him the entire collection, adding, "Only now have I repaid Grandfather's loyal service and done my duty as a grandson." He said to me, "I have sung unstinting praise of Grandfather's loyalty and his meritorious deeds. In describing him, I have employed words that refer to the Duke of Chou. At times he becomes the Lord of Wei, at times Han Fu-p'i, at times a sage or a worthy.* Once published, this book will be transmitted to a hundred generations. There will no longer be any cause to discuss his past sufferings."

In the fourth month of *kyŏngsin* (1800), the late King composed an introduction and a preface to the entire collection and wrote to my third brother, saying, "Grandfather's loyal service will be revealed by this." This letter is preserved by my family. The late King then said to me, "At the time of publication, I intend to include another piece on his most exceptional contribution." What he meant was that he could not suddenly praise my father's loyal service of protecting and saving him during that fateful year, and so he wanted to wait for an occasion when this service could be given full notice. I read the royal prefaces. The graciousness and the liberality of the tribute the late King rendered to his maternal grandfather was extraordinary. Indeed, it exceeded anything a son might have composed. Moved and grateful, I brought my hands together and said, "Today I feel the joy of having a ruler-son. This vindicates my life of shame."

However, my tormented fate is still not resolved! In the bottomless sorrow of losing my son, I had to see the clamor over my father's collected memorials. Some even insisted that the late King's compositions, which were interspersed among my father's writings, should be eliminated from the manuscript.† With this, the

* The Duke of Chou was one of the cardinal paragons of virtue in the Confucian tradition. Han Ch'i was a wise minister of the Sung dynasty. He pacified a rebellion and contributed to a peaceful succession. He was enfeoffed as the Lord of Wei. Han Fu-p'i was also a wise minister of the Sung dynasty.

† The implication is that a guilty person should not have the honor of having the King write prefaces for his writings.

humiliation of my late father reached an extreme; the persecution unleashed on my own person spun out of control. But the derision was extended to reach the late King himself! Though the late King is no longer with us, his son is the sovereign whom everyone claims as his lord. Yet they do this sort of thing. What times are these? How depraved!

The first royal edict [of 1776] that sent my uncle into exile said that he had "no seditious intentions or suspicious ambitions." In *imja* (1792) the late King declared that "The remark 'He does not need to know' is as ambiguous as 'One can't say there isn't.' The remark is not sufficiently incriminating that he should be punished for it. He will be cleared of guilt some day." In recent years he spoke of my uncle quite frequently, treating him as though he had already been declared innocent. Of his plans for his maternal family, the late King used to say, "As soon as we carry out the big task in *kapcha* (1804), I will also see to it that all the charges [against the members of the Hong family] will be nullified. Regrets of mother and son will be dispelled at once." In the second month of *kyŏngsin* (1800), he reaffirmed this intention in an edict that said, "I want to exonerate one person today and another tomorrow so that none will remain condemned and no family ruined. In that way, we will live in great peace and harmony."*

But I was rather impatient with the way the late King was putting things off to *kapcha* (1804). I said, "That will be my seventieth year. There is no guarantee that I will live to that age. Besides, what if my lord does not honor today's pledge at that time?" The late King answered in anger, "Does Your Ladyship think that I will deceive a seventy-year-old mother?" Thus I could do nothing but to eagerly await the *kapcha* year. Because of my odious and miserable fate, none of these plans and pledges were to materialize. My miserable plight and my family's misfortune have reached this unbelievable point. I do not believe I have encountered such a case as this in any history book. Under the circumstances, what is the use of living even for a moment longer?

* Chŏngjo declared a large-scale amnesty when he appointed Sunjo as Crown Prince in the second month of 1800. Thinking the amnesty too extensive, officials including the Prime Minister requested that Chŏngjo rescind it. This was more or less how Chŏngjo reaffirmed his intention to exonerate as many people as possible. *CS*, 53:26a–b. For details on the 1776 edict and 1792 declaration about Hong Inhan, see *The Memoir of 1801*, 162–63.

My only hope is the present King. Though young, he takes after his father in benevolence and filial piety. I pray day and night that once he reaches maturity, he will execute the unfulfilled wishes of his father.

The royal marriage of the *kapcha* year (1744) altered my family's position, and so my father did not wish to take the civil examinations. However, the scholars of the mountains and forests opined, "The father-in-law of the Crown Prince has a unique position. It is senseless to foreswear the examination." My father took it and passed it in the tenth month of that year. His Majesty King Yŏngjo had been anxiously awaiting the result and was pleased with the news. The Prince, though young, was delighted. "My father-in-law passed the examination," he announced happily. No one from the families of either Lord Kyŏngŭn or Lord Talsŏng had succeeded in the *munkwa* examination and so my father was the first royal affine who had passed it in quite a long while.* Pleased with their new in-law's successful candidacy, Their Royal Highnesses Queen Dowager Inwŏn and Queen Chŏngsŏng summoned me specially to offer congratulations. Queen Chŏngsŏng's family had suffered in the *sinim* (1721–1722) purge, and she was partial toward the Noron. Her delight at Father's success was as great as if it had been her own father's. I was overwhelmed and touched by her enthusiasm. How vividly I remember this scene as if it were just yesterday!

The world in its ignorance has assumed that His Majesty's trust in my father was due to familial relations. This was not true. In the spring of *kyehae* (1743) my father, as student representative at the Royal College, had a royal audience at Sungmun Hall. At the time, His Majesty was greatly impressed with Father—the way he offered his opinion and the way he carried himself in the royal presence. When he retired that day, His Majesty said to Lady Sŏnhŭi, "Today I have seen a [potential] minister for the Crown Prince." "Who is it?" Lady Sŏnhŭi asked. "The student representative Hong," he replied, adding, "I am offering a palace examination, hoping that this Hong will pass." This episode was later related to me by Lady Sŏnhŭi. Judging by this story, my father's relationship with the

* The *munkwa* was the highest of the civil service examinations. Lord Kyŏngŭn was the father of Queen Inwŏn. Lord Talsŏng was Sŏ Chongje, the father of Queen Chŏngsŏng, Yŏngjo's first queen.

throne began when he was a student-scholar, at which time His Majesty had already marked him as a future minister.

At the time of the final selection of a princess consort, there were other well-recommended girls; though I was the granddaughter of a minister, Grandfather was deceased, and so I was the daughter of a mere student-scholar. This made their selection of me quite exceptional. His Majesty's sagacious heart favored me, but the decisive factor was that I was the daughter of one whom His Majesty was planning to employ in major capacities. Even if he had not been a royal affine, my father would surely have had a successful career given his talents and abilities, which had already impressed the throne. Because of me, he was placed under extreme constraints and subjected to unbelievably complex political situations. In the end, he faced mounting calumny, and his political fortunes plummeted. He died before his time with bitterness in his heart. The benefit he received from being a royal affine was small, but his suffering because of it was great. This was all because he had me. Thus I have lived my life in guilt and bitterness.

After his success in the examination, Father grew rapidly in His Majesty's esteem. He was appointed to a succession of offices, each with heavier responsibilities than the last. At various points, he was entrusted with currency and grain, military troops,[4] and finally the premiership. His absolute impartiality, his complete sincerity, his talent, and his wide knowledge pleased His Majesty's sagacious heart. Never once did he commit an impropriety or violate a rule. During the twenty years that Father headed parts of the military and civilian bureaucracy, he saw the benefits and losses of the populace, their pains and joys, as his own. No malfeasance or abusive practice that he noticed either in or out of the bureaucracy was left uncorrected. To this very day, those corrections are in force. Admittedly, this was possible mostly because of the remarkable compatibility between him and His Majesty, a rare and outstanding example in the annals of royal-ministerial relations. However, if not for his talents and extraordinary sense of loyalty, he could not have accomplished so much.

My father's political fortunes did take a dismal turn, and he fell victim to endless slander and calumny. But that was all because of variations on two baseless stories. Though he was in public service for thirty years, no one has remotely intimated that any course of action he took led to the decline of the nation or brought harm to

the people. Not only educated scholars and officials but rank and file soldiers, ordinary residents of the city, and even ignorant people in rural areas remember his virtue and feel indebted to him. Their overwhelming consensus is that "were it not for Minister Hong, neither they nor the nation would have survived." This is not what I, out of private affection, say. If one were to ask anyone in the street, even a child or a soldier, one would hear that my father was a wise minister indeed. This verdict is certainly not what is accorded a person just for wielding power for a long time. His many accomplishments in office are well known. The late King enumerated them in his preface to the "Collected Memorials,"[5] and I do not wish to repeat them. Here I will only point out how utterly unjust the accusations against him were. A detailed account of how he fell victim to that vicious calumny is recorded elsewhere.* There is no need for me to go into it here.

Suppose that Prince Sado's illness had not reached that indescribably difficult state or that His Majesty had not become aware of it, and that Father for some peculiar reason had informed His Majesty of the Prince's illness and provided him with "that thing," advising him what to do with it. Of course he was my father, but after all, one's husband comes before one's father, and though I may be an ignorant woman, I know of this most basic of principles. Thus, had that been the case, would I not have had the discrimination to follow my husband in death at the time? Even if I had been unable to do that, would I still have maintained a daughter-father relationship? What of my son, the late King? Would he have interceded on behalf of his grandfather in the *sinmyo* year (1771)? Would he have gone to such lengths to defend his maternal grandfather, refuting that memorial [of Chŏng Ihwan] and citing His Majesty's words? Had Father been guilty, would Heaven have allowed his line to continue? Would I, even reduced to what I am at present, have survived for forty years and received the filial devotion of my descendants?

At the time [of Prince Sado's death], the future of the nation hung imperiled, sustained by no more than a thread. Had my late father mishandled the situation, the ruin of my family would have been but a secondary matter; the very survival of the late King

* See *The Memoir of 1801*, 150–55.

would not have been possible. Faced with that inexorable situation, my father wailed and cried, shed tears of blood, but, despite his grief, succeeded in protecting the late King and preserving this monarchy right unto this very day. Because His Majesty trusted my father and relied upon him, he preserved the late King. Otherwise, in that towering rage, pursuing such a course of action toward his own son, would he have considered his grandson? Had that happened, what would they say of him now? How censorious the judgment of later generations! Situated as he was, what, then, would have been the right course for my father? To beat his head upon those stones till he died, leaving the Grand Heir to perish as well? Or, seeing that the situation had gone beyond the reach of hope, should he not have acted to save the Grand Heir, continuing the dynastic line? One need not consult men of knowledge to find an answer.

The late King used to say to me, "Grandfather's loyalty was rare even among the ancients. To prevent official criticism, I have been unable to acknowledge either his loyalty or his merit. I have no one to blame for this. Thus I act as though muddled or duped, just marking time. Haven't I even [posthumously] exonerated that monstrous Han Yu of his crime! The pressure to do so overcame my resistance,[6] but I know that this is not a righteous principle for the ages. From the next reign, Grandfather's merit and accomplishments will be manifest. I wish to change his posthumous title to include the character *ch'ung* (loyalty)." He said this hundreds and thousands of times. Lady Kasun also heard it. I would not utter one word of exaggeration just because he is no longer with us.

Because of these desires, the late King labored ten years on my father's official papers. Oblivious to fatigue, he worked on them day and night, composing many pieces of his own for inclusion in the book. What he intended to do with this publication was not just to honor my father's long public service and his accomplishments; he wished to show the world the depth of his appreciation for his grandfather's loyal and admirable service in protecting him and stabilizing the dynasty. Who among the ministers who were close to the late King do not know of this? He still worried that Father's role in the incident of that year [1762] might not be fully understood. He searched for ways to declare him guiltless without having to resort to a separate explanation. For this reason, when editing the entry for the thirteenth day of the fifth month in the

imo year (1762) in my father's life chronology, the late King carefully wrote down the precise time [when Prince Sado entered the rice chest]. He also added a long description of how devotedly and carefully my father attended to his duties as director of [Prince Sado's] funeral and how he took care that the minutest details of the funeral rites were properly observed.[7] The late King then asked my brothers, "His Lordship's memorial on the *imo* event, which he submitted to the throne directly,* is not included in his collected works.[8] What is the reason for this?" My brothers answered, "It is because we are still bound by the order prohibiting the circulation of public documents concerning the incident of that year."† The late King said, "That is not written in stone. Besides, that memorial reveals His Lordship's true intentions and the facts of the incident. Why don't you include it?" He urged them repeatedly. But before long, my brother met with calamity,‡ and so this was not done.

How excited and pleased the late King was when he obtained His Majesty's handwritten letter of the *sinmyo* year (1771) exonerating my father! He said, "Let's include this in the Records of the Crown Prince Office." Including it in my father's life chronology,§ he said to me, "I finally found a written account of what I witnessed myself. Now I have included this piece in Grandfather's life chronology. It is irrefutable evidence [of his innocence] that will stand for a thousand years to come. I have no regrets." Had my father been involved in the incident of that year even in the smallest degree, the late King would not have spoken of his grandfather in this way. Nor would he have even thought of working on his grandfather's "Collected Memorials" or his life chronology. In matters that allowed no deviation, the late King always upheld righteous principles, even if it meant leaving something unfulfilled

* According to Chosŏn court custom, memorials to the throne were received by the Royal Secretariat. In exceptional circumstances, high-ranking ministers were allowed to hand their memorials to the king directly.

† There was a ban on discussions of the 1762 incident.

‡ This phrase must refer to the execution of Hong Nagim in 1801. It seems that with his death, the project to publish Hong Ponghan's collected works came to an end.

§ Hong Ponghan's life chronology *(yŏnbo)* was compiled for the most part by Hong Nagin, his son. It was completed by someone else, perhaps Chŏngjo himself.

in the way he served his parents.* If he had felt that his maternal grandfather had not been an exemplar of righteous principles, he certainly would not have forgiven him just because he was his grandfather. Beyond that, the late King was not merely expressing the usual familial respect but an extraordinary encomium to his grandfather. Does one need more persuasion than this?

My father was exonerated of all three charges in the *kapchin* year (1784),† which one would ordinarily take to mean that he had previously suffered unfair accusations. But for some inexplicable reason, my father was yet again reviled for that same old charge of which he had been exonerated in *kapchin* (1784). What injustice!

Two opinions have emerged concerning the event of that year [1762]. One is that His Majesty's decision was an impartial and brilliant act of justice. Those who hold this opinion call it the most sagacious and admirable of His Majesty's accomplishments, one in harmony with all of Heaven and Earth. The other opinion is that Prince Sado was not ill but met that tragedy unjustly. Those who hold the former opinion assume the criminality of Prince Sado, that he harbored a truly evil intent. This renders an aura of righteousness to His Majesty's act. It makes it a meritorious deed of the same nature as vanquishing an enemy nation. But what kind of person does this view make of Prince Sado; where does it leave the late King? This view discredits Prince Sado and the late King. The second view, on the other hand, implies that His Majesty took that extreme measure against the Crown Prince on the basis of mere slander. This opinion might originate in a wish to console Prince Sado and to restore his honor, but it does so at the expense of His Majesty's virtue.

Both views are equally faulty. Both display terrible impropriety toward the Three Royal Generations‡ and distort reality. As my

* Not conferring titles of king and queen upon them, which was in adherence to his duty to Yŏngjo.

† Chŏngjo posthumously cleared Hong Ponghan of the three charges—that he gave Yŏngjo the rice chest in which Prince Sado was confined to die, that he begrudged the use of top-quality ginseng during Yŏngjo's illness, and that he discussed the possibility of offering a posthumous royal title to Prince Sado (*CS*, 18:17b–18b; Chŏngjo, *Hongjae chŏnsŏ*, 32:15b–18b). Hong was accused of the first crime by Han Yu in 1771 (*Yŏngjo sillok* [hereafter *YS*], in *Chŏson wangjo sillok*, 117:7a–8a); the second and third crimes by Kim Kwanju and Kim Kwiju in 1772 (*YS*, 119:6a–12b). Afterwards Hong was periodically accused of these three crimes, including once by Chŏng Ihwan shortly after Chŏngjo's accession. For example, see *CS*, 1:9a–b.

‡ Yŏngjo, Prince Sado, and Chŏngjo.

late father said on several occasions, it was clearly an illness [on the part of Prince Sado], but, though it was illness, the safety of His Majesty and the dynasty itself were sustained by a mere breath. There was no way, despite his unfathomable sorrow and pain, for His Majesty to avoid that decision. As for Prince Sado, he could have been blamed only if he possessed his senses. As he grew more afflicted, he lost his true nature; he was unaware of what he was doing. What must be regretted is that he became ill; it had absolutely no bearing on his virtue.

As this was the truth, one must say that His Majesty's decision was made under irresistible pressures, that Prince Sado could not have been helped, and that the late King knew his duty even as he suffered deep grief. Only when this complete picture is presented can the truth be told and justice achieved for all. The first opinion describes His Majesty's decision as sagacious, making Prince Sado a criminal, while the other, seeking to benefit Prince Sado, makes His Majesty an unfeeling parent. Both are unjust to the Three Royal Generations.

And then there are those who maintain that His Majesty was right but are intent on placing all the blame on my late father. In total ignorance of what happened, they insist that my father offered "that thing." How can this be? Are they trying to be loyal to His Majesty King Yŏngjo or are they trying to be loyal to His Highness Prince Sado? They are merely turning the incident of that year into a pit in which to ensnare people. That incident, in whose shadow I have lived in unbearable pain and sorrow for every minute of these forty years, has become the center of a cunning scheme with which they harm people, a foothold with which they advance themselves in the world. Oh! I wail in bitterness.

After the demise of the late King, that evil clique has risen in the world.* Dissatisfied and angry that they could not completely eliminate me, they brought calamity to my brother and made my father a leader of traitors. It even came to pass that a royal decree was issued with my father's name heading the criminal list. Though I am ignorant of the history of the ages, I do not believe that, even in the most venal and depraved of societies, there can have been such an evil clique as the one that, in the presence of the late

* Because Sunjo was underage in 1800, Queen Dowager Chŏngsun acted as regent. Her family and those who were opposed to Lady Hyegyŏng's family were in power. Lady Hyegyŏng is referring to them.

King's mother, listed the late King's maternal grandfather as a head traitor and disseminated the decree to the whole country. Moreover, their written recommendation to persecute my brother, which was sent to the throne in the sixth month of the *sinyu* year (1801), contained a passage saying that a "certain sibling" of my brother was "incomparably traitorous."* Who could they have been referring to as my brother's sibling? Who but me? They were openly calling me an arch-traitor. This shows how the world has changed, how precipitously ministerial integrity has fallen. There is an old saying that it is not enough to wail and shed tears. Still, even that does not adequately express my state of mind.

Because my father was so unfortunate as to have lived in difficult and precarious times, he remained in office for a long time. Graced by a profound royal trust that held him in a very special regard and burdened with the cares of the nation and anxieties for the young Grand Heir, he could not, despite a constant and acute longing to retire, disengage himself from the duties of office. Shamefully, under the influence of events, he remained and thus failed to live up to the [standards of] loyalty and integrity of the ancients.† If a man of rigorous principle and honesty at court or in private life could not fathom my father's true intentions and had criticized him, saying that he lacked solemn loyalty and the integrity of a high minister, my father would have smiled and accepted it as he certainly should have. Nor would I have minded that criticism.

My family, which had served in office for generations, seemed for a while to have entered a period of unobstructed fortune. Men of the younger generation passed the civil service examinations one after another; the glory of the family overflowed and its power grew excessive. It is not odd that people grew angry at us and that ghosts and spirits shunned us. Reflecting upon this after falling into ruin, I find it ten thousand times regrettable and bitter that my family did not depart from the paths of power, but instead remained immersed in the flow of examinations and official posts. Yet it is truly unjust that my family reach this extreme point, maligned

* The recommendation they sent late in the fifth month requesting the execution of Hong Nagim and Ŭnŏn and the edict they sent early in the sixth month announcing their deaths are couched in vicious and condemnatory language. But I could not find this exact phrase in the *Sillok* version. *SS*, 3:19a–21a, 3:24a–b.

† By this standard, Hong Ponghan should have retired from public life upon the death of Prince Sado.

by slander and calumny. How vividly do I see that prosperity and decline, calamity and fortune, join in a circle. As my family has declined after having flourished, I beseech Heaven in tears and blood that perhaps someday this bitter injustice will be known to the world and that calamity shall turn to fortune.

Kwiju's family, catapulted out of poverty and obscurity[9] into sudden prominence by the royal marriage in *kimyo* (1759), exhibited the inevitable awkwardness and inexperience. My late father decided that it was in the best interests of all parties concerned that the two royal affinal families maintain a cordial relationship. Thus he instructed them and, with inexhaustible care and attention, arranged to conceal their rustic and unrefined manners. In the beginning the Kim family was grateful and even moved by his concern, but as their power and influence increased, their hearts grew more wicked, and eventually they became our sworn enemies. How incredible!

Kwiju's father was a man of suspicious and devious nature, but Kwiju was even worse, a truly depraved, vicious, and violent character. Had they modeled themselves after Lord Kyŏngŭn,* who would have faulted them? They were originally from Ch'ungch'ŏng Province and were on friendly terms with those who espoused distorted and peculiar theories. Kim Hallok, Kwiju's first cousin once removed, the father of Kwanju, was a disciple of that Namdang.† He acted as though he were engaged in the business of scholarship. Thus those scholars from Ch'ungch'ŏng Province looked up to and relied upon Kwiju and his family as though they were gods and spirits. By promoting and supporting these scholars' theories, however, Kwiju and company deviated from their proper place as royal affines.‡ Nor did they manage to maintain a consistent position throughout, as they dropped their support halfway through. What distinguished them was their arrogance, absurdly pretending to be

* Kim Chusin. Like Kim Han'gu, he held no official post at the time of his daughter's enthronement, but after his daughter's marriage, he maintained a low profile.

† Namdang was the nom de plume of Han Wŏnjin (1682–1751), a very well-known Neo-Confucian scholar. His famous debate with Yi Kan, known as the "Horak debate," concerned human nature. Lady Hyegyŏng seems to be disdainful of this debate and the scholars involved in it. None of them served in office.

‡ Royal affines were expected to support the royal house. As a rule, they were not expected to present themselves as "pure scholars" who shunned office.

something that they were not and behaving in such an altogether ludicrous manner that they became laughingstocks.

Since my family was an illustrious one that had produced high ministers for generations and had become royal affines earlier than the Kims, they resented us, suspecting that we might scorn and look down upon them. During *kyŏngjin* and *sinsa* (1760–1761), when Prince Sado's illness reached an irreversible point and His Majesty showered special favor upon them as new relatives, the evil hearts of Kwiju and his clique emerged into the open. Conferring, they agreed: "Now that the Crown Prince's loss of virtue has reached this point, something decisive will befall him soon. In that case, it would be only right if his son were not to be preserved either. If this were to happen, as there is no other prince, the throne would have to adopt a son. We, as [adoptive] maternal relatives to the new Crown Prince, would enjoy power and glory for a long time to come."

While they indulged in these daydreams, they feared that, because His Majesty so completely trusted my father, the Grand Heir might be preserved and so their dream would vanish. Thus in *sinsa* (1761), when Kwiju was little more than twenty, he dared to send His Majesty a letter in which he criticized my father and implicated Chŏng Hwiryang.* His Majesty was astounded by his behavior and in no uncertain terms warned Her Highness the Queen that this simply would not do. In intimating that my father failed to admonish Prince Sado and that Chŏng Hwiryang failed to report to the throne Prince Sado's [secret] trip to P'yŏngyang,† Kwiju's intention could not possibly have been simply to harm my father; he was ensuring that His Majesty would be informed of the missteps of His Highness the Crown Prince. It is impossible for a person in his position to be more nakedly evil and covetous than this. During this period, one Palace Matron Yi, a sister of Yi Kyehŭng, was in royal favor. She often waited upon His Majesty and mediated certain things between His Majesty and Prince Sado. She saw Kwiju's letter and was flabbergasted and chagrined. She protested to the Queen, "How dare Your Highness's family engage in that kind of behavior?" and demanded, "Please wash it out with water." My

* Sending such a letter to the king was a breach of public conduct in the Chosŏn court.

† Prince Sado made this trip incognito in 1761 without his father's permission. For details, see *The Memoir of 1805*, 302–3.

father came to be aware of Kwiju's intentions from this incident and was deeply concerned though he mentioned it to no one, not even to Prince Sado. One can gather from this that he did not want a confrontation with the Kims.

Just as they were most envious, feeling that the father-in-law of the King should be more important than the father-in-law of the Crown Prince, and just when their scheme to eliminate us was ripening, that tragic event* occurred. They must have been overjoyed, thinking that the Grand Heir would be swept aside. There would be an adoption; they would become maternal relatives of this new prince while the Hongs would be annihilated. Instead, the Grand Heir became the Crown Prince, my family was preserved intact, and my father served as minister of the State Council. Overwhelmed by chagrin, they made that unprecedented, vicious blasphemy. This was a scheme to sow seeds of confusion and doubt in His Majesty's sagacious heart in order to eliminate the Grand Heir. Though they uttered this evil phrase, I can scarcely bear to write it with my brush. If I were not to write it clearly, however, I fear that later generations might be perplexed by its content, and so I will push myself to record it.

Shortly after that terrible event, Kim Hallok declared at a meeting of the Kims of Hongju, "The Grand Heir is a criminal's son and thus cannot possibly succeed to the throne. Who among the descendants of T'aejo† would not do as well as he?" This is what the world refers to as the sixteen-character blasphemy (*simyukcha hyungŏn*). All the Kims present at the meeting heard it, and as they repeated it, it reached everywhere—though no one could really repeat such a horrid phrase verbatim out in the open. But I heard it, and so did the Grand Heir. Each of us thought it unbelievably hideous. At the same time, we only half believed its authenticity.

Not so long ago, the late King said to me, "I was always incredulous of that blasphemy attributed to the Hallok and Kwiju group. But I recently verified it."

I asked, "How did you find out?"

The late King said, "Rumor had it that this phrase was spoken at a family gathering of the Kalmi group of the Hongju Kims. One night Kim Isŏng of the Office of Special Counselors was on duty.

* The death of Prince Sado in 1762.

† The founder of the Chosŏn dynasty.

He is a Kalmi Kim, and so I thought he might know. I urged him, 'Don't hide. Tell me the truth.' I alternately cajoled and pressed him. At first he was rather hesitant and was not forthcoming. But after all, wouldn't I be able to handle someone young and inexperienced like that? Finally he came out with everything. He told me that he had actually heard Hallok utter that phrase, as had many other Kims. They immediately went to Kim Sich'an, the head of that branch of the Kim family, and reported to him what they had heard. Kim Sich'an was greatly alarmed and deeply incensed. He felt that the statement left no doubt as to the traitorous intentions of Kwiju and Hallok, and he warned the youngsters of the family that they should firmly distinguish between what was loyal and what was traitorous. Kim Isŏng also mentioned that the phrase did not just come from Hallok, but that it had originated with Kwiju. After all these years, I have the proof that it was true. Isn't it incredible! Yet if I were to bring it up now, there is no telling what the repercussions might be. It is best to say nothing for the moment and to have a long look at the future. That group should still be feared. Better to accommodate and soothe them rather than to call for terrible incidents that might cause deep resentment."

The late King continued, "I also heard that after that year they even settled upon someone they would recommend to the throne for adoption. This was all part of the scheme that began with that blasphemous phrase. Just imagine! Some fool placed on the throne as the lord of the nation and, perhaps, in all pomp and grandeur, receiving the humble obeisances of the entire bureaucracy! What a repulsive picture! The more I think about it, the more deeply I shudder at their treacherous hearts and vicious words."

When the late King appointed Kwanju[10] the Magistrate of Tongnae, he told me that he was doing "something that cannot be easily explained, something extremely complicated and difficult." Of course, the late King cannot have failed to observe that Kwiju and his clique were vicious traitors. He had, in fact, known this for a long time. In the *pyŏngsin* year (1776), for instance, when he dealt with Kwiju's case, he listed only his minor offenses and left the rest of his crime unspecified, saying that it was "something truly unmentionable."* This unmentionable crime was none other

* Upon Chŏngjo's accession in 1776, Kim Kwiju was banished to Hŭksan Island. On this occasion, Chŏngjo bitterly condemned Kim Han'gu, Kim Kwiju, and Chŏng Hugyŏm for their intrigues against Hong Ponghan. *CS*, 2:27a–31b.

than that blasphemy. From this one can see that the late King had been informed of this crime before *pyŏngsin*, but when he spoke with Kim Isŏng, he obtained indisputable proof. Since ancient times there must have been many traitors and rebels who pushed some fool onto the throne and betrayed the rightful heir. As for our royal house, the six-generation line descending from King Hyojong has but one royal descendant, the Grand Heir.* Nonetheless, blinded by greed for wealth and power, Kwiju's clique wished to do away with this one true blood line, placing some total stranger on the throne as "a descendant of King T'aejo" and taking this country as if it were their own. There cannot possibly have been more depraved and monstrous villains than these traitors.

This blasphemy was also the reason why the Kims came to regard my family as their enemies and to persecute my father with such determination. As word of the blasphemy spread, they realized that they could neither carry out their schemes nor deny what they had said. It was at about this time that the Kims, acting as men of learning, began to befriend so-called scholars and to participate in scholarly debates. They gathered around them those who were reduced to poverty nearly to the point of death, either from Seoul or from the countryside. These were the sort who, lacking literary or martial accomplishments, enjoyed idle talk and delighted in schemes and gossip. Obviously they were covetous of material gain, but the Kims bent over backward to attract them, pretending that they were associating with them in the spirit of loyal friendship. These rustics were the lowliest and most lawless of malcontents. Not one of them in all their lives had even glimpsed the courtyard of a rich and powerful family. Now suddenly they were treated to fine food and sturdy clothes. If they asked for money, they got money; if they asked for rice, they got rice. If one among them fell ill, ginseng and deer horn were provided. If

* King Hyojong had an only son, King Hyŏnjong, who in turn had an only son, King Sukchong. Sukchong had three sons who survived to adulthood. The first, Kyŏngjong, died without issue, and the last, Prince Yŏllyŏng, died at the age of twenty, leaving no heir. The middle son was King Yŏngjo. Yŏngjo's first son, Prince Hyojang, died leaving no heir. His second son was Prince Sado. Prince Sado's heir by his legal consort, Lady Hyegyŏng, was Chŏngjo, referred to as the Grand Heir. Prince Sado had three other sons by secondary consorts. Thus, as Lady Hyegyŏng observes, only Sado's descendants are in the direct line unless one goes back more than six generations. However, she is overlooking the fact that Sado had sons by secondary consorts. Yŏngjo and Sado were themselves sons by secondary consorts.

one married or died, nothing was withheld for the wedding or the funeral. They were completely overwhelmed and felt eternally indebted to the Kims in life and in death. They went about singing the praises of the Kims, declaring them to be true sage scholars among royal affines, and making it possible for the Kims to continue with their reckless plans.* This was the evil scheme once used by Wang Mang.† Indisputably, Kwiju's intention was to eventually crush my family.

The late King often remarked that my father saved several tens of thousands of taels out of regional tributes as emergency funds in the Office of the Palace Guard and that Ohŭng together with Kwiju spent it all on those they hired in their plan to kill Father. He felt this to be such a bitter irony that once he mentioned it to an official to whom he felt close. The late King told me that this official's response was "A true description, indeed." It was truly odd that Kwiju's group was so single-minded in their determination to annihilate my family. Even if Father had erred against them, they should not have been so antagonistic, since the two families were bound by special relationships. Had we done something disadvantageous or hostile to them, then under the rules of normal human sentiment, they could have hated us. But from the beginning, we had treated them with kindness and without even one iota of hostility. No matter how long I search for a possible explanation for their hatred, I just cannot find it.

No matter how they tried to undermine the Grand Heir with their evil words and schemes, His Majesty's affection for him stood unchanged and royal trust in Father continued undiminished. Moreover, as the Grand Heir matured, his position grew even more secure. They were in dismay. Then, so entirely unexpectedly, that *kich'uk* (1769) incident involving those palace servants occurred.‡ The late King was still quite young at the time and he could not have been fully mindful that his maternal grandfather and this old mother were so completely and totally devoted to his welfare. His passing anger cooled his affection for his maternal family.

* *T'anghwa rŭl p'ich'i anihage mandani* literally means "causing them not to avoid boiling water and fire."

† Wang Mang was the interloper who, in the view of his overthrowers, usurped the throne from the last emperor of the former Han dynasty.

‡ For details, see *The Memoir of 1801*, 144–49.

Hugyŏm was not kindly disposed toward my family either, and through him, Kwiju noticed this change in the Grand Heir. Thinking that he finally had what he needed, Kwiju, in the manner of a thief turning on his master with a club, now assumed the role of a loyal and devoted follower of the Grand Heir, whom he flattered and cajoled. He insinuated to the Grand Heir that my father, fond of Ŭnŏn and Ŭnsin, wished to turn things against the Grand Heir. He also announced to the whole world that "Hong is making things difficult for the Heir Apparent who, in turn, is slighting Hong." Those who wanted an official post overnight and those who cultivated self-interest and changed with the times joined in at once. The so-called "ten scholars" and many other such groups all rolled themselves into one big clique scheming against my father. In the third month of *kyŏngin* (1770), they finally found that wretch Han Yu from Ch'ungch'ŏng Province whom they could persuade to send that evil memorial. It was Kwiju who planned the whole thing. This Han Yu could not boast of even a modicum of learning or a modest standing among the gentlefolk of the countryside. He was just a foolish wretch from some remote backwater, an ignorant, vicious, and foolhardy person who did not belong in the company of gentle-mannered people.

Some years previously, His Majesty King Yŏngjo had been deeply angered by Song Myŏnghŭm and Sin Kyŏng. Lamenting what he felt to be criticism by scholars of his policy of grand harmony, on which he had expended so much effort over the forty years of his reign, His Majesty punished Song and Sin.* Then he published the book called *Yugollok* (Instructions for later generations), the gist of which was that scholars were leading the

* In the fifth month of 1764, Yŏngjo ordered that Pak Sech'e (1631–1695), a renowned scholar-statesman who had served under Hyŏnjong and Sukchong, be canonized at the Confucian temple. Pak Sech'e had been a member of the Soron, and Yŏngjo's measure was meant to demonstrate to the increasingly Noron-dominated bureaucracy his commitment to the policy of grand harmony. In the tenth month, Sin Kyŏng, a grandson of Pak Sech'e, sent to the throne Pak's writings accompanied by his own memorial saying that the way the policy of grand harmony was being pursued by some powerful ministers was inconsistent with his late grandfather's hopes. In the eleventh month, when someone criticized this memorial, Sin sent another one in which he reaffirmed that Pak Sech'e's usage of the term "grand harmony" was being misrepresented by the present court. Sin was banished, and Song Myŏnghŭm and others who expressed agreement with Sin were demoted to commoner status. *YS*, 103:24a, 104:21b–22a, 104:32a–b, 104:33a–b.

country astray and that his successors should not employ them.[11] This was truly excessive, and there were none who did not think it a pity. Nevertheless, since it was an octogenarian ruler doing this in a moment of excess, my father—much in the way in which younger members of a family, in response to complaints of ingratitude by a respected elder, seek his forgiveness to appease him—decided that he, an old and trusted minister, should do nothing that would further enrage his sagacious heart. Trusting that all would understand, he complied with His Majesty's promulgation of royal instructions. He just wanted to smooth things over. He was serving in a time of genuine complexity and difficulty. His only true concern was to protect the Grand Heir so as to leave the foundation of the nation firm and strong. As for the rest, he took a rather philosophical approach; that is, he just decided that nothing could or should be done about an aging king's excesses and that there would be a time when all would be worked out. This was, indeed, a case of erring by acting from one's humanity. It was rooted in his devotion and concern for the Grand Heir.

Soon word circulated that sending a memorial to the throne criticizing *Yugollok* would bring fame.* Someone persuaded this wretch Yu, saying, "If you send a memorial about *Yugollok*, then you will achieve fame. You will get an official post in the future and become a *yangban*."† This stupid wretch believed it. Having some characters tattooed on his arm as a way of expressing his loyalty, he came to Seoul, set to present a memorial. He happened to be friendly with one Sim Ŭiji, who knew that Kwiju was searching for someone. Ŭiji and Kwiju conferred with each other and coaxed Yu. He should by all means bring up the issue of *Yugollok*, but they also said, "Right now, Hong has been a minister for so long and he wields so much power that His Majesty is tired of him. He did something wrong by the Heir Apparent, too, and so the Heir Apparent no longer cares for him either. The whole world knows about this, and yet people are unable to bring themselves to attack

* In fact, the protest was gathering momentum. In the fifth month of 1769, 1,800 students sent in a joint memorial requesting that the *Yugollok* be abrogated. Yŏngjo's response was to compose a continuation, *Sok Yugollok* (Continuation to *Yugollok*) (*YS*, 112:22a–b). *Yugollok* and *Sok Yugollok* are listed in *Munhŏn pigo* (3 vols., Seoul: Tongguk munhwasa, 1957, 245:11a–b), but they do not seem to be extant.

† *Yangban* is the colloquial term for a member of the hereditary aristocracy.

him. If you were to criticize him in your memorial, then not only would you get an official post, but you would be considered one who undertook a great and meritorious act." They tempted him endlessly in this fashion. They also turned to other inducements. Kwiju sent servants to the inn at which Han Yu was staying and ordered them to inquire loudly, "Is there a Mr. Han from Ch'ŏngju here? His Lordship the Prime Minister ordered the wretch be seized. He is here to make trouble by sending a memorial." On other occasions the servants covered their faces and heckled, "We are ordered to chase this person out of Seoul." Thus they baited Yu. His temper rose and he grew chagrined. Ŭiju then cajoled Yu with thousands of sweet words and promises. He said, "If you send this memorial, you will acquire a reputation for uprightness and integrity. You will enjoy power and glory." He gave Yu a memorial that he himself composed, and this wretch, not discerning whether he might die or live or whether what he was doing was right or wrong, sent in that vicious memorial.

Under the sway of Hugyŏm, Madame Chŏng was convinced that only by eliminating my family could she and her son consolidate their power. Allied with Kwiju, she tirelessly and ferociously slandered my father to His Majesty until his sagacious heart was seven- or eight-tenths turned against him. My father was relieved of his post for a rather insignificant issue in the first month of *kyŏngin* (1770).* He was soon recalled, but as a minister without portfolio, while the Prime Ministership went to Kim Ch'iin, who continued in this post till the third month. One could clearly detect in this a lessening of royal affection toward my father. When His Majesty saw Han Yu's memorial, he was deeply chagrined. However, influenced by those who maligned Father, His Majesty had Han Yu interrogated with rather light corporal punishment and banished him to an island.† Then His Majesty accepted my father's resignation. The royal intention was, of course, to shield my father from further attack. Nonetheless, considering the affec-

* On the eighth day of the first month of 1770, Hong Ponghan, serving as Prime Minister, led the bureaucracy in requesting severe punishment for a censor, Yun Hongnyŏl, whose recent memorial was deemed factional. Yŏngjo was angered by this and dismissed all the bureaucrats who had joined in this demand. *YS*, 114:2b–3a.

† Han Yu was expunged from the scholars' roster and sent to Hŭksan Island. *YS*, 114:13b.

tion and trust between them in that long relationship, this measure was totally unexpected. After that, my family was out of favor and my father was not at court. Kwiju alone wielded power. With Hugyŏm inside and with all sorts of faction-minded cronies outside, he schemed day and night to harm my father. I cannot begin to describe the precarious state in which we lived during that period.

In the winter of *kyŏngin* (1770), Ch'oe Ingnam sent a memorial that said, "It is embarrassing that the Heir Apparent is not paying respect at Prince Sado's tomb. Prime Minister Kim Ch'iin should be held responsible." The implication that the Grand Heir visit Prince Sado's tomb was not wrong but, given the extremely delicate issues that surrounded it, was not something that a subject might casually suggest. Moreover, the incumbent Prime Minister had nothing to do with it. This Ingnam, who sent the memorial, was an ill-mannered person with a reputation for shallowness and recklessness. He was a relative of Madame Chŏng's in-laws. Through this connection, my family had the misfortune of having made his acquaintance. Kwiju sent one Ku Sang to persuade Hugyŏm to insinuate to His Majesty that it was my father who had inspired Ch'oe Ingnam's memorial. His Majesty's sagacious heart was easily influenced by their explanation of why Father might have wanted such a memorial written. To wit, he wished to portray the incident of that year as having been His Majesty's fault and to use this to get rid of Kim Ch'iin. Because of this suspicion, His Majesty conducted a thorough and extensive personal interrogation of the suspects, torturing many severely,[12] hoping that someone would confess that Hong was behind the memorial. But because my father did not know about it, no one implicated him, although several people including Ingnam were beaten to death.[13] His sagacious heart, however, was not appeased. The murderous hearts of that evil clique were still inflamed. Thus after only several months, in the second month of *sinmyo* (1771), a terrible incident involving Ŭnŏn and Ŭnsin occurred.

When Ŭnŏn was born in *kapsul* (1754) and then Ŭnsin in *ŭrhae* (1755), I was afflicted by that feeling that attacks us women regardless of birth, high or low, and was not pleased. The Prince's illness, however, was getting quite awful, and he was not particularly enamored of the mother of these children. Moreover, these children were already born, unintended though their births may

have been. Even if I did wish to express jealousy toward my husband, the situation just did not allow for such a display. Of a weak and indecisive nature, I felt that these children were, after all, my husband's flesh and blood, lowly though they may have been. Unable to ignore them, I made suitable arrangements for them. His Majesty regarded them as a potential source of trouble and harshly reprimanded Prince Sado. This caused me to bear the situation with greater fortitude than I would have otherwise. I felt that, if I were to display jealousy under these circumstances, it would increase the Prince's misery. His Majesty thought my acceptance of these children with no show of jealousy quite odd. "You are acting contrary to human feelings," he scolded.

After that terrible event [1762], I felt even more pity for these forlorn children. I had the duty of a legal mother—they were, after all, flesh and blood that my husband had left behind. I looked after them and made their lives as comfortable as I could. Then they came of age and the time came for them to leave the palace and take residences of their own. His Majesty was quite worried about them. "What will they do?" he kept saying. My father, who, out of fair-mindedness, always took the view that they were the flesh and blood of Prince Sado no matter what, suggested to His Majesty, "As they have grown and gone, one must be concerned that these youngsters, still green and hot-blooded, might be seduced by something or enlisted by someone into a dangerous involvement. There is no telling what horrendous trouble they might fall into. This would be extremely unfortunate. I, your servant, am so closely related to the Grand Heir that no one will suspect me. If I were to watch over and instruct them and educate them to be responsible adults who cannot be seduced by dangerous things, it would not just benefit them; it would be a blessing for the nation." His Majesty replied, "I am truly grateful and moved by my lord's concern. Please do that." His Majesty added, "I wonder whether they would listen to my lord's instruction."

The younger members of the family had a different opinion. They said to Father, "That was a mistake. They will be the seeds of trouble." They advised, "Please have nothing to do with them." When Ŭnŏn and Ŭnsin came to the house, everyone including very young children avoided them. My late father scolded the household, "It's all misconstrued, unnecessary fear. Out of public

duty, I just want to instruct and guide them so that they will not be led into some terrible error." He then assured them, "Who would suspect me? Would the Grand Heir suspect me? Who would not understand my intention?" If someone were to say that Father, not discerning the mentality of this age of decline, did a foolish thing, let him. He received the same criticism from his own children. That a huge disaster would be concocted out of it was, however, beyond our wildest dreams. It was simply too incredible! Neither my father nor Lord Ch'ŏngwŏn was in any way guilty. But Ch'ŏngwŏn also rendered service to Ŭnŏn and Ŭnsin and gave them such things as palanquins. Should one also suspect Ch'ŏngwŏn?

My father's repeated attempts at instruction and guidance were wasted, however. Ŭnŏn and Ŭnsin were clods. Dull-witted and muddleheaded, they did not at all apply themselves to studying. The first, and perhaps the only, thing they learned was to assume the haughty airs of royal princes. In this way, they associated with an unseemly element from the palace and went about making trouble. They turned a deaf ear to my father and increasingly distanced themselves from him. Father then realized the futility of his effort. Fearing that further attempts might elicit only resentment, he gradually dissociated himself from them. When Father went to the countryside in the *kyŏngin* year (1770) after meeting that trouble, they completely ignored him, and he made no move toward them.

As he did every year, toward the end of the first month of *sinmyo* (1771) my father sent chestnuts harvested from his estate to each establishment of the royal family, including that of Prince Sado's daughters. Chestnuts were also sent to Ŭnŏn and Ŭnsin. This somehow ignited royal fury. In the beginning of the second month, His Majesty went to the Ch'angŭi Palace.* Acting as though he was anticipating an uprising, he had the palace and the city walls guarded by soldiers† and banished Ŭnŏn and Ŭnsin to Cheju Island. Imminent danger hung over my father.‡ The Grand Heir did

* Ch'angŭi Palace was Yŏngjo's residence when he was a prince. After accession, his visits to Ch'angŭi Palace usually signified displeasure with something. On this occasion, Yŏngjo went there for nine days. *YS*, 116:5b–8b.

† Yŏngjo also ordered that Ŭnŏn's and Ŭnsin's mother's house be guarded by soldiers. *YS*, 116:7b–8a.

‡ Hong Ponghan was also punished. For details, see *The Memoir of 1801*.

not accompany the royal carriage to the detached palace, and only Han'gi and Hugyŏm attended His Majesty. This was a result of their elaborate plan to induce a royal decision [to kill Father] at once. Kwiju was in mourning and so he sent his uncle, Han'gi, in his stead. From the beginning, his sagacious heart had felt great displeasure with us concerning Ŭnŏn and Ŭnsin. He did not like my taking them in without much ado, nor did he think it necessary for my father to bother with them. Furious at us, thinking that my family had conspired to induce Ingnam to write that memorial blaming the event of that year on him, and provoked by the trusted Kwiju's slanders and his beloved daughter Madame Chŏng's incitement, His Majesty was about to carry out the act.

The late King was astounded by the news and went to Her Highness the Queen to protest. "There is no evidence that His Lordship has planned to place royal grandchildren* on the throne. Accusing him of that, they are about to kill him. It just won't do to indict and kill someone for no other reason than that you hate him. Your Ladyship, you should put a stop to this." With these words from the Grand Heir, Han'gi and Hugyŏm relented, and thus the most immediate danger was lifted. My father, who had been confined to Ch'ŏngju for several days, was released.† Upon his return to the palace, His Majesty realized that the episode had occurred because of private animosities and trumped-up charges. He said to the Grand Heir, "The attacks and counterattacks between the two affinal families are causing a great deal of trouble for the country. I will have to think of a way not to be deceived by this crowd." His Majesty's sagacious intelligence had been only briefly clouded. In the end, he could not fail to recognize the machinations of those wretches and the fallacy of those accusations! That was why His Majesty spoke to the Grand Heir as he did.

Although the imminent danger passed because of the Grand Heir's intervention, their blood thirst grew stronger day by day. Now that they had shown their hand, it became harder for my father and his opponents to coexist—his detractors became more apprehensive than before of future consequences if my father were to live. For instance, in the second month, they succeeded in per-

* Ŭnŏn and Ŭnsin.

† Yŏngjo's comment on releasing Hong Ponghan was that he was doing this not for the sake of Hong but for the sake of Lady Hyegyŏng. *YS*, 116:10b.

suading His Majesty to release Han Yu, noting that he had shown perspicacity. This fool Yu obviously had been persuaded by the sweet talk of others that he would attain high office and gain advantage if he were to send in that memorial. Instead, he was beaten and banished to an uninhabited island. He felt that what he had done was not his true intention, and he composed "an essay of remorse." Kim Yakhaeng had been exiled to the same island earlier than Yu* and so talked to Yu. Kim Yakhaeng asked Yu why he sent that memorial. Yu said, "I did it because I was deceived by Sim Ŭiji and Song Hwanŏk and their crowd. It seems that Ŭiji and company were enlisted by Kim Kwiju. But I am just a scholar from the countryside who went up to Seoul to speak of the *Yugollok*. How could I have known the details? Only after I came here and heard many things did I realize that I was deceived. I felt so remorseful that I composed an essay called 'Remorse.'" He then showed the essay to Kim Yakhaeng. Thus the essay came to be known to the world. My family saw it and I heard about its contents. I do not know whether Kim Yakhaeng is still alive or not, but this essay makes it all the more clear that the whole thing was Kwiju's doing.

Once that wretch Yu was set free, Kwiju's clique coaxed him again. They said, "Hong Ponghan is definitely under siege. His Majesty released you because you showed understanding. Were you to do it again, you would surely get something better." The wretch sent another memorial in the eighth month. In this memorial he finally mentioned "that thing," saying that my father "gave [the rice chest] to His Majesty and suggested its use."† His willingness to engage in calumny knew no bounds. As punishment for bringing up "that thing," His Majesty sent Yu down to the Ch'ungch'ŏng provincial court and had him executed. Ŭiji was also interrogated. Asked what "that thing" referred to, he arrogantly retorted, "Your Majesty truly does not know what 'that thing' is?"[14] His Majesty termed this crime *lèse-majesté* and meted out punishment harsher than what had been imposed on Han Yu. Not only was Ŭiji executed, but his wife and children were separated from each other and exiled to distant places. His Majesty

* Kim served in the Censorate but was banished to Hŭksan Island from 1768 to 1771.

† Yŏngjo interrogated Han to see what he meant by "that thing" and how he learned about it. *YS*, 117:7a–b.

dealt Yu and Ŭiji the heaviest of punishments for having brought up the issue of "that thing," and certainly not for criticizing my father.[15]

Although His Majesty imposed capital punishment on those wretches, he was also deeply irate at my father. "Who is the one who has been stirring up that *imo* (1762) business* since the spring?" he raged. His Majesty ordered, "He will be deprived of every post and made a commoner."[16] What His Majesty meant when he said "stirring up that *imo* (1762) business" was that he was still suspicious and resentful of my father in connection with Ch'oe Ingnam's memorial. The royal pronouncement mentioned that my father "has been stirring up that *imo* (1762) business" and that he "helped to create it." One could very well interpret these phrases just as Yu did in his memorial—that my father offered "that thing" to His Majesty, asking him to "please use this to put an end [to Prince Sado]." Now, because a royal pronouncement said that Father "helped to create it," some people took it literally. In the face of this, what can be done about the suspicion and who can establish his innocence? What I say would probably sound like defense by an interested party. However, there is one proof that can stand in witness for the ages.

In disgrace, my late father shut himself up in the country in the ninth month of *sinmyo* (1771). One day he received a letter from the late King. It said, "In truth, the spirits and ghosts will stand witness to Your Lordship's wholehearted loyalty. That Your Lordship has nothing to be ashamed of in comparison to ancient men of principle is no mere private homage from a grandson to a grandfather. It should be publicly recognized by the age, a recognition that will stand for one hundred generations. Unfortunately, his sagacious intelligence is momentarily clouded and so he has meted out this measure placing Your Lordship in this plight. However, I heartily agree with Your Lordship that, despite life's thousand anomalies, hundred oddities, and limitless varieties of the unexpected and the amazing, there is one fundamental, unchanging truth—the importance of dedication to the nation and public welfare. Although the royal order was rather unexpected, Your Lordship's loyalty and devotion will long be remembered, for ten thousand generations. There should be no worry."

* Here it means creating an issue over the Sado incident of 1762.

The letter also said, "On the thirteenth day of the fifth month of that year,* at three o'clock in the afternoon, I heard that that confounded thing was ordered to be brought in from the outer kitchen. Realizing that something ominous was about to happen, I went into the Munjŏng Pavilion. His Majesty ordered me to leave, and so I did. I sat beneath the eaves of the Crown Prince Tutorial Office. Long after three o'clock I heard that Your Lordship had arrived outside of the palace and was having a fainting spell. So I sent out the heart-clearing pills that I was going to take myself. The timing of the events of that day makes it clear that 'that thing' was thought of by His Majesty himself and not suggested by Your Lordship. Because the measures His Majesty took that day were solely for the sake of the dynasty and because his sagacious heart was forced to make that decision, I have sustained my life until now. I am alive today because, though I am Prince Sado's son, I have to separate duty from grief. If, however, the situation had been, as that recent royal pronouncement seems to be saying, that a minister had suggested 'that thing' to His Majesty and that His Majesty, persuaded by the minister, had carried out that incident, then not only would it attribute insufficient virtue to His Majesty, but it would also obscure the righteous principle. If principle were to be obscured, then the fact that I am alive today would not be right either. Wouldn't it be distressing?" It then said, "I have spoken to Kim Han'gi about this." The late King thus clarified the timing of the events of that day—which came first and which came later—by recounting what he himself saw. With this one sheet of paper, it becomes clear that my father had not offered "that thing."† If this was the case, on what ground was he being censured?

It was not strange that uninformed people in the remote countryside, hearing nothing more than rumors, suspected my father. But Kwiju and company were royal affines. Besides, the Grand Heir spoke to Han'gi specifically about it. Yet they slandered my father. Had Kwiju not been so bloodthirsty, they could not have behaved in such an extreme fashion. Close though Kwiju's relationship

* The day when Prince Sado was confined to a rice chest.

† To my knowledge, this letter is not extant. However, as noted earlier in this memoir, Chŏngjo publicly declared very early in his reign that Hong Ponghan had nothing to do with Yŏngjo's use of the rice chest. He quotes Yŏngjo on this. *CS*, 1:9b–10a; Chŏngjo, *Hongjae chŏnsŏ*, 42:1a–2a.

to the throne was, he could not have succeeded in causing so many depraved incidents without the collaboration of Madame Chŏng and Hugyŏm. Outside, Kwiju plotted and schemed with his cronies; inside, Hugyŏm conspired with him, and thus they joined forces.

Then my third brother, urged by me to think of a way to save our parent, befriended Hugyŏm. Hugyŏm colluded with Kwiju partly because he was persuaded by Kwiju's crowd that he would wield great power if he eliminated Hong and partly because he did harbor some resentment toward my father. However, he did not seem to have set his heart irrevocably upon massacring the Hongs. As my third brother pleaded with him, Hugyŏm began to respond with some feeling. A marriage had just been arranged between the two families.* Hugyŏm was aware that, as the Hongs were the maternal family of a Crown Prince who would, in all likelihood, reign, there was the future to worry about. As for Madame Chŏng, she was fickle, changing from morning to evening. I ingratiated myself with her to the utmost in order to gain her favor. Furthermore, she did not hold a deep grudge against us. Gradually, they came around and, in the first month of *imjin* (1772), managed to have my father expunged from the criminal register.†

Now that Hugyŏm had slighted him and no longer responded to his plans, Kwiju no longer had a collaborator inside the court. In his anger, he sent a memorial to the throne in the seventh month. Kwanju, Hallok's son, followed suit.[17] Between Heaven and Earth, the brother of the Queen did this horrendous thing with no thought for its effect upon Her Highness or how it would affect her relations with her daughter-in-law. In this sense, Kwiju was not only the bitter enemy of my family but also a traitor to the nation, a betrayer of the late King, and a criminal to Her Highness.

Kwiju's memorial faulted my father on three counts. The first concerned a failure to use only top-quality ginseng during His Majesty's illness in the *pyŏngsul* year (1766), the next concerned pine-flavored tea, and the last concerned certain words my father said. During royal infirmity, it is not unusual to use two or three

* It is impossible to determine who the betrothed were and whether the marriage took place. If it did, which is likely, it involved the children of Hong Nagim and Chŏng Hugyŏm.

† Hong Ponghan was restored to the post of minister emeritus. The *Sillok* says that Yŏngjo took this measure to console Lady Hyegyŏng. *YS*, 118:7a.

yang of ginseng a day. In *pyŏngsul* the Director of the Medical Bureau was Kim Ch'iin, and my late father was Prime Minister. The medicine offered to His Majesty was made from a mixture of half top-quality ginseng and half more ordinary ginseng. One day Kwiju's father walked into the attendant's office and summoned a physician. He asked, "His Majesty does not seem to be doing well. How is it that his potion is not made entirely of top-quality ginseng?" My father was sitting with the Director at the Medical Bureau. Hearing this, he said to the deputy director, "We have so little top-quality ginseng left that, if we were to use only top-quality ginseng now, we would soon run out of it. Then we would have to use ordinary ginseng exclusively. That would be even worse." Then he said, "The affairs of the Medical Bureau are not something that the royal father-in-law should bother about." The matter should have ended there.

However, the Kims, father and son, were incensed at Father's suggestion that the royal father-in-law had interfered in the Medical Bureau. They turned the matter into something quite different, portraying themselves as paragons of loyalty and my father as one who prohibited the use of top-quality ginseng for His Majesty. How evil-hearted this was! As for the pine-flavored tea, it is even more ludicrous, so much so that it does not even deserve description. As for their accusation concerning certain words that Father said, here is the story.

When my father was in retirement during his mourning between *chŏnghae* and *muja* (1767–1768), Ch'ŏngwŏn paid him a visit. Ch'ŏngwŏn mentioned that the Grand Heir seemed intent on conferring a posthumous royal title [upon his father].* Ch'ŏngwŏn, who was related to my family by marriage, was on very friendly terms with my father and the two families were bound by the same interests. Since this was a matter of grave importance and since Ch'ŏngwŏn felt close to Father, he came to speak to him about it. So, after his term of mourning, when Father saw the Grand Heir at my quarters, he gingerly broached the topic in the course of a long conversation. He advised the Grand Heir, "On this matter, please do not be swayed by emotion; firmly adhere to the precedent." He warned the Heir of the danger and treachery in

* The discussion centered around what title Chŏngjo, upon his accession, would confer upon his father, Prince Sado.

the ways of the world and in the hearts of people. He said, "Even if the conferral were consistent with the law, there are still groups of malcontents who resent the government and who seek opportunities to stir up trouble. Just to name a few, there are the descendants of *kisa* (1689) and the remnants of the *musin* (1728) rebels.* It would be most tiresome if these groups, taking issue with the conferral, were to stir up trouble. I am quite bothered by this thought." The Grand Heir also concurred, "There is indeed that worry. How frustrating!" I was also worried about those problems, and the three of us all expressed concern.

The Grand Heir was still a boy at the time, and so he related this to Her Highness the Queen. Kwiju heard of it and brought this out in his memorial. What an odious wretch he was! Even if Father had been in the wrong, how could Kwiju send a memorial to His Majesty about something that had gone on in the inner court and he had heard at the Queen's residence? If His Majesty had been enraged at the Grand Heir for discussing the possibility of offering a posthumous royal title [to his father], there is no saying where the calamity might have reached. It is evident that Kwiju's scheme was not just to vilify my father but also to harm the Grand Heir. Can there be in this whole wide world another such devious, cruel, evil traitor?

In my father's position, what was there that he could not say to the Grand Heir, his grandson, in private conversation? Even if Father had said such things as "Please do offer a posthumous royal title" or "If Your Highness were not to offer the title, then you would become such and such," he would simply have been regarded as imprudent. But he said, "Don't offer the royal title. Please don't be swayed by emotion; firmly adhere to precedent." As for the rest, he was merely expressing his long-term concerns and worries for the nation, cautioning the Grand Heir on the limitless changeability of the hearts of men, living as they did in an age of decline. How could this be a crime? If this was a crime, then all warnings to their rulers by the ancients, such warnings as "the ruin of the country is imminent" or "thieves would arise," should also

* The descendants of *kisa* are the Namin, who were out of power since 1694. The *musin* rebels are the rebels of the 1728 rebellion. The 1728 rebellion, though pacified with relative ease, played an important role in shaping Yŏngjo's policies and in setting the mood of his court. Haboush, *Heritage*, 136–46.

be construed as threats to the ruler. Were this the case, who could have said anything at all? What sheer nonsense this is! The details concerning this matter are recorded in court documents and also in the *kapchin* (1784) royal instruction that exonerated my father, so I will only touch on the gist. The terrible memorials by Chŏng Ihwan and Song Hwanŏk in *pyŏngsin* (1776)[18] took up where Kwiju left off [in his memorial of 1772]. What need is there to speak of them?

If one carefully analyzes Kwiju's attempts to harm my family since *sinsa* (1761), a pattern emerges. In the beginning, it started with the hope that, once Prince Sado was eliminated, the Grand Heir would also be put aside, which would lead to an adoption that would make Kwiju's family the maternal family of the new heir. The next phase evolved after the event of that year [1762], when he realized that things did not turn out as he had hoped. Together with Hallok, he uttered the sixteen-word blasphemy. This was intended to confuse his sagacious heart and to replace the Heir Apparent, so that an adoption would be made and they would become the maternal family of the heir. However, His Majesty's sagacious heart remained firm, and the Grand Heir reached maturity. There was no likelihood that there would be a change of heir apparents, though their blasphemous phrase circulated far and wide, making it increasingly difficult to hide their intentions. But then, seizing upon the moment when the Grand Heir was feeling displeased with his maternal family, they pretended to be his most loyal subjects and accused the Hongs of engaging in activities disadvantageous to him. Although they adopted this tactic in order to get rid of the Hongs and to ingratiate themselves with the Grand Heir, their real motive was to conceal their own treachery. I feel that this blasphemy was the root of many calamities.

There must be people who are alive today who witnessed these events, and so they must have a general idea of what those times were like. But I doubt that there is anyone who knows them in such detail as myself. One cannot deceive even small children three feet high with the accusation that my father, short of losing his mind because of some disease, would have done something disadvantageous to the late King in order to benefit Ŭnŏn and Ŭnsin. Nor can one deceive three-foot-high children by arguing that Kwiju was a loyal subject and my late father was a traitor to the late King. What Kwiju said in his accusation of my father violates hu-

man feelings and Heavenly principles. Thus one need not seek a man of erudition to distinguish who was right and who was wrong and who was loyal and who was traitorous. Yet the curse that was uttered in the crowd around Kwiju and Hallok—that they would see to it that the dynasty came to an end—has not yet, to this very day, come out in the open. Kwiju has even been termed a loyal minister.* On the other hand, my family, who never dreamt of saying even half of a remotely disloyal word, is receiving ever harsher maltreatment and greater persecution as time goes by and has been declared the most heinously traitorous of families. There cannot have been, in the entire history of the human race, such ways and such decrees! Vomiting blood, I regret that I have not yet attained the bliss of unawareness.

* Kim Kwiju was banished in 1776 upon Chŏngjo's accession. In 1784, in a general amnesty celebrating the appointment of Prince Munhyo as Crown Prince, Kwiju was moved to a closer place, but he subsequently died. In 1801, when Queen Dowager Chŏngsun acted as regent for the young Sunjo, Kwiju was posthumously honored with the post of Minister of Personnel. *SS*, 2:2a–b.