

# The Tudor masque in comparison with the Yi dynasty masque of Korea

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## 1. Introduction

It will be of special interest to us to compare the English masque of Tudor times with the Korean masque of the Yi dynasty, though they are of different origin, that we may know how the masque developed in both countries, east and west.

The masque begins with the dance of the seasonal festivals. This primitive dance of the seasonal festivals is originated in a religious act—a wordless ritual of temporary physical and emotive dedication to the unseen powers. This ritual of the dance, more often masqued than not, was common to the ancients in Europe and Asia. It was almost a world-wide ritual.

In England, there was no masque<sup>(1)</sup> before it was introduced in Tudor times (1485-1603) from the Continent. It may be said that England was indebted chiefly to contemporary Italy in the development of its masque.

The Italian masque, after its introduction into England, took root in the English soil. With

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(1) The French word 'Masque' appears first in the 16th century, when the Italian masquerade was being introduced into France, and it means a face-mask, Meyer-Lübke derives it from the Spanish and Italian form *máscara*, *maschera* which he regards as unquestionably Arabic in origin (Vid. Enid Welsford, *The Court Masque*, New York, 1962, p. 94)

the accession of the first Tudor King, the court began to develop into a lively center of the masque, and consequently it came to develop into a sophisticated form of dancing revelry of courtiers and nobility of the time. It was void of religious motive, as Sir Edmund Chambers remarks:

'The mask is not primarily a drama; it is an episode in an indoor revel of dancing. Masked and otherwise disguised, persons come, by convention unexpectedly, into the hall, as a compliment to the hosts or the principal guests. Often they bring gifts; always they dance before them and they invite them to join the dance...'<sup>(2)</sup>

The Korean masque presumably originates in the Indian masque introduced into Packjae (One of the three Kingdoms of Korea, A.D. 18—660) through China under the title of Ki-ak<sup>(3)</sup> as a common form of seasonal religious act. It was a pantomimic masque dance. This masque dance, influenced by Nare<sup>(4)</sup> gradually developed into the Santae masque in the early years of the Yi dynasty (1392—1910). It achieved maturity and brilliance, and in the course of time, it developed into a kind of folk-drama which flourished as a typical form of masque until the middle of the said dynasty. This Santae masque is a fully developed typical form of the Yi dynasty masque, and this may be regarded as the Korean equivalent of the Tudor masque.

## 2. The English court masque of Tudor times and its characteristics

### (1) The Italian Masque in the English court and its development

From the time of Henry VIII to the outbreak of the Civil War, the history of the English court masque is the history of the acclimatization of the Italian masque. Its full development into the English court masque is vividly described by Edward Hall as follows:

On the daie of the Epiphanie at night, the Kyng with xi other wer disguised, after the maner of Italie, called a maske, a thyng not seen afore in Englande, they were appareled in garmentes long and brode, wrought all with gold, with visers and cappes of gold and after the banket doen, these Maskers came in, with sixe gentlemen disguised in silke bearyng staffe torches, and desired the ladies to dance, some were content, and some that knewe the fashion of it refused, because it was not a thyng commonly seen. And after thei daunced and commoned together, as the fashion of the Maskes is, thei toke their leave and departed, and so did the Quene, and all the ladies.<sup>(5)</sup>

(2) Edmund Chambers, *Elizabethan Stage* vol. 1. p. 149.

(3) The exact date of its introduction into Packjae is unknown, but it is presumed to have been introduced earlier than 612.

(4) Nare is a kind of religious masque dance flourished in the Kuryu dynasty (918—1392).

(5) Hall's *Chronicle* (London, 1809) vol. 1. p. 40.

This is a description of the Italian masque which first appeared in England on Twelfth Night, 1512. ¶This gay revel of Italy made an irresistible appeal to Henry VIII whose accession to the throne actually gave a great impetus to the development of the revels.

In the course of time, the Italian masque was gradually modified and acclimatized in England. The following description of the masque by Cavendish, Cardinal Wolsey's gentleman-usher and biographer, recounts a modified form of the Italian masque combining both a masque and a mumming. <sup>(6)</sup>

'The banquets were set forth, with masks and mummeries, in so gorgeous a sort, and costly manner, that it was a heaven to behold. I have seen the King (Henry VIII) suddenly come in thither in a mask, with a dozen of other maskers, all in garments like shepherds.... and at his coming, and before he came into the hall, ye shall understand, that he came by water to the water gate, without any noise; where against his coming were laid charged many chambers, and at his landing there were all shot off, which made such a rumble in the air, that it was like thunder. It made all the nobleman, ladies, and gentlemen to muse what it should mean coming so suddenly, they sitting quietly at a solemn banquet...Then immediately after this great shot of guns, the Cardinal desired the Lord Chamberlain and Comptroller, to look what this sudden shot should mean, as though he knew nothing of the matter. They thereupon looking out of the windows, into Thames, returned again, and showed him that it seemed to them there should be some noblemen and strangers arrived at his bridge, as ambassadors from some foreign prince... They desired the Lord Chamberlain to act as interpreter between them and their host. They announced that they had come to play at mumchance with the ladies, and then after to dance with them and so to have of them acquaintance.' <sup>(7)</sup>

Another entertainment given by Henry VIII in 1527 to the French ambassadors at a banqueting house at Greenwich is noteworthy [in terms of the development of the Tudor court masque. Hall describes it as follows:

'Then at the nether ends, by lettyng doune of a courtaine, apered a goodly mount, walled with towers...on this rocke sat eight Lordes...and then they sodenly descended from the mounte and toke ladyes, and daunced divers daunces. Then out of a cave issued out the ladie Mary daughter to the Kyng and with her seven ladies...these eight Ladies daunced with the eight Lordes of the mount, and as thei daunced, sodenly entred six personages, appareled in cloth

(6) In the Tudor period there was a real distinction between the mummings and disguising themselves, so that the masque need not differ from them both in precisely the same way....Here it is enough to say that there is more affinity between the masque and the mumming than there is between the masque and the disguising. The latter entertainment had become altogether artificial and sophisticated; the mumming and the masque were neither of them as yet very far removed from the popular street processions of Christmastide and Carnival. But there was a difference. The mummers might dance after their arrival in the hall, but their main object was to play a game of mumchance in complete silence; the object of the masquers was to choose each a lady out of the assembled company, to entertain her with dancing and gallant conversation. (Vid: E. Welsford, op. cit. p. 135)

(7) Cavendish, *The life of Cardinal Wolsey*, ed. S.W. Singer (London, 1825), vol. I. p. 49 ff.

of silver...and these perscnes had visers with sylver berdes...these Maskers took Ladies and daunced lustly about the place. Then sodenly the Kyng and the viscount of Torayne were convehged out of the place into a chamber thereby, and there quicklie they ii and six other in maskyng apparell...great, long and large, after the Venicians fashion and over them great robes, and their faces were visard with beardes of gold: then with minstrelsie these viii noble personages entered and daunced long with the ladies, and when they had daunced there fyll, then the quene plucked of the Kynges visar, and so did the Ladies the visars of the other Lordes, and then all were known.<sup>(8)</sup>

Hall's accounts also show us how well both a disguising and a masque had been fused together to produce a discrete form of the masque since its introduction into England.

During the reign of Queen Elizabeth, the Queen made no attempt to foster any new and striking development of the masque purely out of a desire to curb the expenditure of the court revelry, but as she inherited from her father, Henry VIII, a delight in every form of revelry, she took great delight in court entertainments, so long as they were not as lavish as those under Henry VIII. They were more varied—there were masques of fishermen, fishwives and market-wives,<sup>(9)</sup> presented on Shrove Tuesday, 1559, and in addition, there was also a masque of a mythological type presented before the Queen when she visited Norwich in August, 1578. It was composed by Henry Goldingham.

'It was of gods and goddesses, both strangely and richly apparelled. The first that entred was Mercurie. Then entred two torchbearers, ...sixe musitians, ...playing very cunningly. Then two torchbearers more. Then Jupiter and Juno, Mars and Venus, Apollo and Pallas, Neptune and Diana, walking in pairs, preceded by torchbearers. Cupid came last. They marched once about the chamber, and then Mercury make an introductory speech. Then they marched about again, and Jupiter spoke to the Queen and presented her with a riding wand of whale's fin curiously wrought...After this, the gods and goddesses, with the reste of the maske, marched about the chamber againe, and then departed in like manner as they came in'.<sup>(10)</sup>

Another memorable masque of a mythological type is a wedding masque in celebration of Sir Henry Unton's wedding in 1580. The masquers walk in pairs, separated by Cupids, five white and five black, as torchbearers, with Mercury and Diana in front, and a drummer at the head of the procession. There are striking resemblances between this masque and the Norwich entertainment mentioned above.<sup>(11)</sup>

Finally, an interesting but important example of a masque developed in the reign of Elizabeth is the masque composed by George Gascoigne for Viscount Mantacute, in celebra-

(8) Hall, op. cit. vol. II. pp. 87—88.

(9) This kind of masque representing trades or professions was popular both in Italy and France.

(10) John Nichols, *Prog. Eliz.* vol. II, pp. 159—164.

(11) Vid. E. Welsford, op. cit. pp. 155—156.

tion of the double marriage between his son and daughter and son of Sir William Dormer. It shows a striking feature of the literary development of the masque by introducing a presenter who goes before the masquers and delivers an introductory speech.

'Gascoigne tells us how eight gentlemen related to the Montacutes had already made all preparations for a Masque of Venetians, when it occurred to them that the performance might appear rather pointless, and so to remedy this, they sent for the author and asked him to write some verses for recitation by an actor, which should furnish a motive for the arrival of Venetians. The poet fell back upon their family tree, and calling to mind that the Montacutes were related to a family called Mounthermer, and assuming a connection between the English family and the noble house of Montacute in Italy, he decided to bring in a boy of twelve years old, supposedly a Mounthermer by his father's side, and a Montacute by his mother, who should explain to the audience that his father, having been killed in battle against the Turks, and he himself taken prisoner, he had only lately been released by certain Venetians, who being on their way home were shipwrecked on the coast of England, where they heard of the marriage of the Montacute family and were hastening to pay their respects. All this the boy expounds at great length in pages of verse until he breaks off at the entry of the masquers:

"They will not tarry long: lo! now I heare their drumme; Behold, lo! now I see them here, in order howe they come. Receive them well, my lord, so shall I praye all wayes, That God vouchsafe to blesse this house with many happie days."

"After the maske was done, the Actor (i.e. the boy) tooke Master Tho. Bro. by the hand, and brought him to the Venetians," explaining that he also is a Montacute:

"Make much of him, I pray you then, for he is of your name. For whom I dare aduante, he may your Truchman bee, Your herald and ambassador; let him play all for me."

"Then the Venetians embraced and received the same master Tho. Browne, and after they had a while whispered with him, he turned to the Bridegroomes and Brides, making a congratulatory speech in verse on behalf of the Venetian masquers."<sup>(12)</sup>

This is a good example to show how the introduction of a presenter could lead to the literary and dramatic development of the masque in Elizabeth's reign. In fact, a masque produced by the gentlemen of the Inns of court as part of their Christmas merrymaking in 1594 had already almost all the characteristics of the developed Stuart masque.

## (2) Some major characteristics of the Tudor Masque

One of the most conspicuous characteristics of the Tudor masque worth mentioning here is that it is a free play to flirtation and love-making for disguisers by choosing out ladies in the audience for their dancing partners. Indeed, 'to mask with' came to be recongnized

(12) W.C. Hazlitt, (ed) *Complete Poems of George Gascoigne*, printed for Roxburghe Library, 1869, vol. 1, pp. 77 ff.

as an expression for this dancing of the masquers with members of the audience. It is really a kind of novel practice of the masquers inviting the ladies 'to dance with them and so have of them acquaintance.' Another outstanding characteristic feature is that in the masque the masquers draw their inspiration from real life and from the learning of Renaissance, while in disguising the disguisers are generally lovers in the mediaeval dream-setting. This is a result of the spread of the Italian Renaissance into England and of the influence of the Italian spirit on the English masque. And the literary and dramatic quality possessed by the late Elizabethan masque is also a very important characteristic feature of the Tudor masque.

### 3. Shakespeare's appreciation of the masque in his early plays

Enid Welsford remarks, 'The true character of the masquerie was evidently appreciated by Shakespeare, who in his early plays, where the scene is laid in Italy, makes the masque an important social affair.'<sup>(13)</sup>

The masque scene in Act V, Scene II of *Love's Labour's Lost* is a good example of Shakespeare's ingenious application of the masque to create complicated dialogues which drift into mocking merriment interwoven with a series of jokes. For example, Katharine, masqued and pretending to be Maria, who is the lady of Lord Longaville's choice, mocks that gentleman masqued and in Russian habit. The following quibble between them finally leads to a happy jesting on cuckoldry.

Katherine. What! was your visor made without a tongue?

Longaville. I know the reason, lady, why you ask.

Katherine. O! for your reason; quickly, sir; I long.

Longaville. You have a double tongue within your mask, and would afford my speechless visor half.

Katherine. 'Veal', quoth the Dutchman. Is not 'veal' a calf?

Longaville. A calf, fair lady!

Katherine. No, a fair lord calf.

Longaville. Let's part the word.

Katherine. No, I'll not be your half: Take all, and wean it: it may prove an ox. (V.II. 243-251)

Just as in *Love's Labour's Lost*, in *Much Ado About Nothing*, an imbroglio arises from Hero's maid masking herself as her mistress and threatens the happiness of all four lovers, but all ends well with dancing at the close.

Another good example is a dancing scene in a hall in Capulet's House, and the following

(13) E. Welsford, *op. cit.* p. 102.

Capulet's speech evidently refers to the lovemaking practice of the masquers inviting the ladies 'to dance with them and so have of them acquaintance.'

Capulet: Welcome, gentlemen! I have seen the day that I have worn a visor, and would tell a whispering tale in a fair lady's ear such as would please; 'tis gone, 'tis gone. You are welcome, gentlemen! Come, musicians, play. A hall! a hall! give room, and foot it, girls. (music plays, and they dance). (I.V. 25-30)

The play 'As You Like It' is also connected with the masque by the introduction of Hymen, one of the most familiar figures in the masque who brings peace solving all discords at the close of the play.

The masque scene in the first Act of King Henry VIII in which the King, masqued and habited like a shepherd, chooses Anne Boleyn as his partner in the dance reflects the court masque of Henry VIII's reign.

(The King chooses Anne Bullen)

K. Hen. The fairest hand I ever touch'd! O beauty,  
Till now I never Knew thee! (Music, Dance)  
My Lord Chamberlain, Prithee, come hither.  
What fair lady's that?

Cham. An't please your Grace, Sir Thomas Bullen's daughter,  
The Viscount Rochford, one of her highness' women.

K. Hen. By heaven, she is a dainty one. Sweet heart,  
I were unmannerly to talk you out, And not to kiss you.  
A health gentlemen! Let it go round. (I. IV. 74-96)

This play is not his early one. With his later plays, this betrays the influence of the Stuart court masque which joined the dance and music with symbolic costume and also with increasingly elaborate scenic display. His later plays such as *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*, in particular, have a masque-like structure as *A Midsummer Night's Dream* has.

#### 4. The typical Yi dynasty Masque—*The-Santae masque*

As remarked in Introduction, the introduction of masque into Korea through China may date back beyond the Three-Kingdom era. It was then a religious act. This ancient masque lasted on from the remote Three-Kingdom era to the Yi dynasty. It developed into a typical form of the Korean masque under the title of 'Santae masque'<sup>(14)</sup> in the early period of the

(14) The Santae masque is nearly forgotten among the young generation today, but the government realizes the importance of this folk drama and tries to preserve it by subsidizing a few remaining masque-players.

Yi dynasty, and it gradually achieved maturity and developed into a folk drama.

This Santae masque was occasionally presented for the welcome of the foreign ambassadors before their entry into Hanyang, the capital city of the Yi dynasty, but it was always a delightful amusement which appealed to a low-class public; they loved it and took great delight in seeing it performed by wanderers (most of them were witches) who moved from village to village to give their shows. In this sense, the Santae masque developed as a popular form of entertainment among the lower classes in contrast with the Tudor masque developed at court.

The Santae masque consists of twelve acts. The first act is an invocation by witches. In front of a wooden table bearing a cooked cow's head, a pot of rice cakes and bowls of rice-wine, several witches, masqued, bow and pray to unseen powers for their successful performance of the masque. The last act is also a witch scene in which the witches hold a funeral for a deceased old witch, and pray for the blessed eternal life for the departed. The first and final witch scenes are thought to have lasted since the beginning of the Korean masque; this suggests that it was evidently derived from the witch-rituals of the pre-Three-Kingdom era.

In the second act, a masqued monk appears and invokes to gods and dances. In the third act, a witch and a monk appear, the witch taunts the monk but they dance together. In the fourth act, a witch and a monk come in masques, they flirt each other and then sing and dance. The fifth act is a mummery scene in which two witches appear, one hiding her face with a fan and the other with her long sleeve, and they dance together. In the sixth, eighth, ninth and tenth acts, the common theme is a satire or reproach on corrupt Buddhist monks, and these four acts are composed of scenes in which masqued laymen appear and rail against corrupt monks in invective terms. This is merely a satire on the corruption of monks of the time and not a cynical criticism of Buddhism, though it was then overshadowed by Confucianism, the dominant religion of the Yi dynasty. This is the reflection of the wishes of the people of the time to cleanse the foul body of the infected world of Buddhist monks. The ninth act in particular is a scene which brings into contempt a lascivious monk who has relations with two young witches.

The seventh act is a dancing scene inserted between a series of satiric scenes on corrupt monks. The eleventh act is also another scene of a satire on Yangban classes (the upper classes of the society).

The masquers including witches used to occupy a very low social status in the society of the Yi dynasty; they were despised and scorned so much by the haughty Yangban classes that they vented themselves by censuring them their fill before an audience of the same low social status as themselves.



## 5. Conclusion

A masque of any kind originates in folk-rituals which imply a respect or regard for something which goes beyond the actual state-of-affairs or the event, but in the course of time, the masque itself developed in a very different direction and gradually its ritual aspect was lost, and the newly developed masque had a direct bearing upon the actual events of the time; So was the Tudor masque and the Korean masque as well.

The Tudor masque, though it grew up through the gradual fusion of various pastimes, most of which were ultimately of foreign origin, gained fresh vigour and vitality as an elaborate form of entertainment at court, and [besides] it gradually came to possess the dramatic quality of its own.

The typical Yi dynasty masque (The *Santae* masque) which may be regarded as the Korean equivalent of the Tudor masque, though it was not completely void of ritual quality as the Tudor masque was, was very closely associated with the events of the time which ultimately stimulated the literary and dramatic development of it. Finally, it developed into a kind of folk drama. It lacked noble theme and artistic unity; nevertheless, its popularity with a low-class public was always high.

When we compare the two parallels, some outstanding differences are also noticeable: the Tudor masque developed at court which was an attractive centre for humanism in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, and it was performed by noble personages masqued to dance, and they danced together with the audience; this is a symbol of harmony, and especially the King in the court masque is himself an embodiment of national unity—the reflection of the spirit of humanism. On the contrary, the Korean equivalent, under the rigid social class system, developed among the lower classes as a form of folk drama of satiric nature against the upper classes. This is not a symbol of concord or unity, but that of discord or enmity; so in the latter, the masquers and the audience never act together, the masquers are merely entertainers and the audience merely spectators; in this sense, when viewed from the part of the audience, the latter itself is objective, while the former subjective.

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