Royal Banquets and Uigwe during the Late Joseon Period

Kim Jong Su

Abstract

In the early period of the Joseon dynasty, it was common for banquets for unity (hoereyeon) and banquets for the elderly (yangnoyeon) to be held regularly once a year, and celebratory banquets (jinyeon) held on specific occasions, such as national holidays and the birthdays of royal family members. However, after the King Injo’s restoration (1623), regular banquets were abolished and celebratory banquets were limited to commemorating the anniversary of a king’s ascension to the throne, or celebrating the birthday of the kings. Consequently, the frequency of such banquets was significantly reduced.

Most royal banquets were celebratory banquets, and after these came to an end, the details of these banquets and the procedures involved were recorded in books called uigwe (royal protocols).

In the latter part of the Joseon dynasty, the government began to hold banquets for common people as well. Banquets were held for people over the age of seventy or eighty (regardless of social status) and provided rice, liquor, and food. The government also arranged opportunities for beggars to be fed for several days, and conducted a series of curtailments of grain loans (hwangok) and land taxes (jeonse). Such efforts were made for in the name of the royal family sharing joy and happiness with the general population.

Keywords: royal protocols, uigwe, oeyeon, naeyeon, hoeryeyeon, yangnoyeon, jinyeon.

* This paper is based on the author’s several previously published articles on royal banquets.

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Introduction

In the Joseon dynasty, where there were not theatrical performances for purely artistic purposes, royal banquets provided a place for music and dance. In order to host music and dance performances and prepare drinks and food for large audiences in the palace, where administrative work and royal ceremonies were ordinarily performed, additional space was needed. Temporary facilities were built and, unlike commoners’ feasts, royal rituals entailed the production of uigwe, or royal protocols.

In 2001, I wrote a book on the subject of royal banquets, in which I addressed them as spaces for performing music and dance. Later, I also became interested in the rituals, literature, food, fashion and architecture involved with the royal banquets. As a result, I and two other experts from various fields gathered to publish three books under the title, “Royal Banquets during the Late Joseon.” These studies were made possible thanks to the records left in uigwe: precise records that detailed the process behind the royal banquets, beginning with initial preparation and including even the expense accounting after the banquets were over.

There are 553 kinds of uigwe housed in the Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies at Seoul National University, 293 in the Jangseogak Library at the Academy of Korean Studies, 191 in the French National Library, and 69 in the Imperial Household Agency in Japan. Often times, the same kinds of uigwe are dispersed in different places. Excepting these, only 637 kinds of uigwe are still in existence. Among them, nineteen are related to royal banquets.

As an integral part of society, royal banquets (yeonhyang) solidified human relationships and strengthened familial ties. Royal banquets were divided into four types: hoeryeyeon, or a banquet for unity, which brings together the king and queen and their subjects and titled ladies; yangnoyeon, a banquet for the elderly, which emphasized filial piety; jinyeon, the celebratory banquet, which commemorated auspicious occasions such as holidays and birthdays; and sagaengnyeon, a banquet for envoys from neighboring countries.

While there was no difference throughout the Joseon period in the number of times banquets were held for foreign envoys, the number of hoeryeyeon, yangnoyeon, and jinyeon greatly decreased during the late Joseon era. According to Gyeongguk daejeon (National Code), a legal norm produced in the early Joseon period, “banquet for unity” and “banquet for the elderly” were both held annually, and “celebratory banquets” were frequently held. However, during the late Joseon era following King Injo’s restoration (1623), the once annual “banquet for unity” and “banquet for the elderly” were both nearly abolished, and “celebratory banquets” were only held on special occasions such as the commemoration of the thirtieth or fortieth anniversary of the king’s ascension to the throne, or to celebrate the fortieth, fiftieth, and even sixtieth birthday of royal elders, with the effect that the frequency of such banquets was significantly reduced.

Most extant yeonhyang uigwe, or royal protocols, were applied to the celebratory banquet, jinyeon, in part because many of the other uigwe were lost during the Imjin War. Thus, this paper examines the royal banquet with a focus on the celebratory banquet, jinyeon.

Types and Composition of Royal Banquet Uigwe

Types of Royal Banquet Uigwe

There are nineteen royal protocol on banquets currently in existence,\(^1\) most of which are housed at the Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies, Seoul National University, and the Jangseogak Library, Academy of Korean Studies.

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1. There is also Welcoming of Chinese Envoys Uigwe (Yeongjeop dogam yeonhyangsaek uigwe 旮毆駮恇毞尦嘞僟覇), a record of a visit by Ming China’s envoy in 1634. However, it is not included in the list above as it differed from other royal banquets.
Table 1. Royal Banquet Uigwe in Existence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Types</th>
<th>Housed at</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pungjeong dogam uigwe</td>
<td>Records of a banquet held in 1630 (8th year of King Injo's reign) to wish Queen In Mok (King Seonjo's queen) a long life</td>
<td>Inner Banquet</td>
<td>French National Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gihae jinjyeon uigwe</td>
<td>Records of a banquet held in 1719 (45th year of King Sukjong's reign) to celebrate King Sukjong's entrance into Giroso</td>
<td>Outer Banquet</td>
<td>Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gapja jinjyeon uigwe (甲子)</td>
<td>Records of a banquet held in 1744 (20th year of King Yeongjo's reign) to celebrate King Yeongjo's entrance into Giroso</td>
<td>Inner &amp; Outer Banquets</td>
<td>Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies and Jangseogak Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eulyu sujak uigwe (乙酉)</td>
<td>Records of a banquet held in 1765 (41st year of King Yeongjo's reign) to celebrate King Yeongjo's 42nd year of reign and 72nd birthday</td>
<td>Outer Banquet</td>
<td>Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wonhaeng eulmyo jeongni uigwe</td>
<td>Records of a banquet held in 1795 (19th year of King Jeongjo's reign) in Hwaseong fortress at Prince Jangheon's grave to celebrate the 61st birthday of Hyegyeonggung (mother of King Jeongjo)</td>
<td>Inner Banquet</td>
<td>Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies and Jangseogak Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gisa jinpory jinchan uigwe (己巳)</td>
<td>Records of a banquet held in 1809 (9th year of King Sunjo's reign) to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the coming-of-age ceremony for Hyegyeonggung</td>
<td>Inner Banquet</td>
<td>British Library and Jang-seogak Library</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. The bold line in the table above indicates the change to uigwe with the publication of Wonhaeng eulmyo jeongni uigwe (Uigwe on King Jeongjo's Visit to the Crown Prince Sado's Tomb in 1795).

3. While “outer” banquets (oeyeon) featured the king and civil and military government officials, “inner” banquets (naeyeon) featured royal family members, royal relatives, and titled ladies.

4. Giroso refers to a social organization for civil ministers at the senior grade of the second court rank and of 70 or more years of age. Approximately 700 people entered Giroso in the Joseon era, including King Taejo at the age of 60, King Sukjong at the age of 59, and King Yeongjo and King Gojong at the age of 51.

Table 1. Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Types</th>
<th>Housed at</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jajya Yangjeon jinjak jeongnye uigwe</td>
<td>Records of a banquet held in 1827 (27th year of King Sunjo's reign) to celebrate the birth of a royal grandson</td>
<td>Inner Banquet</td>
<td>Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies and Jangseogak Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muja jinjak uigwe (戊子)</td>
<td>Records of a banquet held in 1828 (28th year of King Sunjo's reign) to celebrate Queen Sunwon (Sunjo's Queen)’s 40th birthday</td>
<td>Inner Banquet</td>
<td>Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies and Jangseogak Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gichuk jinchan uigwe</td>
<td>Records of a banquet held in 1829 (29th year of King Sunjo's reign) to celebrate King Sunjo's 30th year of reign and 60th birthday</td>
<td>Inner &amp; Outer Banquets</td>
<td>Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies and Jangseogak Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musin jinchan uigwe (戊辰)</td>
<td>Records of a banquet held in 1848 (34th year of King Heonjong's reign) to celebrate Queen Sunwon's 60th birthday</td>
<td>Inner Banquet</td>
<td>Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mufin jinchan uigwe (戊辰)</td>
<td>Records of a banquet held in 1868 (5th year of King Gojong's reign) to celebrate Queen Sinjeong's 61st birthday</td>
<td>Inner Banquet</td>
<td>Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gyeju jinjak uigwe (癸丑)</td>
<td>Records of a banquet held in 1873 (10th year of King Gojong's reign) to celebrate the 40th anniversary of Queen Sinjeong's installation as Queen Mother</td>
<td>Inner Banquet</td>
<td>Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies and Jangseogak Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeonghuk jinchan uigwe (丁巳)</td>
<td>Records of a banquet held in 1877 (14th year of King Gojong's reign) to celebrate Queen Sinjeong's 70th birthday</td>
<td>Inner Banquet</td>
<td>Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies and Jangseogak Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeonghae jinchan uigwe (丁巳)</td>
<td>Records of a banquet held in 1887 (24th year of King Gojong's reign) to celebrate King Gojong's 30th year of reign and 41st birthday</td>
<td>Inner &amp; Outer Banquets</td>
<td>Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies and Jangseogak Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imjin jinchan uigwe (壬辰)</td>
<td>Records of a banquet held in 1892 (29th year of King Gojong's reign) to celebrate King Gojong's 30th year of reign and 41st birthday</td>
<td>Inner &amp; Outer Banquets</td>
<td>Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies and Jangseogak Library</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1. Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
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<th>Types</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sinduk jinchan uigwe</td>
<td>Records of a banquet held in 1901 (38th year of King Gojong’s reign) to celebrate Queen Hyojeong’s (King Heonjong’s queen) 71st birthday</td>
<td>Inner Banquet</td>
<td>Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies and Jangseogak Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sinduk jinyeon uigwe</td>
<td>Records of the banquet held in 1901 (38th year of King Gojong’s reign) to celebrate King Gojong’s 50th birthday</td>
<td>Inner &amp; Outer Banquets</td>
<td>Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies and Jangseogak Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imin sawol jinyeon uigwe</td>
<td>Records of a banquet held in 1902 (39th year of King Gojong’s reign) to celebrate King Gojong’s entrance into Giroso</td>
<td>Inner &amp; Outer Banquets</td>
<td>Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies and Jangseogak Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imin sibirwol jinyeon uigwe</td>
<td>Records of a banquet held in 1902 (39th year of King Gojong’s reign) to celebrate King Gojong’s 40th year of enthronement</td>
<td>Inner &amp; Outer Banquets</td>
<td>Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies and Jangseogak Library</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As evident above, many different titles were used for uigwe (royal protocols): pungjeong (sumptuous banquet), jinyeon (offering a banquet), jinchan (offering food), jinjak (offering drinks), sujak (receiving drinks). Pungjeong is an abbreviation of jin pungjeong (offering a sumptuous banquet). Sujak refers to “receiving a banquet,” and is used to refer to banquet guests, whereas jinjak, or “to offer a banquet,” referred to the banquet host. Almost every banquet-related uigwe has the word jin in its title, which means “to offer.” Also, pungjeong refers to the resourceful party, and yeon means party; chan (餼), food; jak (飲), drink.

From the nuance of each word, it appears that jin pungjeong was the largest type of banquet, followed by jinyeon, jinchan, and jinjak. When these terms were first used, banquets were titled according to their size. However, from the mid-nineteenth century, the titles were no longer based on the scale of the event. For example, jinchan held in 1892 was larger than jinyeon of 1902.

Jin pungjeong, jinyeon, jinchan, and jinjak are quite similar in that they were held to commemorate national celebratory affairs. In this paper, I use the term jinyeon to refer to all four. All uigwe found in Table 1 are related to royal celebratory banquets or jinyeon.

Unfortunately, of the records listed above, Pungjeong dogam uigwe (The 1630 Royal Banquet Uigwe) and Gisa jinpyori jinchan uigwe (The 1809 Royal Banquet Uigwe) are no longer in Korea due to the French pillaging of the Kyujanggak archive, which was located on Ganghwa Island during the 1886 French invasion. The latter was sold to a French firm before being handed over to a British person in 1891, and is now housed at the British Library. Since it was meant to

Figure 1. “Painting of a Royal Banquet” in Gisa jinpyori jinchan uigwe

6. Imin jinchan uigwe (The 1892 Royal Banquet Uigwe) (壬辰)流遷儀軌, gwon 3.23a-27a; Imin sawol jinyeon uigwe (The 1902 Royal Banquet Uigwe) (壬寅)流遷儀軌, gwon 3.22a-24b.
be read by the king, the quality of the pictures and colors was outstanding. There is another copy of this uigwe, which records a banquet held to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the coming-of-age ceremony of crown princess Hyegeoyeonggung, housed at the Jangseogak Library of the Academy of Korean Studies. However, it is less detailed than the one meant for the king's perusal, as it was produced for the Ministry of Rites. Figure 1 is a painting of a banquet that appeared in Gisa jinpyori jinchan uigwe.

Composition of Royal Banquet Uigwe

As mentioned above, with the publication of Wonhaeng eulmyo jeongni uigwe, banquet-related uigwe began to take a different form. As there are only four extant uigwe that were produced prior to 1795, I will focus on the uigwe published thereafter. Also, as a commemoration of the day itself, these uigwe included a wide range of information ranging from the establishment of Jinyeoneocheong or Jinchanso, a temporary administrative office for the organizing of the banquet; food preparation; the production of ceremonial items such as musical instruments and costumes; lists of participants, instrument players, and dancers; and prizes and accounts. Since the ceremonial procedure is the key to the uigwe, it will be explained in a separate chapter. Descriptions on the other parts of uigwe are as follows:

1) Illustrations

Each uigwe included numerous descriptions of seat arrangements, ceremonial procedures, songs and dances (jeongjae), flowers, ritual dishes, musical instruments, ceremonial instruments, the costumes of the leaders of the musical instrument (jeonak), male court musicians (akgong), female entertainers (yeoryeong), and Cheoyong (son of the Dragon King).

2) Preparation of Food

According to Musin jinchan uigwe (The 1848 Royal Banquet Uigwe), 263 tables were prepared for the officials of the ranks below titled ladies, along with the king’s mother, king’s grandmother, king, queen, and royal concubine. And 114 plates were prepared for palace eunuchs, assistant officials, male court musicians, and female entertainers. In addition, 917 other participants including soldiers on duty and cooks were given three loaves of white rice cake, three skewers of meat, and one drink each.

The uigwe even describes the ingredients used in each food. For example, it is recorded that chogyetang or “chicken broth with vinegar” was made from five chickens, five abalones, ten sea cucumbers, twenty eggs, half a bellflower root, mushrooms, two cups of black pepper, two peeled pine nuts, starch, soy sauce, and vinegar. Each uigwe also records that yaksik, a traditional dessert, which was made using glutinous rice, jujubes, peeled chestnuts, honey, sesame oil, soy sauce, and peeled nuts.

3) Salary

Artisans were paid by day according to their expertise. Skilled artisans, such as cooks, florists, and sculptors were paid three doe of rice and two cheok of silk, and ordinary artisans were given three doe of rice and cotton. Painters received two doe of rice and cotton, and manual laborers were paid with one doe of rice and cotton.

4) Expense

The cost of the banquet was approximately 27,385 jeon, which is equivalent to 6,846 seom of rice. sixty-three percent of this amount went to food preparation, 20 percent to musical instruments and cost-

7. Musin jinchan uigwe (The 1848 Royal Banquet Uigwe ( внеш. 서울역사관), gwon 2.31a-45a.
8. Musin jinchan uigwe, gwon 2.30b.
Royal Banquets and Uigwe during the Late Joseon Period

As royal banquets (yeonhyang) required a great deal of space for the many guests and dance and music performances, a wide makeshift floor called a bogye was usually prepared, on which the terrace ensemble (deungga) played music along with the performance of jeongjae. Ensembles were also held in the court garden. The purpose of royal banquets was not only harmony and joy, but also respect and reverence. I examine royal banquets in further detail below.

"Outer Banquets" or Royal Celebratory Banquets for the King and Officials

The royal celebration banquet for the king and officials, or "outer banquet" (oejinyeong) was held for the king on behalf of all officials, aides to the king, and the crown prince—the legal successor to the throne.

The king and crown prince were seated in the palace hall. Civil and military officials above the third grade were seated on the floor, and those below the third grade were seated in the courtyard. The terrace ensemble was made up of boys in their early teens, and they were called mudong (male dancers). Only men were allowed to attend the royal court banquet, and all of the dancers were also male.

The royal celebration banquet, or “outer banquet” was held for the king on behalf of all officials, aides to the king, and the crown prince. Table 3 describes the procedure of the banquet held to commemorate King Gojong’s thirtieth year of reign and forty-first birthday.

A royal court banquet is by and large made up of three stages: First, the crown prince and prime minister offer the first, then the second cup of wine to the king along with a congratulatory message.
They then express their wishes that the king “lives a thousand years.” Second, the first drink is offered to the crown prince, as he will be next to ascend the throne. Third, the king, crown prince, royal relatives, and all civil and military officials have drinks in the proper order.

11. It is housed at Ho-Am Museum Art.

As seen from the banquet procedure above, the king and all officials have the third drink together, because the officials are recognized as being responsible for assisting the king in ruling the country. The "outer banquet" is a banquet for the king and ministers who are bound to a sense of propriety, and thus its ritual etiquette is very strict. For this reason, when royal relatives and officials have drinks, they first move aside and prostrate themselves with a humble bow. After taking a drink, they prostrate themselves again before returning to their seats. For both the crown prince and officials, the drink is served at the same place, which is inside the hall. This is because they all participate in helping the king to rule the country.

The Royal Celebratory Banquet for the Royal Family

"Inner banquets" naeyeon refer to those offered to elderly royal family members, and were hosted by the royal family and relatives who were related to each other by blood and marriage. In contrast to the "outer banquets" held for the king and officials, where the king is always the honored guest, "inner banquets" for the royal family were meant to honor the dowager queen, king, and queen.

At the "inner banquet" held in 1848 king’s grandmother, queen, and concubine were in a hall, while the kind and titled ladies—jwamyeongbu and umyeongbu—were on the ceremonial stage. The two groups (kind and titled ladies) were divided by a beaded blind. In addition, the king’s relatives and son-in-laws, and family members of the king’s wife and mother were seated in the garden. The blind was used to divide the men and women.

At banquets for the royal family, where the queen and titled ladies were in attendance, female entertainers performed music and dance. After the latter part of the eighteenth century, male musicians played accompaniment, and a curtain was used to separate the queen, crown princess, and titled ladies from these male musicians.

15. It is housed at the Jeonju National Museum.
17. Imjin jinch'an uigwe, gwon 1:67b-87b.

This type of banquet was held to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary and forty-first birthday of King Gojong in 1892 and the sixtieth birthday of grandmother of King Heonjong in 1848, respectively.

Banquets for the royal family were also divided into three procedures. For example, when a banquet was held for the king's grandmother, the king and queen, regardless of their current status, were considered son, daughter-in-law, grandson, or grandson-in-law.

In the case of royal family banquets, the king and queen first offered two rounds of drinks to chief guest (the king's grandmother of the previous king), followed by the offering of drinks and congratulatory messages by royal family members. In some cases, they did
not offer drinks. After offering congratulatory messages, they expressed their wishes that the chief guest would “live a thousand years.” Second, the chief guest offers drinks to the royal family members, including the king, queen, crown prince, and crown princess. Third, titled ladies, royal relatives, and other relatives take drinks.

“Inner banquets” were held for family members who were bound to each other emotionally. The chief guest offers drinks to the king, queen, or crown prince and princess, while expressing their feelings. This type of banquet was informal compared to the royal courtyard banquet, and therefore titled ladies, royal relatives, and other relatives were not required to prostrate themselves before drinking, and were only required to sit on their knees. There were remarkable differences between men and women in terms of how drinks were supposed to be offered to the chief guest. For example, in 1892, the crown prince and princess offered drinks to the king and queen inside the palace hall. Titled ladies offered drinks from behind a curtain, whereas princes and royal relatives did so from outside it.

Table 5. Royal Celebratory Banquet for the Royal Family in March 17, 1848

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The king's grandmother took her seat. All those in attendance, including the king, bowed four times to the king's grandmother.</td>
<td>A meal was served to the king's grandmother.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The king offered the first drink to the king's grandmother and a congratulatory message. The king's grandmother had the first drink and gave a reply address.</td>
<td>The queen offered a second drink to the king's grandmother along with a congratulatory message. The king's grandmother had the second drink and gave a reply.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tea was offered to the king's grandmother.</td>
<td>Representatives from each of the titled ladies, concubines, and royal relatives offered drinks and congratulatory messages in the aforementioned manner, and the king and queen gave a reply address. All those in attendance expressed their wishes that the king's grandmother “live a thousand years.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The concubine Gyeongbin offered the third drink to the king's grandmother.</td>
<td>All those in attendance, including the king, queen, and Gyeongbin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A meal was served to the king, queen, and Gyeongbin.</td>
<td>A congratulatory message was offered to the king's grandmother.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The king's grandmother had the third drink.</td>
<td>The king's grandmother gave a reply address.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The king's grandmother offered a drink to the king's grandmother.</td>
<td>A meal was served to the titled ladies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The king's grandmother gave a reply address.</td>
<td>The king, queen, and Gyeongbin each accepted a drink from the king's grandmother in turn.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tea was offered to the king, queen, and Gyeongbin.</td>
<td>All those in attendance including titled ladies had a drink.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All those in attendance including titled ladies bowed four times.</td>
<td>The tables were cleared.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The king's grandmother descended from her seat.</td>
<td>All those in attendance including the king bowed four times to the king's grandmother.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gyeongguk daejeon, a legal instrument composed during the early Joseon period, stipulated that banquets for unity and the elderly be held once a year, while celebratory banquets were held on traditional holidays, such as Dano and Chuseok, and on the birthdays of royal family members. For example, during the reign of King Sejong, when the new dynasty’s laws and institutions were being completed, the rules of Gyeongguk daejeon were faithfully observed. Banquets for unity and the elderly were performed almost every year, and celebratory banquets were held several times a year. For example, in 1488, jinyeon were held nine times.


19. Three cups were offered in 1827 and in 1848, two cups in 1868, and seven cups in 1829.
However, from the reign of King Jungjong (r. 1506-1544), royal banquets were suspended during bad harvest years. Since King Seonjo (r. 1567-1608), banquets for unity and the elderly were no longer held. It is believed that royal banquets were only held on national holidays, when there was occasion to celebrate. Hence, during the twenty-six years of King Injo’s reign, only two banquets were held; during the eight years of King Hyojong’s reign, only one was held; and during the forty-six years of King Sukjong’s reign, only six were held.20

King Hyeonjong (r. 1659-1674) attempted to hold a banquet for his mother and grandmother, but failed to do so due to the recurring bad harvests. Ultimately, he was unable to hold any banquets during the fifteen years of his reign. Song Jun-gil, then sixth state councilor (jwachamchan), told the king that true filial piety lay in sharing the joys and sorrows of the people rather than holding a banquet for his mother and grandmother. On the fifth day of the ninth month of 1665 Song Jun-gil stated:

> If a banquet is held during an extremely bad harvest year, people will think that the state is not doing anything to help the poor. How can you persuade the people otherwise? If there is a disparity between the king’s policy and heavenly will and the people’s feelings, the monarch will not have filial piety.21

For that reason, the number of banquets in late Joseon was remarkably reduced compared to early Joseon. In the latter part of Joseon, banquets for unity and the elderly disappeared and celebratory banquets were held only once every few years. As the scale of the celebratory banquet grew, it came to encompass two types of banquets.

In the twelfth month of 1657, a celebratory banquet was held for the queen dowager, and rice, liquor, and food were given to elderly people over the age of eighty. In the eleventh month of 1677, the Queen Dowagers were presented with a banquet, and elderly people over seventy years of age living in Seoul and local regions regardless of social status were given rice.22 Also, in 1706, 1710, 1728, royal banquets were held to offer rice and meat to the elderly.23 The elderly were often honored in this way through banquets.

In addition, land taxes (jeonse) were lowered,24 and grain loans (hwangok) cancelled. In 1766, after a banquet, beggars in the capital were invited to eat their fill.25 On the occasion of the sixtieth birthday of Hyegyeonggung in 1795, the poor were given three mal of rice each, and were said to have returning home singing with pleasure.26

While there are no extant records of people receiving such benefits after royal banquets held during the early Joseon period, these acts of charity were taken for granted during the late Joseon period. The following illustration captures the scene of distributing rice to the poor at Honghwamun gate.

It is apparent that as Neo-Confucianism began to take root in Joseon society, the idea that the king should share the joys and sorrows of his people, and that the joys felt at banquets should be extended to the people, was accepted.

21. Hyeonjong sillok (Annals of King Hyeonjong), gwon 11, 9th month, 6th year of King Hyeonjong’s reign.

22. Sukjong sillok (Annals of King Sukjong), gwon 6, 11th month, 3rd year of King Sukjong’s reign.
23. Sukjong sillok, gwon 44, 8th month, 32nd year of King Sukjong’s reign.
24. Sukjong sillok, gwon 48, 5th month, 36th year of King Sukjong’s reign.
25. Yeongjo sillok (Annals of King Yeongjo), gwon 19, 9th month, 4th year of King Yeongjo’s reign.
26. Sukjong sillok, gwon 55, 9th month, 40th year of King Sukjong’s reign.
27. Yeongjo sillok, gwon 107, 8th month, 42nd year of King Yeongjo’s reign.
28. Wonhaeng eulmyo jeongni uigwe (Uigwe on King Jeongjo’s Visit to the Crown Prince Sado’s Tomb in 1795), appendix 1:2b.
29. Wonhaeng eulmyo jeongni uigwe, appendix 1:2b.
Joseon society, which was built on the Confucian ideology, stressed the idea of propriety (ye ᆕ) and music (ak ᆠ). To this end, Gukjo oryeui (Five Rites of the State), a ritual canon, was legislated during the initial period of the dynasty, along with Gyeongguk daejeon. Most rites found in Gukjo oryeui are concerned with music, since ye (propriety), which focuses on respect and humility, and ak (music), which focuses on harmony and joy, are mutually complementary. In the same manner, royal banquets (yeonhyang) were included in Gyeongguk daejeon, and their ceremonial procedure appears in the Gukjo oryeui, as the banquets served to solidify social ties.

Until the reign of King Seongjong, when the new dynasty’s spiritual and material foundations were consolidated, banquets for unity and for the elderly were held annually, and celebratory banquets were performed on national holidays—New Year’s Day, Dano, and Chuseok—as well as on the birthdays of the king, king’s mother, and king’s grandmother.

However, with the advent of the Sarim group, which stressed the practical aspects of Neo-Confucianism during King Jungjong’s reign, banquets were not held during times of disaster. Following the reign of King Seonjo in particular, regular banquets for unity and for the elderly disappeared completely, with banquets for the royal family being held only at the anniversaries of the king’s ascension to the throne and on his birthday. Thus, every banquet held during the late Joseon era was a celebratory one. Unlike those of early Joseon, people were usually given hand-outs after banquets during late Joseon, which was regarded as important for consolidating social unity. This is closely related to the entry of the Sarim faction into the political arena. Currently, nineteen types of banquet-related uigwe remain in existence. In conclusion, it can be ascertained from the banquet procedures that what Joseon Confucian literati sought was not so much a space for entertainment as a space for sharing joy with the people and realizing the harmony of propriety (ye) and music (ak).
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GLOSSARY

akgong
bogye
Cheoyong
choyetang
deunngga
Gisa jinpyori jinchon
Gukjo oryeui
Gyeongguk daejeon
Hyegyeonggung
hoeryeyeon
Honghwamun
hwangak
jeonak
jeonjae
jeonse
jin jungcheong
jinchon
Jinchonso
jinjak
jinyeon
jinyeong
jinyeongcheong
jwachamchan
jwaryeongbu
mudong
naeyeon
oeyeon
pungjeong
Pungjeong dogam
sagaengnyeon
sarim
sujak
uiwge
umeongbu
Wonhaeng eulmyo
jeonni uigye
yaksik
yeongyebun
yeonhyang
yeoryeong