

The Swedish Perception of Korea and the Koreans during the early twentieth century

Name of the author: Annette Hye Kyung Son Ek, Ph.D.¹

Affiliation: Department of Korean Studies, Stockholm University

Abstract

During the early twentieth century the Swedish knowledge on Korea and Koreans was considerably limited. The major source for the information and knowledge about Korea and the Koreans was a foreign travel record, "Journael and Beschryvinge van't koninghrijck Coeree," written by a Dutch sailor Hendrik Hamel from the seventeenth century. However from the early 20th century Korea began to be introduced to the Swedish public by a few Swedes who had visited Korea in different occasions and with different aims. Their professional backgrounds are varying such as war correspondent, zoologist and missionary. The aim of this study is to describe how the Swedish perception on Korea and Koreans has changed throughout the early twentieth century. Data sources are the three books in Swedish written by those few Swedish visitors to Korea during that period.

Keywords: Sweden, Korea, and Perception

*** Draft. Comments are welcome, but please do not quote without the author's permission.*

¹ Address to author: Östra Banvägen 71, SE-184 52 Österskär, Sweden.
E-mail address: hykyson@yahoo.com

Introduction

Although the Swedes have been traveling far and broad during the so-called Viking Age (approximately 800-1060) their contacts with foreign countries until the mid-seventeenth century was mostly limited to the European and the North American countries and the countries in the Middle East.² The Swedish contact with the Far Asian countries took place with the Swedish East India Company that was active in trading from 1731 to 1813. Despite its name, the Swedish East India Company was mainly engaged with the trade with China, especially in the port city Canton.³

It was only during the early twentieth century that a direct Swedish contact with Korea and the Koreans took place. At that time their knowledge on Korea and the Korean people was considerably limited. The major source for the information and knowledge about Korea and the Koreans was a foreign travel record, "Journael and Beschryvinge van't koninghrijck Coeree (Description of the kingdom of Korea)," written by a Dutch sailor Hendrik Hamel from the seventeenth century. As is known various versions of the Hamel's account of Korea had been translated both into French, German and English and therefore had been available for a wider international public.⁴ A few Swedes who made a visit to Korea in the early twentieth century are mostly the upper class in origin and therefore it is safe assume that they had good command on the above three European languages. Their professional backgrounds are varied such as war correspondent, zoologist, missionary, and explorer. Worth noting is that while Hamel's encounter with Korea was purely unintentional, caused by shipwreck and the Swedish encounter with Korea were often well planned in advance with clear purposes. The aim of this study is to describe how the Swedish perception on Korea and Koreans has changed throughout the early twentieth century.

Data sources

This present study is mainly based on the three books on Korea in Swedish by three different Swedish authors. The first one, *I Korea – Minnen och studier från "Morgonstillhetens Land" (In Korea – Memories and Studies from the Land of the Morning Calm)*, is written by a war correspondent William A:son Grebst (1875-1920). His visit to Korea took place at a very critical

² Anderson, Ingvar & Jörgen Weibull. 1985. *Swedish History in Brief*, Stockholm: The Swedish Institute.

³ Frängsmyr, Tore. 1990. *Ostindiska kompaniet – människorna, äventyret och den ekonomiska drömmen*, Höganäs: Wiken.

⁴ Roeper, Vibeke & Boudewijn Walraven (eds.). 2003. *Hamel's World – A Dutch-Korean Encounter in the Seventeenth Century*, Amsterdam: SUN, p. 11.

moment in Korean history, four weeks between December 1904 and January 1905 during which the Russo-Japanese War was going on. Because he visited Japan first he frequently made a comparison between Japan and Korea in this book. It was published in Gothenburg (Göteborg), the author's hometown and the second largest city and the major port city of Sweden in 1912.⁵ The seven years' gap between his travel and the publication of his book implies that the author had a substantial time to polish his manuscript before he published it. It has a color painting of a female dancer who is standing in front of the traditional Korean wall and grass and together with Korean designs for lattice (munsal) design on the title page. The book includes many ethnographically important pictures from Korea, which the author himself had taken during his travel in Korea. Compared to Hamel's account of Korea that has some fifty printed pages, this book is quite voluminous one with a total of 368 pages. This thick volume of travel account is divided into 15 chapters and each chapter begins with the list of contents, which is certainly a great help for the readers to get hint what they are going to read about. Since the author is a journalist working for a newspaper he writes his travel account in vigorous prosaic and objective but sometimes entertaining style. The subjects he deals with in this travel account include almost all aspects of the Korean society, for example history, economy, religion, education, women's social position, the customs and folkways of Korea, architecture, correction system and even some myths, legends and fables. In this manner his account of Korea resembles to a great extent to that of Hamel's account of Korea. However there is a crucial difference between Grebst's account of Korea and Hamel's account of Korea. When Hamel wrote his account of Korea in the late seventeenth century he had nothing but to rely on his own observation and experience.⁶ On the contrary when Grebst wrote his account of Korea in the early twentieth century he was not only able to utilize Hamel's account of Korea but also the views and descriptions on Korea that have been produced by Chinese and Japanese academicians as well as a growing number of Western missionaries who began their missionary activities in Korea in the latter part of the nineteenth century. This circumstance also implies that the author's view on Korea and the Koreans can have been tainted by the influences from those sources. Since this book is the first comprehensive book on Korea it became the prime written source on Korea in Sweden for other Swedish writers who visited to and wrote on Korea in the later period. This supposition is without doubt proved by some similar formulations on the Korean traditional wedding and funeral customs and some negative judgments on the Korean people and other folkways.

The second one, *I morgonstillhetens land: skildringar från en forskningsfärd till Korea (In*

⁵ Gothenburg is the port city where the Swedish merchant ships belonging to the Swedish East India Company had departed to their destinations in China during the 18th century.

⁶ Ledyard, Gari. 1971. *The Dutch Come to Korea*, Seoul: Royal Asiatic Society.

the land of the morning calm: descriptions from a field research trip to Korea), is written by a zoologist Sten Bergman (1895-1975). As indicated in the title of the book the author describes his observations and experiences during his field research trip to Korea, which started from Stockholm on February 7, 1935 and ended with his return to Stockholm on November 28, 1936. The major purpose of his research trip was to study the birds' habitation area, migration trend and overall biological circumstances in the Northern part of Korea. An additional purpose of his visit to Korea was to collect ethnographical objects on behalf of the Swedish National Natural Science Museum and Ethnographical Museum in Stockholm. In performing such important tasks he had a Swedish research assistant and a Japanese who assumed the task of cook and interpreter.

The first printing of the book was made in 1937, just one year after his return from Korea, which may prove his skills in writing books. In fact he made a number of field research trip to different places in East Asia before he visited Korea. For example, he led two academic expeditions to the Far East, one to Kamchatka Peninsula between 1920 and 1923 with botanist Eric Hultén and entomologist René Malaise while the other to Kuril Islands between 1929 and 1930 with his wife and his other colleagues. His expeditions to these areas were possible through his active contacts with the Japanese authority as well as the Japanese scientific community. During his expeditions he was known for recording everything that had to do with biology and anthropology although his major interest and specialty were ornithology and entomology. Because he was a so-called freelancer without any specific affiliation with any university or academic research institute his expeditions were generally financed by research grants from different research funds, donations, sponsor even public collection and fees for his lectures. After every field research trip he published his research reports and also frequently appeared in many radio programs that became enormously popular among the Swedish public.⁷

His book on Korea was published by a printing company Bonniers, which is one of the major printing companies in Stockholm, the capital of Sweden. Although he took frequently pictures and even occasionally filmed some events in Korea, it is rather regrettable that this book does not include those materials. In spite of this fact, his book is still rather voluminous one including a total of 231 pages divided into 35 chapters. The writing style is a combination of research report and travel account including many detailed and living descriptions of native Koreans birds, animals and peoples. This book was reprinted in 1952, which may prove the popularity of this book. In the second printing the author added one chapter dealing with the political situation on the Korean peninsula after the end of Second World War and the background and the current state of the Korean War, which was going on at the time of the reprinting of the book.

While these two books are published during the Japanese colonial period in Korea, the third

⁷ *Nationalencyklopedin*, 1990. Vol. 2. Stockholm: Bokförlaget Bra Böcker, pp. 448-449.

one, *Uppdrag i Fjärran Östern (Mission in the Far East)* is published by the Salvation Army Press in Stockholm in 1957, four years' after the end of the Korean War. A female author, Verna Olsson (1888-1960), has written this book and it deals with the author's experience as the Salvation Army missionary in Korea, Manchuria and China from 1912 to 1945. That is why the title of the book is not Mission in Korea but Mission in the Far East. Due to its numerous examples for the conversion of the Koreans to the Christianity the book gives an impression of a guidebook for a future missionary than a travel account. As this book was published two or three decades later than the two earlier publications on Korea, it shows some traces that the author has read them both. Especially there is almost identical expression on the Korean's religiosity which appear in both Grebst's and Olsson's book. "A Korean is confucianist in company, and Buddhist when he meditates, and spirit worshipper when he has in difficulty".⁸

Historical context

Korea in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century can be said the most depressed period in the Korean history. The opening of the country in 1876 after the signing of Gangwha treaty between Korea and Japan made possible for a host of the American and European Christian missionaries to preach Christianity in Korea and with them came travelers from those countries. What these early Western visitors discovered in Korea at that time was the ruling dynasty that was in full decline and its government had become hopelessly corrupt and incompetent to carry out any necessary political and social reform. The consequences of this political disarray in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century were that Korean society was disintegrating and the Korean people were considerably poorer than they had been a few centuries earlier. The annexation of Korea by Japan in 1910 did not improve their perception on Korea and the Koreans in general.

On the other hand, Sweden had transformed from one of the poorest agricultural country in Europe to one of the fast growing industrializing country in the world during the same period. Especially Sweden underwent the rapid expansion of industry in the 1890s and around the turn of the century thanks to a rapid influx of foreign capital from England and Germany. The Swedish economy had met a turning point immediately after the World War I and Sweden suddenly became a rich country. The major reason was the increasing demand for Swedish commodities such as steel and pulp, matches and ball bearings, lighthouses and separators, telephones and vacuum cleaners.⁹ The political consequences of economic growth were that

⁸ In fact this formulation on the Korean's religiosity was made by one of the earliest Korean specialist Hulbert.

⁹ Andersson, Ingvar & Jörgen Weibull. 1985. *Swedish history in brief*, Stockholm:

there was greatly increased pressure for a universal and equal franchise around the turn of the century. The Constitutional Reform that was carried through between 1918 and 1920 signified the introduction of parliamentary democracy in Sweden.^{1 0} Despite of political turmoil inside the country the Swedish economy continued its progress thanks to the high demand for Swedish timber products and pulp, steel and other manufactured goods from all over the world.

Parallel with the economic expansion and political democratization a new and extensive social change had also taken place in Sweden; the term “popular movements” is commonly used to describe it. The great groups of the Swedish population who did not have the suffrage until the beginning of the twentieth century began to seek other outlets for their energy and new ways to influence the society in which they lived. They found such outlets in the religious revival movements; in the labor movement, which grew rapidly during the decades of industrialization and in the temperance movement, which became a great force in the social training and education of the so-called lower classes.^{1 1} The Swedish visitors to Korea during the early twentieth century were those who were proud of this political and economic and social transformation that Sweden just went through.

William A:son Grebst’s adventure in Korea

Grebst’s book, *I Korea – Minnen och Studier från “Morgonstillhetens Land”(In Korea – Memories and Studies from the Land of the Morning Calm)* begins with the explanation how and why he wanted to visit Korea. He wanted to get a first-hand knowledge about the Russo-Japanese War that was just going on at that time. However, due to the Japanese authority’s strict restriction of travel to the war front by any foreign correspondent he was stuck in Tokyo for a considerable time. He shared this tricky situation with many other foreign correspondents. Following the suggestion by a Swedish merchant ship captain, the author could get the permission to travel to Korea under the disguise of a textile merchant from England. He was then able to get a passenger ticket in the Japanese transport steamship ”Nitto Maru” that at that time transported war material to Korea to be used for the Russo-Japanese War. It took three days from Nagasaki to Busan (Fusan) because the ship ran very slowly in order to avoid any collision with numerous mines in the sea. When the steamship approached to the harbor of Busan the author express his pre-knowledge on Korea:

“But some distance from here in this darkness lay Korea, the secretive *Chosen*, the country,

Svenska Institutet, pp. 46–47.

^{1 0} Hadenius, Stig & Björn Molin & Hans Wieslander. 1988. *Sverige efter 1900 – En Modern politisk historia*, Stockholm: Bonniers, pp. 69–90.

^{1 1} Andersson, Ingvar & Jörgen Weibull. 1985. *Swedish history in brief*, Stockholm: Svenska Institutet, p. 35.

from which the victorious Japan acquired the great part of its culture, the old countries, which up to the seventeenth century was unknown to Europe, the last of the old cultural countries, which opened its door to the Europeans; among them, the manners and customs that had been inherited through thousand year-old history should surely have the farthest distance from the Western civilization”^{1 2}

When he discovered that he finally arrived at Busan he was full of excitements and expectations.

“Today a new interesting adventure in my life shall begin. I shall tread to a new country, which none of my friends at home had visited. I shall see unusual things and probably get peculiar experiences”^{1 3}

After his arrival at Busan he immediately began traveling to Seoul. Initially he attempted to communicate with the Koreans on the street with the help of a Japanese-Korean dictionary he carried with him but due to the unfamiliarity to the Korean pronunciation he failed. On his way to the railway station he noted the city of Busan and the Koreans. His first impression of Busan was quite poverty-stricken but the Koreans are in general taller than Japanese and the attitude of the Koreans is considerably straight forward in comparison with that of the Japanese who are very often excessively submissive. He also made a comparison with the Japanese area in Busan and the rest of Busan and foresaw the inevitability of Korea to become a Japanese colony in some years’ time. ^{1 4}

After his arrival at Busan he had the fortune to get on the very first train between Busan and Seoul. According to the original plan it would take for him 16 hours to get to Seoul but due to the railway sabotage and the lack of water and other technical problems it took him three days to get to Seoul, making two overnights stops, one in Daegu (Tai-ku) and the other near Yeongdeungpo (Kiong-Do-Po). During his short stop in Daegu he found that the streets were narrow and crooked and the houses were dilapidated and the folk life in the city was not at all lively and many people in the street had the scars after the small pox epidemic on their faces.

On the train the author happened to accompany with a Japanese North-Eastern Army captain, who after permission due to war wound was on his way back to Port Arthur where the Russo-Japanese War was going on. They engaged in conversation in German, French and English. From this Japanese Army captain the author then came to hear a typical negative view on the Koreans such as laziness, filthy, lack of independent spirit of the Koreans and the Japan’s plan

^{1 2} Grebst, William A:son. 1912. *I Korea – Minnen och studier från ”Morgonstillhetens Land”*, Göteborg: Förlagsaktiebolaget Västra Sverige, pp.15-16.

^{1 3} Ibid, p. 19.

^{1 4} Ibid, p. 25.

to colonize Korea. Due to the some sabotage along the railway lines he was forced to stay over one night in an inn at Daegu. Here he made acquaintance with the ondol floor, which he thought was very effective and genius but not very enjoyable for him.

When he finally arrived at Seoul he checked in at the Station Hotel, which was run by an English missionary, Emberley. It was Emberley who introduced Yun San Gal, a student at one of the missionary schools, as a guide and an interpreter to him during his four-week stay in Seoul. In the course of time the author also became acquainted with the German counselor and some of the foreign missionaries who had been in Seoul for a considerable period by that time. He also devoted some of his times to study on Korea, for example by reading books on Korea and by following the news in the English newspapers. It was from these sources the author got the information on Korea's situation.

During his four weeks stay in Seoul he had a plenty of opportunity to get to know many aspects on Korea, from politics to the daily life of the ordinary Koreans. That was possible mainly through daily excursions in and around Seoul with his enthusiastic Korean interpreter who wanted to show and explain everything about Korea and further through a number of riding excursions with the German counselor and more important from his own curiosity on a new country.

For example, the author, under the guidance of the German counsel, witnessed the execution of the three Koreans without trials who sabotaged the newly built railway in protest the Japanese confiscation of the Korean land. From this example, the author drew the conclusion that Japan had still a long way to go before it became civilized in the Western sense. He even had a rare opportunity to be invited to the royal funeral ceremony of the Crown Princess. During the official funeral ceremony that took place at the Royal Palace he even had a sufficient time to make observation about the two Korean royalties, the Emperor Gojong and the Crown Prince. His impression of the Emperor was not favorable but that of the Crown Prince was even worse.^{1 5} It cannot totally be excluded that his impression on the two Korean Royalty may have been influenced by the rather gloomy political circumstances that Korea faced at that time. When he made a visit to the stone shrine over the mythical Korean founder at Gangwhado Island he noticed that it had not been well maintained. The author was of the opinion that the Koreans' negligence of such an important national monument would give some clue to the characteristics of the Korean people who did not show proper care and concern for many other things.^{1 6}

Overall his impressions of the Korean people are considerably negative – childish, stupid, lazy, hopeless and superstitious. Such judgments he shared with the Japanese and other Western

^{1 5} Ibid, pp. 216-217.

^{1 6} Ibid, p. 336.

observers at that time. On the contrary his impression on the Korean landscape that he saw through the window on the train is positive.

“It was a highly varying and magnanimous picture of the inside Korea we were able to see. In Japan it has been said that the Land of Morning Calm would be ugly and uninteresting. But instead the landscape is one of the most impressive among which I have ever traveled to.”¹⁷

He left Korea via Jemulpo port at the end of January after he failed to get travel permission to Port Arthur from the Japanese authority. The author got an offer from the navy captain of a German warship “Seeadler” to travel further.

Sten Bergman’s expedition in Korea

Sten Bergman’s visit to Korea took place nearly three decades later than that of Grebst’s. As an experienced explorer the author begins his book by thoroughly describing the travel route he and his colleague had taken and what they saw on their way to Korea. They took the shortest available way to Korea at that time, that is a travel with the Trans-Siberian Express Railway, covering 10,000 km altogether between Stockholm and Seoul.¹⁸ And it took them 13 days, from the 7th of February 1935 to the 20th of February 1935. The first thing he observed when he crossed the border between Manchuria and Korea was the white-clothed Koreans and their muddy huts. These scenes gave the author an impression of poverty in Korea but still very much picturesque. In addition the author provided a description of Korea’s history, culture geographical location, relationship with China and Japan and population.

Thanks to his two earlier visits to Far Eastern Area he was at the time of his visit to Korea not totally unfamiliar with the native way of living and conditions. But this did not stop him to criticize the unhygienic condition of the Korean houses he stayed during his field research trips to different wilderness in the northern part of Korea. His complain was mainly concerned with the louses that often disturbed his sleep at nights. But unlike Grebst he often expressed his appreciation of the *ondol*, the Korean heated floor after his numerous expeditions in freezing cold weather in the northern part of Korea.¹⁹

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 65.

¹⁸ The second alternative way was a travel via North America and the third alternative way was a travel via Suez Canal. Both alternatives naturally take much longer time than the author took in his travel to Korea (Bergman, Sten. 1952. *I morgonstillhetens land : skildringar från en forskningsfärd till Korea*, Stockholm: Bonnier, p. 7).

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 46

One can easily get the feeling that he was enormously enthusiastic about his expeditions in Korea. He provided a very detailed description of every exotic birds, insects and animals that habituated in Korea and collected them to be shipped over to Sweden for the Swedish public. During his nearly two years' stay in Korea he had an ample opportunity to travel within Korea and to the neighboring countries Manchuria and Japan, which a few Korean at that time had time and fortune to do. For example, he had had the opportunity to explore Korea's major high mountains, Taebaeksan, Geumgansan, Myohyangsan, Jirisan. He even visited Jeju Island.²⁰ He did these trips by utilizing a variety means of transportation, i.e. railway, cars, ships and even airplane.

As a person with a high social competence he made a broad personal exchange. The persons he associated with during his two-year stay in Korea include the Japanese Governor-General in Korea, the Curator of Changgyeongwon Zoo and Botanical Garden, the Chairman and members at the Royal Asiatic Society in Korea, the Japanese academicians in Korea. He gave a number of lectures to the university students at Kejo and Ewha Universities. He met the Swedish colony in Korea at that time. He even met Verna Olsson, the author of the third book that this study analyzes shortly. However his contacts with the Koreans were limited to the Korean families with which he stayed overnight during his expeditions and some Korean interpreters and the bearers of his excursion equipments.

On the whole from Bergman's description of Korea one could get the impression that Korea had changed considerably during those three decades. For examples, many towns he visited were lively in commerce and the transportation system within the country had immensely improved. The capital city of Seoul had also transformed enormously with a number of broad roads and increasing number of populations. In any case the negative judgment on the Koreans still persisted.

"To his disposition the Koreans differ considerably from the Japanese. The Koreans do not have the spirit of entrepreneur, energy and warrior's temperament and further the capability to subordinate oneself to the public in order to reach a goal, toward which the Japanese are well disposed. For a Korean the individual is more important than the society while for a Japanese the society means everything and an individual in relation to the society means nothing. In this sense a Korean resembles more a Chinese. Like a Chinese a Korean is individualistic. The Koreans are proud of their old culture, which they willingly preserve. On the other hand a Korean is not inclined to work hard. If he can undergo to work he prefers to sit and smoke a

²⁰ The author often used the names of different places he visited in Korea in Japanese transcription instead of Korean transcription, which proved his reliance on the Japanese sources.

long-shaped pipe and talk with someone like-minded”^{2 1}

Verna Olsson’s mission in Korea

The author to *Mission in the Far East* describes the Koreans from a typical Western missionary’s perspective. In her description of Korea she often divided the Korean peoples into two groups, the Christian group and the non-Christian group. All those belonging to the non-Christian group were described as the “heathens” who should be converted from the darkness of heathenism to the brightness of Christianity by her active missionary activities. Altogether she spent 34 years in the Far East of which she spent her 27 years’ in Korea and approximately two years’ in Manchuria and five years and one month in Peking. As she writes “during those 27 years Korea became my second home country and I became so affectionate with the Koreans and came to love them with whole my soul”.^{2 2}

When Olsson began her journey to Korea one day in December 1911 she had her two other female Swedish missionary colleagues with her, Magda Köhler and Sofia Frick. They were the volunteers in the service of the Salvation Army for the mission to Christianize the “natives” in non-Christian countries in the Far East. They traveled first by ship from Stockholm to Helsinki, the capital of Finland. At that time Finland was still a part of Russia. The next leg of their journey was St. Petersburg and Moscow, the two large cities in Russia. From Moscow they took Trans-Siberian Express Railway to Antung, a border city between Manchuria and Korea. There the wife of Colonel Robert Hoggard in the Salvation Army received them. Three years earlier Colonel Robert Hoggard and his wife and a group of officers came to Seoul to spread Christian gospels to the Koreans and they were now receiving an enforcement group for their Christian missionary activities from Sweden. From Antung the three Swedish missionaries and the English missionary took another train to Seoul. Overall it took for them about two weeks from Stockholm to Seoul. When they finally arrived at Seoul they had very scant knowledge in English and no knowledge at all in Korean. But they had an important mission to Christianize “the heathens” in Korea!

As to the author’s first impression on Korea she epitomized a word “Lerkojornas Land” (“A Land of Muddy Huts”).^{2 3} This expression surely comes from her observation of the thatched-roof houses that were abundant in Korea at that time. In any case this expression has a quite distance from the expression “The Land of Morning Calm” as the two other Swedish male authors used in the subtitles of their respective books. Further this expression gives the impression of the filthiness and poverty of the Korean people.

^{2 1} Ibid, p. 25.

^{2 2} Olsson, Verna. 1957. *Uppdrag i Fjärran Östern*, Stockholm: FA–press tryckeri, p. 125

^{2 3} Ibid, p. 9

When she and her colleagues were invited to the first service in Korea they were asked to take off their shoes before they entered the service hall, which they found inconvenient. When they observed some males in the mass who had still their hat on but shoes off inside the house they felt the things Korean seemed quite upside-down or quite awkward.

Their stay in Korea began with an intensive language study in both English and Korean for one year. While they were occupied with language study, Olsson lost her colleague Sofia just after three months' stay in Korea. Her sorrow became even greater when she lost her another colleague Magda during the typhoid epidemic in Korea in their second year in Korea.

When she began her missionary activities in a village called Moon San Po she was the only female Western missionary in the village. She led a very frugal life with a limited space of two by two-square meters and lived in a typical Korean thatched-roof house with ondol floor. She found the traditional Korean way of heating the floor and cooking the food simultaneously was satisfactory. Although her belief in God was strong she was still a young and unmarried female and suffered tremendously from loneliness and dread in the beginning of her field missionary activities in a remote village in Korea. Especially she was continuously in fear of a possible intruder during the night. Therefore she went to bed every night she placed a rope between one of her arm and the loop in the door at night so that she could wake up immediately whenever someone attempted to open the door. But she soon realized that such a genius installation was unnecessary. She wrote "because the Koreans are very much friendly and peaceful persons".^{2 4} In fact she made a continuous observation of the Korean way of life and expressed a number of positive judgments on it. Especially she expressed her admiration on the Korean's respect for the parents and the elderly.^{2 5} However Olsson also provided the "heatheness" of the Koreans by pointing out the harsh treatment of women, children and animals, especially dogs. As a woman she especially expressed her sympathy with the Korean women who were according to her servants to men and the girls who often were assigned to take care of younger brothers and sisters. She devoted the major part of the books to her successful missionary activities during which a considerable number of the Koreans became converted from Shamanism, Buddhism and Confucianism to Christianity.

Towards the end of her missionary works in Korea the author became an eyewitness to the religious persecution of the Japanese colonial authority. So firm in her Christian religion she had difficulty in accepting the order of the Japanese authority to combine the church service with the worship of the Japanese emperor. And many of her Korean missionary colleagues who showed resistance to the Shintoism put into jail. When Japan became involved with the World War II all the foreign missionaries were ordered to leave Korea and that was the reason why she moved to

^{2 4} Ibid, p. 26

^{2 5} Ibid, p. 30

Manchuria in 1941.

Concluding remarks

This study is intended to explore the Swedish perception of Korea and the Koreans during the early twentieth century. To this end three Swedish books written by the Swedish visitors to Korea during the same period have been reviewed. Worth noting is that unlike Hamel and his colleagues' encounter with Korea in the seventeenth century their encounters with Korea in the early twentieth century were well planned in advance with all specific aims. Their travel routes were much shorter and more effective than Hamel and his colleagues had taken.

As their information sources were often the publications in the Western languages such as Germans and English and their informants were often American and European missionaries or their Japanese acquaintances their views on Korea and the Koreans were considerably distorted, often highly negative. It was possible to see that their judgment on the Koreans has improved during their stay in Korea the longer they stayed in Korea. This is especially true with Verna Olsson who stayed in Korea for 27 years and who could speak Korean fluently. It cannot be excluded that her improved judgment on the Koreans depended on the high receptiveness of the Koreans to Christianity during her long missionary activities in Korea. In any case they all expressed their appreciation for the Korean landscape. One important thing is that through their writings Korea no longer remained as a Land of Hermit Kingdom and more Swedish people became interested in knowing about Korea. Especially Sten Bergman, who lived to 1975 made numerous appearances in radio and later even in TV, played an important role in spreading the knowledge on Korea. Some 1124 Swedish people who volunteered to work at the Swedish field hospital for Korea at during the Korean War should have had a good use of the books by Grebst and Bergman on Korea. It will be interesting to study if their impression of Korea and the Korean have changed or improved compared to that of those early Swedish visitors to Korea. But that is the beyond the scope of this study.

References

- Andersson, Ingvar & And Jörgen Weibull. 1985. *Swedish history in brief*, Stockholm: Svenska Institutet.
- Bergman, Sten. 1937. *I morgonstillhetens land: skildringar från en forskningsfärd till Korea*, Stockholm: Bonnier.
- Bergman, Sten. 1944. *Durch Korea. : Streifzüge im Lande der Morgenstille. Mit 61 Originalaufnahmen auf 40 Kunstdrucktafeln und einer Karte Koreas im Text. [Berechtigte Uebersetzung aus dem Schwedischen, translation by von Ernst Alker (Stockholm), Zurich.*
- Bergman, Sten. 1952. *I morgonstillhetens land : skildringar från en forskningsfärd till Korea*, Stockholm: Bonnier.
- Frängsmyr, Tore. 1990. *Ostindiska kompaniet - människorna, äventyret och den ekonomiska drömmen*, Höganäs: Wiken.
- Grebst, William A:son. 1912. *I Korea – Minnen och studier från "Morgonstillhetens Land"*, Göteborg: Förlagsaktiebolaget Västra Sverige.
- Hadenius, Stig & Björn Molin & Hans Wieslander. 1988. *Sverige efter 1900 – En Modern politisk historia*, Stockholm: Bonniers.
- Ledyard, Gari. 1971. *The Dutch Come to Korea*, Seoul: Royal Asiatic Society.
- Olsson, Verna. 1957. *Uppdrag i Fjärran Östern*, Stockholm: FA-press tryckeri.
- Nationalencykolpedin*, 1990. Vol. 2. Stockholm: Bokförlaget Bra Böcker.