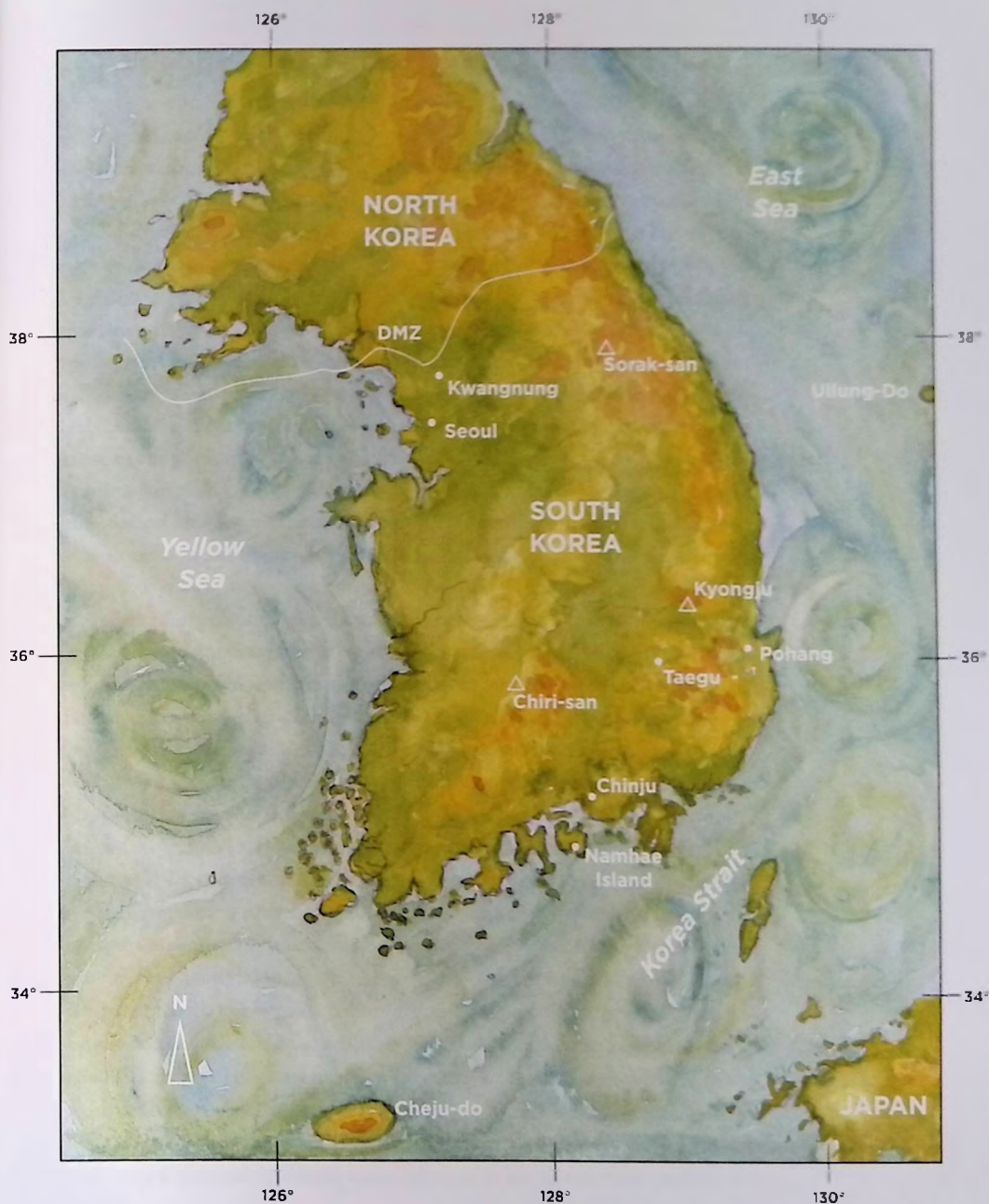


Land of the Morning Calm

I WAS SUMMONED TO IAN BEYER'S OFFICE on a chilly autumn morning in 1988. As deputy curator of Kew's Living Collections Department, Ian enjoyed a formidable reputation and the respect of the botanic garden world. Many at Kew feared his no-nonsense approach but grudgingly acknowledged that he ran a tight ship—firm but fair was the consensus. With Ian's reputation in mind I was more than a little apprehensive as I climbed the staircase of Aiton House in the Lower Nursery; named in honour of William Aiton, the first curator of the original 4-ha (9-acre) botanic garden started by Princess Augusta in 1759, this building acted as the curatorial nerve centre of Kew. I knocked lightly on the outer office door and was invited in and offered a seat looking out over the River Thames. Ian, a balding, portly man, came straight to the point. 'We want you to lead a seed collecting expedition to South Korea and begin the post-storm fieldwork programme'. Dumbstruck I searched for a response. I hadn't ventured into the field since a near fatal seed collecting trip to Chile with colleague Stewart Henchie in 1985. The memory of my brush with death—a combination of salmonella typhoid, a military coup and a massive



SOUTH KOREA

earthquake in Santiago—was all too fresh in my mind, but here was an offer too good to miss and I was eager to oblige.

Most collections from the 1982 Living Collections Department trip to South Korea, led by Ian Beyer, were now growing well in the arboretum and herbaceous section, but many areas on the mainland had not been visited and several collections failed to germinate or were not successfully established in the gardens—the unfinished business. I therefore was to organise and lead a follow-up expedition next autumn, in 1989. I had to choose a colleague, which wasn't going to be too difficult, as there was really only one candidate who would be suitable: Mark Flanagan, a fairly new lad to Kew from Manchester, trained at the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh, who had recently moved to take a manager's post at Wakehurst Place.

Ian made a telephone call to Tony Schilling, and the green light for Mark to participate was given. The invite was put to Mark, who didn't need much persuading. This was the start of an association that would make a significant impact on the future woody collections growing in the arboreta at Kew and Wakehurst Place.

At the request of Grenville Lucas, keeper of the herbarium and chairman of the Fieldwork Committee, a third member would join us: Peter Boyce, an assistant scientific officer and Araceae expert in the herbarium who required real fieldwork experience. Our hosts would be the Korean Forestry Research Institute, who successfully administered the 1982 expedition jointly with the Korean Horticultural Society. Contacts were made with Mr Jo Jae-Myung, the director general in Seoul, and once again he and his colleagues kindly offered their valuable help and assistance, which Mark and I gratefully took up. The offices of the Forestry Research Institute also arranged for all the collecting permits and permissions needed to collect officially in the national parks, national forests and other natural monuments in South Korea. The following months were spent in the two arboreta, at Kew and Wakehurst Place, and the herbarium, compiling a target list of plants to collect and an inventory of equipment we would need for a six-week field trip.

On 21 September 1989 we check in at Heathrow Airport for a Korean Air flight to Seoul via Anchorage in Alaska. I say goodbye to Sally, who is six and a half months pregnant, and Mark to Lesley and their six-week-old son Callum. Our timing for an expedition to far-flung places is impeccable!

As well as our rucksacks we have a large blue suitcase, carrying expedition equipment and gifts for our hosts, which puts us well over our baggage allowance. A long discussion with the duty manager follows, and a gift of a 1990 Kew calendar and an explanation about the nature of our trip (complete with buzzwords like 'conservation', 'genotypes' and 'germplasm') help to oil the wheels. We get away with paying a modest charge for excess baggage, which doesn't eat too much into an already small expedition budget.

On 22 September 1989, after a monotonous yet nerve-wracking eighteen-hour flight via Anchorage in Alaska (over the Kamchatka Peninsula, where on 31 August 1983 the Soviet Union shot down Korean Air Flight 007 after a supposed air space incursion), we finally arrive in Kimpo International Airport, Seoul. Rebuilt for the 1988 Olympic Games, the main airport arrival area is an impressive cathedral-like piece of architecture.

We are met by Mr Kim Un-Cho, founder of the International Gardens Foundation in Korea, and Mr Oh Jeong-Soo, chief of the forest ecology section at the Forestry Research Institute, and feel a little more relaxed being in capable hands in foreign parts. We load the institute jeep with our baggage and are driven to the Mammoth Hotel in Tongdaemun district, where we are to spend the first three nights of our duration in South Korea. It feels expensive, and Mark, who is treasurer for the expedition, starts to mentally juggle figures and conversion rates and announces to Peter and me that he intends pulling in the purse strings on day one. It later turns out that the Forestry Research Institute have special rates, and Mark's fears are somewhat allayed.

Following a short discussion with Mr Oh about the trip, we are taken out to sample the delights of Korean cuisine. Bulgogi, a dish that we are to become very familiar with over the next six weeks, is at the top of the menu, and no meal would be complete without a portion of the national dish, kimchi. Bulgogi consists of thin strips of beef marinated in soy and a strong chilli sauce with copious amounts of garlic, barbecued at the table on a cast iron pan over red-hot coals. Rather more of a culinary shock to Western palates is kimchi, a pungent, fiery hot sort of Eastern coleslaw consisting Chinese cabbage, sometimes with radish or carrot added, fermented for long periods in earthenware jars with exotic spices, red pepper, garlic and ginger—and I can vouch that it is an acquired taste. On the way back to the



Tongdae-mun Sijang market

hotel we are shown a place suitable for breakfast and are told what to ask for, *hae chang kuk*. We all feel relaxed and comfortable at the close of this first day and with the way in which our hosts have been so helpful.

The following morning we awake to the roar of traffic and people going about their daily business. We venture out, dodging bicycles overloaded with cardboard boxes and speeding motorbikes, to the eating house recommended by Mr Oh last night and confidently ask for *hae chang kuk*. When it arrives, it's not what we would have expected for breakfast: a bowl of eel heads, complete with teeth, staring out of a broth of congealed blood and rice with another bowl of kimchi as a side salad. All around us Koreans pick out the fish heads with their chopsticks and drink the soup whilst taking in mouthfuls of kimchi at the same time. We all quietly prod and poke at the contents, pushing them round the bowl, waiting for someone to say something and finally unanimously decide that we are not hungry and should

forego breakfast. This was to be the most difficult mealtime for us whilst in Korea and nothing could have prepared us for this experience—we don't make this mistake again!

Peter, a supposedly ardent traveller to the far east of tropical Asia in search of arisaemas for his monograph in the herbarium, has arrived in Korea with an empty suitcase with the intention of procuring clothing here in a Seoul (rather unusual I thought, but it certainly helped ease the excess baggage problems at Heathrow). This called for a trip to the Tongdae-mun Sijang market at the Great East Gate, one of several large markets in Seoul that sell everything from silk to fruit and, for the not-so-faint-hearted, any form of meat or fish from dogs to sharks and much, much more. It is said that if you can't find what you are looking for here then you won't find it anywhere. In the spice market it will be possible to collect most of our target list without even venturing out into the field. However we are here to top up Peter's wardrobe and this we do with an array of cheap, top-brand designer reproductions that would make any of the trendy sports companies livid.

In the afternoon we are picked up at the hotel and taken to the Research Institute at Chongryangri-Dong. We are to have a meeting with several senior staff to discuss our itinerary further. Mr Oh introduces us to Mr Choi Myoung-Sub, a dendrologist at the Kwangnung Arboretum (the institute's base just north of Seoul), a well-built Korean with hard facial features dressed in denim jeans and a short fishing vest. 'He will be your guide, body-guard and interpreter for your trip', explains Mr Oh. We introduce ourselves and get a wry smile from Mr Choi; we are then told that he doesn't speak English. We all look puzzled, and Mark breaks the silence by saying '*Acer okamotoanum*'—a rare maple uncommon in cultivation in the West, now recognised as a subspecies of *A. pictum*, from a Korean island in the East Sea. Mr Choi responds by opening a map and stubbing the island with his index finger, saying 'Ullung' several times. Mark is happy; as he believes that Mr Choi knows his plants and will be a great field botanist. We all shake hands and celebrate with a cup of ginseng tea complete with pine kernel floaters.

Mr Oh advises that the institute's accommodation in Kwangnung Arboretum in Pochun-Gun will be made available to us as a base to stay and prepare collections between trips out in the field. A walk round the Kwanak

Arboretum, attached to the institute, completes our afternoon before we return to the Mammoth Hotel for what will be one of our last Western meals for several weeks. A 10-m (32-ft) specimen of *Firmiana simplex*, the parasol tree, is growing outside the main offices; the large maple-like leaves and fruits with broad papery wings make this a striking species. This is one of the few hardy species in the Sterculiaceae, which is primarily a tropical family, and if it can survive a winter here in Seoul it must be hardy enough for the south of England. With permission a few seeds go in the bag to start the collection.

The following day is spent visiting British Ambassador Lawrence Middleton at the embassy, where we dispense horticultural advice in the embassy garden in exchange for their monthly quota of tinned Spam lunch-con meat and corned beef. This addition to our field ration supply would later prove to be a valuable resource to us. We leave the embassy to visit Pagoda Park by way of the Secret Garden and observe thousands of maidenhair trees, *Ginkgo biloba*, growing as street trees. The majority are females, showing the familiar symmetrical fastigiate habit, and the apricot-like fruits, just beginning to ripen, are giving off that strong smell of rotting flesh that seems to fill and linger on the air. At present the leaves are green, but by the time we return to Seoul in late October they will be a fantastic butter-yellow colour. The other common street tree is *Zelkova serrata*, grown as a multi-stemmed tree, a rather unusual habit for an urban tree but one that seems to work.

We exit the park onto the main highway and are confronted by thousands of students being contained by riot police dressed in full combat outfit. The tear gas in the air is starting to have an effect on our eyes when some of the riot police recognise us as Western tourists and quickly escort us into the subway, advising us to leave the area on the next train. We take their advice and return to the Mammoth Hotel for our last night in Seoul before leaving for Kwangnung Arboretum. We spend the evening at a bar next to the hotel drinking OB, Korean beer, before retiring to our beds for a much needed sleep.

The next morning is bizarre to say the least. I am awakened, I think, by a telephone call from the Forestry Research Institute: our meeting time has changed from 9.00 a.m. to 7.00 a.m. and we will be met in the reception downstairs. I quickly call Mark's room and then Peter's, explaining the



Administrative buildings at Kwangnung Arboretum

change of plan whilst half-asleep. It's already 6.30 a.m., so there is a sense of urgency as I wash and pack. We gather in the lobby, all looking the worse for wear, slightly hung over. 'Who telephoned this morning?' asks Mark. I cannot recall, and it soon becomes apparent the whole thing was a dream and I have deprived Mark and Peter of an extra two hours sleep!

Mr Oh arrives at 9.00 a.m., as planned, and takes us for a meeting with the director general of the Forestry Department before our departure for Kwangnung. But there is a hitch in the itinerary—Mr Choi, our guide, cannot join us until later, so our first field trip will be delayed. The good news is that we can collect in the foothills surrounding the arboretum. After an hour's drive we arrive at Kwangnung and are shown the two rooms that are to be ours for the trip.

There are only two beds between the rooms and whilst I am busy making conversation with our hosts and trying to apologise for the weight of



Deciduous woodland on Sori-San

the blue suitcase, which has left two Koreans with bad backs, Peter chooses one room and Mark the other. They both quickly fall onto the beds, attempting to make up for the lost time this morning. Mark is supine and asleep within seconds, and it looks like I'm on the floor. I settle down, about to drift into some badly needed sleep, when there's a knock at the door, followed by another and then another. Clearly I'm not going to catch up on any bonus 'shut eye'.

Our first day is spent on our own in the forests surrounding the arboretum, collecting on the flanks of Sori-San, a relatively small mountain of some 536 m (1715 ft). This is mixed deciduous woodland, the climax species being oak and hornbeam, *Quercus mongolica* and *Carpinus laxiflora*, with occasional specimens of Korean white pine, *Pinus koraiensis*, and Japanese red pine, *P. densiflora*. The autumn colour is just starting to turn, with the cloudless blue sky as a backdrop, and there is no shortage of fruit.

The understorey comprises *Styrax japonicus*, *Clerodendrum trichotomum*, *Aralia elata* and *Viburnum dilatatum*, plants that are very familiar to us as exotic specialities in our gardens back at home. The temperature is very warm and by

the time we get back a cold Korean beer in the bar across the road from the arboretum is a welcome sight. Mr Choi and his colleague Dr Kwang-Woo Park, another dendrologist at the arboretum who will be accompanying us as a guide later on into the expedition, soon join us. They check our herbarium specimens and agree with our determinations. Today has been a good day to try out our field equipment, and we naturally assign ourselves roles for the smooth collecting process in the field. I will be responsible for the seed, Peter the herbarium specimens and Mark the field notes. When we are all up to speed with these respective duties in the evenings, we will all get on with the seed cleaning, which is possibly one of the most important aspects of a seed collecting expedition, as seed can deteriorate very quickly if left wet or dry in sealed bags. It can be deprived of oxygen and rot or dry out too fast, reducing the viability of the seed by the day.

We have an early start next morning in order to prepare our bags for our first trip. The water in the washroom is bitterly cold and there appears to be no hot water, but we brave a cold shower before a homemade breakfast with leftovers from yesterday's meal. Feeling cleansed and well fed, we gather outside the offices to wait for Mr Choi. I am amazed at how quickly the weather has changed. It has been raining hard through the night; the forests we were collecting in yesterday have disappeared under a shroud of mist, and the temperature has dropped considerably.

Our aim is Sorak-san National Park. Sorak-san ('snow-peaked mountain') is a series of peaks in the mid section of Taebaek Sanmaek (Great White Range) situated in the northeast of South Korea, just south of the DMZ (demilitarised zone) that separates North Korea from South Korea. But first we head south, boarding a forestry lorry for a lift to Seoul's central bus station, whence we embark on an uncomfortable five-hour bus journey northeast across the country following the South Han River through poor weather that steams up the windows, denying us any views of the country. I am sitting next to a young boy aged about nine who is chewing on a piece of dried squid, and the fishy aroma gets stronger as the journey goes on. He kindly offers me a piece, but I decline the offer, sticking to conventional Western chewing gum. I offer him a piece, which he tries; he turns up his nose and decides he prefers the squid. I fall asleep. I awake at about four o'clock in the afternoon as we arrive at our destination, a small town called



View across the mountains in Sorak-san

Yong-Dae-Lee. Mr Choi finds us a yogwan, a type of traditional inn providing bed and breakfast; it is dry, warm and comfortable, but very noisy with the sound of car and bus horns sounding off every few minutes and dogs constantly howling.

Once settled in we take a short walk and recce to the park entrance. The weather has started to clear and there are now patches of blue sky breaking through the cloud, but as the sun goes down dark comes in very quickly. We return to town and eat some noodles in a small bar before retiring to our yogwan for an early night. This is our first night on and under traditional yo and ibul, a thin mattress and form of duvet, respectively, which gets too warm in the night, as the floors are very warm from underfloor heating.

We awake in the morning to sunshine beating through the windows and mist rising up from the river valley, revealing the spectacular granite



Roof detail of Paekdam-sa



The striking bark of *Betula davurica*

autumnal leaves and the Dahurian birch, *Betula davurica*, my favourite of all birches, with fingers of light from the midday sun shining through and highlighting the wonderful loose, pale-coloured flaky bark. The tree with the greatest presence is *Acer pseudosieboldianum*, showing strong hints of bright scarlet autumn colour from its small palmate leaves through the rest of the surrounding vegetation. However, disappointingly, there is not a sign of a samara to be found.

The going is tough, as this is the first real day in the field. It's starting to test my fitness, and Mr Choi encourages us to head back. Before we do, we take in some of the splendid rugged scenery that surrounds us, with the sharp columns of granite pointing up from the river bottom. Despite the harsh nature of the rock, plants still seem to thrive on them, including naturally bonsaied, in all shapes and sizes, *Pinus densiflora*, the Japanese red pine, closely resembling our native Scots pine with its red bark. We start to make our descent to Yong-Dae-Lee and finally arrive as the sun disappears behind the mountains at 6.00 p.m., foot-weary and hungry.

I take a cold-water bath in the communal bathroom before breakfast, which consists of noodles, bread and coffee, and at 7.00 a.m. eagerly head once again for the park entrance. It is not long before we start collecting, as every plant is new to us. However, we have to be well disciplined and ensure that the plant features on our target list; otherwise, we will be duplicating the collections made in 1982 and wasting valuable time. We climb steadily through the day to 620 m (1984 ft), past Paekdam-sa, a charming, colourful Buddhist temple in Inner Sorak.

I am delighted to find *Lindera obtusiloba* with its butter-yellow



Fiery autumn tints of *Acer pseudosieboldianum*

The following morning we catch a bus and leave for another small town about 5 km (3 miles) down the road in order that we can enter Sorak-san from another direction. The trail today is a lot more difficult than yesterday with much climbing, following the river up into the mountains across great slabs of smoothly worn granite. We pass many hikers on their way down and are greeted with continual smiles and 'kamsa hamnida' (Korean for 'thank you'); I have never met a friendlier people. Growing out over the edge of a gorge above the torrent of water is *Magnolia sieboldii* clothed in red fruits with orange-coloured waxy covered seeds exposed. We saw this plant yesterday, barren of fruits, but today with some precarious climbing above the steep gorge, we manage to make a good collection of seed. This species of magnolia was first introduced to the arboretum at Kew in 1893 by the Yokohama Nursery Company from Japan and later by E. H. Wilson from



Magnolia sieboldii collected in Sorak-san flowering at Kew

Korea in 1918. With its fragrant nodding white flower and bright red stamens, it bears a close likeness to *M. sieboldii* subsp. *sinensis*, which was first found in the mountains of western Sichuan in China and introduced into cultivation by E. H. Wilson in 1908 but not introduced into English gardens until later in 1928. The flowers of both plants are best observed in the garden from beneath the pendent flowers.

Growing with the magnolia along the river is *Betula schmidtii* with its dark brown bark and lenticelled trunk, and beneath it is *Callicarpa japonica* with a profusion of purple berries. The surrounding forest contains two large stately conifers, the Manchurian fir, *Abies holophylla*, and *Pinus koraiensis*, with a deciduous element of *Acer pseudosieboldianum* and *Quercus variabilis*.

We pass 700 m (2240 ft) elevation, higher than we reached yesterday, and the autumn colour is well and truly set in here. We are climbing a magnificent natural monument known as Nam Gyo Lee (Twelve Nymph Pools), a series of large pools gouged out of the granite bed rock by millions of years of water cascading down the mountain from one pool to another. We stop for lunch, Embassy Spam and bread by the riverside. Mark spots an eye-catching climbing plant on the opposite bank and whilst leaping across



Silvery underside of *Thuja koraiensis* foliage

to photograph a flowering and fruiting *Clematis koriana* gracing a shady, mossy slope, his camera slips from his shoulder and lands in the river. It is fished out, but both camera and film are ruined. Luckily we have a spare.

We reach the last pool at 3.00 p.m., and it's a good two-and-a-half-hour nonstop trek back, leaving us an hour to collect anything we see. On the forest floor is Korean arbor-vitae, *Thuja koraiensis*, with a strange growth habit. It appears to reach about 4 m (12 ft) high, falls over and begins growing upright again, making a dense, impenetrable thicket. Some old brown cones are attached, but we struggle to find only three seeds, which we carefully bag and record.

Growing amongst the arbor-vitae is *Deutzia coreana*, one of the earliest flowering and in my mind most beautiful deutzias, producing small, graceful white bell-like flowers before the leaves appear. Mr Choi is getting fidgety and eager to begin the return hike, knowing how quickly the night will set in and how tired we will all be after a long hard day in the mountains. Our daysacks are packed with a good collection of seed, and the plant press is full and heavy from the day's herbarium voucher specimens, so we take turns carrying the press as we trot back down the track. At the village Mr

Choi has lined up some well-earned liquid refreshments that quickly quench our thirst and a sit-down to rest some tired feet whilst we wait for one of Mr Choi's friends to join us. He is apparently a keen hiker familiar with tomorrow's location. Mr Kim arrives and drives us over the mountains to our next overnight stop, a town called Osack Yaksu. At 900 m (2950 ft) altitude we drive through the Han'gye Pass, where we get some spectacular views of Sorak-san in the fading evening light.

Our accommodation tonight is a single room that the three of us will share, but it has hot water and the floor is so hot I can hardly stand on it, which is great for drying the herbarium specimens. As we dine lavishly tonight on bulgogi with heaps of garlic and good kimchi we begin to get to know Mr Choi, who is pleased to hear that we have had a good day and are very happy to have made some interesting collections.

It is Saturday morning, and after a walk round Osack Yaksu to find breakfast we return to the yogwan to pack our bags for a long day in the mountains, culminating with a climb to the peak of Jum-bong. We manage to find a lift to the start of the trek, below the Han'gye Pass, where we stopped to take in the view last night. The climb starts straightaway, and immediately Mark is excited by the wealth of herbaceous elements here; *Lychnis cognata*, *Aconitum carlesii*, *Caulophyllum robustum* and *Ligularia fischeri* all make up the rich community in the dappled light of the forest floor. The tree species include a walnut, *Juglans mandshurica*, and the Mongolian oak, *Quercus mongolica*, but unfortunately there are very few walnuts or acorns to find.

We are climbing a smaller mountain named Mang Dearm Bong to reach the foot of Jum-bong. Despite its modest height, the going is tough, and we need the tree climbing rope to help us scale a few rocky outcrops safely. We are soon in a heavily wooded valley of Mongolian oak with ground vegetation of pure *Sasa borealis*, a bamboo up to my chest. Walking is difficult as it is impossible to see obstacles protruding from the ground, and it's not long before we lose Peter, who, propelled by the weight of the plant press on his back, has tripped over an unseen tree stump and into the bamboo. Mr Choi and Mr Kim are highly taken by this and show it in their uncontrollable laughter, but Peter is clearly not amused. As we climb higher, the bamboo gets shorter, until it is only ankle deep, and the diversity of plant material begins to get more interesting again. After about another two hours of hard



E. H. Wilson in Korea, 1917

(photograph by E. H. Wilson courtesy Photographic Archives of the Arnold Arboretum, copyrighted by the President and Fellows of Harvard College, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts)

climbing and several arguments in Korean between Mr Kim and Mr Choi about directions and positions on the map, we reach the summit of what we think is Jum-bong, only to find that we are still on the smaller peak of Mang Dearn Bong. Mr Choi points to the west, and in the far distance, peeping through the shimmering haze that has now started to form in the heat of the day, is the elusive peak of Jum-bong. Mr Choi insists that we press on if we are to reach our destination before dark, and with every plant we collect, he nervously encourages us to get a move on.

We climb steadily through a dwarf alpine forest of *Betula ermanii* and *Taxus cuspidata* with occasional dwarf shrubs of smaller habit, more *Magnolia sieboldii* and *Berberis davurica*, *Rhododendron dauricum* and *R. schlippenbachii*. The higher we ascend the more free-fruited everything is and the more tired I become. We eventually reach the summit at 1424 m (4557 ft); the panoramic view is breathtaking with huge drifts of the magnolia and rhododendron running riot in the afternoon sun. I take time to remove my

heavy boots and socks to air my tired feet and reflect. When the great plant collector Ernest Henry Wilson visited and explored these mountains in 1917 he wrote, 'Not even in the richest parts of China or Japan have I seen such extensive displays of pure pink and white as on the Diamond Mountains, where *Rhododendron schlippenbachii* and *Magnolia parviflora* dominate the undergrowth for miles and bloom to perfection'.

Today *Magnolia parviflora* goes under the new name of *M. sieboldii*, and how I would love to be here in the spring to see the colours that Wilson witnessed so many years ago. Mr Choi produces two enormous Chinese pears from his daysack, peels and chops them and distributes them amongst us all. This is the most delicious, juiciest pear I have ever tasted in my life and I relish every piece as I take in the scenery and help to tidy up the many herbarium specimens we have managed to collect today. The vegetation, including the trees, grows right to the very top of the mountain—when Mr Choi talks about alpine plants, he means any herbaceous plants, not what we perceive as alpine.

I don my socks and boots once more; there is a fresh spring to my step as we begin to make our descent off Jum-bong. But this renewed energy does not last too long, and soon I am pushing my legs to their limit—oh, what I would do for a lie-down on a Korean mattress! I am lagging at the back of the team now, and whenever I can I stop to ponder the mountains that surround me. I use a photograph moment as an excuse for a break, but there are only so many photographs you can take of one mountain!

Three hours later we reach Osack Yaksu and, heaven, Mr Choi has already got the ice-cold beers in, which I drink whilst resting my aching body. It's not long, however, before we leave for the outskirts of town, a small village called Kwan-Dae-Lee, where Choi finds us a small minbak, a type of granny flat attached to a private house. The landlord has moved granny and everything else, including all the furniture, out, and we move in with all our belongings, including the seed and herbarium specimens. This is the smallest of rooms so far, and it takes some time to organise the layout for maximum efficiency. Anything would suffice after today's exertions, and the bedroll on the floor is looking more and more inviting. Still, like all yog-wans up to now, it is warm and dry, with its own fire outside and the chimney is channelled under the floor to provide the heating. We stoke this up,



Mark and Peter pressing herbarium specimens on Jum-bong
whilst Mr Choi looks on

as the weather is looking to take a turn for the worse, and head back to Osack Yaksu once more in search of dinner.

As we pass a table outside the minbak Mark points to a large, dead snake coiled on the surface and asks Mr Choi, 'Why?' We think his reply is that it is being prepared for dinner; later we find out that there are snakehunters in the village, as snake meat is highly prized for food and as an aphrodisiac. We find a small food place in town and thankfully snake is not on the menu! However, there is very little else on offer, and we eat a type of hamburger as a last resort to stave off our hunger until morning. As we are settling down to a much deserved sleep, Mr Choi comes in with some huge Chinese pears from the landlord which we eagerly consume before trying to get to sleep. Despite my tiredness, I am struggling to fall asleep because of the noise (many screaming children, barking dogs, the buzz of heavy traffic on the main road), an uncomfortably hot room and the stale, sweet stench of sweaty socks and wet boots, not mine of course, that are now steaming from the heat of the floor.

I wake to the sound of heavy rain; Mr Choi's weather forecast last night was right. I try to brave the latrine-type toilet but decide in the end to go for a walk despite the downpour. When I return I let Mark know that the snake is still on the table.

Over a cup of coffee, Mr Choi suggests that we try an area in the east of Sorak-san, as the vegetation will be new to us. It is also a touristy place so it will be easy to access and to explore, especially given the bad weather, which would make it foolish to attempt any serious mountain work. After yesterday's hard slog this sounds ideal to me, and I agree wholeheartedly with our guide. We pack our daysacks with Goretex jackets and trousers and catch a bus to Naksan, a small coastal fishing town on the East Sea. We walk along the main street past the many restaurants with fish tanks bubbling away outside, displaying their catches of the day: live squid, lobster and other unappetising species of fish and crustacea.

The waves of the East Sea crash onto the main street as we head for Ulsan-bawi, another spectacular granite formation that dominates this region of Sorak, just south of the Diamond Mountains. The rain is unforgiving, and yet it appears that every Korean family in Sorak has descended upon this tourist feature, all donning clear plastic macs complete with

hoods. Even Mr Choi wears one over his short fishing vest, and we struggle to contain our amusement in front of him. He soon gets his own back when he sees Mark wearing his brand-new, bright red 'Yeti' gaiters, which look like slippers, over his boots.

Despite having permission to collect seed in this resort, the weather is so bad that we decide to call it a rest day and sightsee with the rest of Korea. We leave Mr Choi alone in a seedy bar at the bottom of the mountain drinking coffee and climb about 3 km (2 miles) to the Kejo Hermitage. This is a small temple, partly built into a granite cave, and a subsidiary of the world's oldest Zen temple, the Sinhung-sa, built in its present location lower down the mountain in 652 AD. Unfortunately, when we finally reach it the cloud is so low it is difficult to see any of the beautiful artwork that graces the entrance or the trees that frame the temple with their would-be scarlet hints of autumnal colour. We take our turn to have a touristic photograph in front of the Rocking Rock, a huge granite boulder precariously balanced on the edge of an outcrop in front of the temple, before a final steep and bracing climb to the peak of Pison-dae. Here, in this remote area, we are greeted by a hardy, weather-beaten Korean man selling Buddha medals to tourists eager to prove that they had conquered Flying Fairy Peak. We chose the wrong day: a Sunday when every Korean family takes to the hills and the worst weather we have experienced on this trip. The one saving grace—closer inspection reveals there is no fruit on any tree, so we have not wasted a potential collecting day.

We make a quick descent and find Mr Choi comfortably dry, still drinking coffee where we left him. That he knew more than we did was clear from his grin, and I am sure he has a Buddha medal from an earlier trip. We take a bus back to Osaek Yaksu via Naksan without a stop and walk along the road to our tiny minbak, struggling against persisting rain that even the Goretex is finding tough. The sodden snake is still on the table!

The following morning we rise early, feeling hungry, and pack our bags for our return to Kwangnung. 'We're ahead of the game' is Mark's saying whilst we patiently wait for Mr Choi to get ready. The landlord of the minbak invites us to eat breakfast, quite a nice tasty broth full of large chunks of meat, until Mark remarks with horror that the snake has finally gone from the table! Before we depart, the landlord invites us to collect seeds

from the small woodland at the rear of his garden. We make a good collection of *Diospyros lotus*, the date plum, a small tree with yellow fruits resembling a cherry tomato, and *Castanea crenata*, the Japanese chestnut—both possibly planted many years ago as orchard trees but still worthy of a collection for our gardens. The terrain is steep, and Mr Choi takes a nasty fall finishing up at the bottom of the slope; the empty husks of the spiky chestnuts cover him, sticking him painfully through his clothes. It is time to leave, and we finally arrive back at Kwangnung at about 7.00 p.m. after another long bus journey.

A glorious blue sky and warm autumn weather greet us next morning, just what we need to get on top of washing, field notes, seed cleaning and drying herbarium specimens. Mrs Fu, the forestry workers' in-house cook, cleaner and laundress, shouts 'bali' from out of the kitchen—washing time. Mr Choi has asked her to do our clothes, but Mark is getting twitchy about Peter's purchases from the market in Seoul being included in the same wash as ours. He spends the next ten minutes explaining to Mrs Fu the difference between hot and cold washes and colourfast cotton and noncolourfast synthetics, in what could be perceived as a new international language with lots of hand gestures, which she seems to understand and take on board. He was right to worry. Not long after, what was a white polo shirt with red hoops is now hanging on the line (the multiuse kernmantel tree-climbing rope), a pink polo shirt, flanked by several pairs of pink underpants.

The next three days are spent resting whilst cleaning seed and preparing herbarium specimens on the south-facing balcony of our arboretum accommodation. The main priorities with the seed are to cross-check all the collection numbers against the field notes and herbarium specimens to ensure there is no mix up, put as much seed as possible into the most practical drying bags and begin to clean the fleshy drupes. The viburnums, callicarpas, vacciniums, berberis and arisaemas need to have the flesh removed and the seed washed and dried before packing them away safely. The best and most efficient wash technique begins in the field, where the fruits are squashed in the polythene bags to extract the seed from the fruit. Everything is then placed in a washing basin from Mrs Fu's kitchen and mixed with fresh water under pressure from the tap. As the water is tipped out, the floating debris is washed away with the water, and the good viable seed is left to fall to the



Fruits laid out prior to cleaning

bottom in a neat pile ready for air-drying on newspaper in the sun before packing. Depending on the age of the fruit and the species, several washes may be required to reveal perfectly clean seed. This is a highly rewarding task on the expedition, despite the hard work, and we spend many hours into the night accomplishing it, as we exchange stories about our families back home and exploits of the past days in the field whilst consuming a dram or two of a single highland malt.

In the evening we walk a few kilometres into the nearest village, Uijongba, to dine on a traditional meal, be-bim-bap, and, of course, kimchi. Be-bim-bap is a sort of eastern risotto—rice with parboiled fern, soybean sprouts, spinach and red pepper sauce, garnished with a fried egg and, occasionally,



Kwang-Woo Park

roasted ginkgo nuts. It goes down very well with a cold beer. Whilst strolling back to continue seed cleaning, we spot a shrub on the side of the road covered in small dark red berries. None of us are quite sure what it is and later, from the herbarium voucher, the specimen is identified as *Lonicera maackii*. To this day, I have never seen such a free-fruited example of this species in England.

On Thursday, 5 October, the rain drumming against the windows awakens us, so we have a lie-in as most of the work is done and the cold water in the washrooms is not an inviting thought. At 2.30 p.m., Dr Kwang-Woo Park arrives to discuss the itinerary for the following six days, in the south; he suggests a 9.30 a.m. start. The institute's jeep complete with driver are to be loaned to us, giving us much more flexibility and the ability to make short trips into different collecting regions. We are very grateful to the director of Kwangnung.

It is a fresh Friday morning, the sky is clear and bright with no sign of rain. We pack away all the seed that has been drying and wait outside the offices for Dr Park and the jeep, which is late from Seoul due to heavy traffic. We eventually leave the arboretum, and it is about 12.30 p.m. by the time

we quit the suburbs of Seoul after a gruelling drive through rush hour, which incidentally lasts all day! Our steady driver, another Mr Kim, is very surly; unbeknownst to him, 10,000 Korean Won from the expedition funds will go to the first person to make him smile. Peter is trying desperately, but to no avail. We continue to drive south along the Seoul-Pusan Expressway, passing endless paddy fields with everyone working hard to harvest the ripe rice crops before winter sets in. With every day that passes now, the night temperature drops a degree, and winter gets ever closer.

At about 8.00 p.m. we arrive at Chinju City and pay a courtesy call to the director of the southern branch of the research institute. The director and his colleagues are delighted we are collecting in their region, and following a cup of ginseng tea, we are taken out to dinner at one of their favourite restaurants. We all dine Korean style, in our own separate room with a raised floor, cross-legged on cushions at a low table—not too uncomfortable, despite our Western bodies' being unaccustomed to sitting for long periods in this position. In come the cast iron barbecues, filled with red-hot glowing coals and carried by asbestos-gloved waiters, who drop them into large holes in the table. This is true Korean bulgogi, and it turns out to be one of the very best we have eaten to date—tender strips of marinated beef, onions and lots of garlic cloves, and it just keeps coming. Even the kimchi tastes good tonight. What we don't know is that we still have another one-and-a-half-hour's drive ahead of us before we reach tonight's accommodation, which is closer to our next destination, Chiri-san National Park, and we are all feeling very weary upon arrival. The yogwan is comfortable and warm but again there is no toilet, hot water or washing facilities. Worse, it is coming up to a bank holiday, and to our dismay there are many screaming teenagers shouting throughout the night in neighbouring yogwans. We are grateful to Mr Kim, who eventually tells them to shut up. This is the first time I have heard him speak, and it is a pity that it's in anger, though I am pleased that it was not directed at us.

We are up early this morning and make our own breakfast and sandwiches for lunch with the supplies brought with us—more delicious Embassy Spam. We board the jeep and drive what would have been a two-hour walk along a monotonous concrete road to the entrance of the National Park. Today we are to collect in the southerly part of the Soback

Mountains on the flanks of Chiri-san. If possible we will climb to the summit, Chong-yang-bong, which at 1915 m (6128 ft) is the highest peak on mainland South Korea, second to Halla-san on the southern island of Cheju-do, which is 1950 m (6240 ft). Whilst we are on the mountain, Mr Kim will go in search of a yogwan for the night and arrange for somewhere to eat. As this is a bank-holiday weekend, in a popular hiking location, it will get very busy with tourists, making it difficult to find anywhere to stay locally tonight.

Immediately we leave the jeep, we are confronted with a very different flora to what we have become familiar with on this trip. A large shrub with bright, glossy red fruits showing clearly above the leaves, growing amongst large boulders washed down by the river, is the first collection of the day: *Lindera erythrocarpa*, a deciduous member of the family Lauraceae. Higher up the trail we find *Fraxinus sieboldiana*, the finely pinnate leaves purple in full autumn colour. By lunchtime we reach a large rock bluff and decide to stop to eat in the warm midday sun. This is a bad idea, for as we sit down to eat, we begin to spot more gems that need checking and end up collecting instead of eating and resting. Within the reach of one spot up on the rock, it is possible to collect from several plants, including *Phellodendron amurense*, the Amur cork tree, so called for the corky bark effect on older trees. The sun is penetrating through the leaf canopy, lighting up the autumnal yellow, pinnate leaves, the small black fruits at the ends of the branches highlighted against the leaves. Next to it is a charming multi-stemmed Amur rowan, *Sorbus amurensis*, with autumn-tinted leaves, clusters of berries on the very tips of the growing points and large purple, almost black dormant buds ready for the winter that is fast approaching.

After lunch we push on to Popkyesa Temple, one of the many small Buddhist temples that are found tucked away in the valleys of Chiri-san. This temple, built in 541 AD, has a small pagoda outside and is surrounded by *Acer pseudosieboldianum*, resplendent in full scarlet autumn colour. We are frequently passed en route by jogging Buddhist monks on their way to the various temples, with their shaved heads and naturally coloured blue-grey robes dyed from the black berries of *Rhamnus davurica* or the bark of *Fraxinus chinensis* subsp. *rhyncophylla*, both of which can be found growing wild in these



Foliage and fruits of *Sorbus amurensis* on Chiri-san

mountains. The unexpected thing about the monks' attire is the modern training shoes that can be seen peeking from under their traditional robes.

At 1000 m (3300 ft) elevation pure stands of the Korean silver fir, *Abies koreana*, a relatively small fir with needles dark green above and silver on the underside, start to appear. Most of the trees bear the violet-purple cones, and as I climb the most symmetrical tree in the area to collect them, I get covered in a sticky resin. In cultivation, this species of silver fir can bear cones at a very young age and on trees no taller than 1 m (3 ft 3 in) high, which make it an attractive horticultural plant for the garden with winter



A contemplative Buddhist monk taking
a rest after a long jog to his temple

interest. Whilst I am collecting the cones, Mark and Peter collect an interesting dwarf variety of the rock birch growing close by, *Betula ertmanti* var. *saitoana*.

The final hour of our eight-hour climb is a hard pump to the summit of Chong-yang-bong over rough terrain and boulder-strewn tracks. We take time to stare at the remarkable view south—rolling mountain peaks clothed in vegetation to their very tops, like a piece of green baize draped over many vases on a table-top. The Korean flag (t'aekuk ki), featuring symbols for yin and yang, is flying from a pole in a cairn at the top; we surprise Dr Park by revealing a Union flag from our pack and

fly it alongside. There are loud cheers and clapping from the many Korean hikers, who seem to enjoy this ceremonial performance as much as we do and want their souvenir photographs taken with our flag.

Looking north is a different story. The vegetation is dried, wind-scorched and bleak. As our warm, sweat-soaked shirts begin to cool down, we notice a dramatic fall in temperature and believe it's time to make our descent along another route, but not before collecting from a free-fruited *Rhododendron schlippenbachii*. This exquisite deciduous azalea, rightly called the royal azalea, is as distinctive as it is beautiful. With leaves in whorls of five it produces pink or occasionally white flowers in great profusion, often before the leaves have unfurled. Add to this its reliable autumn tints of red and orange and you have a winning combination. The royal azalea is also very hardy, reveling in a continental climate such as that of the eastern and central states of America. Often considered exclusively a Korean plant, *R. schlippenbachii* can also be found in neighbouring parts of northeast China and, it is said, the Ussuri region of Russia.



On the summit of Chong-yang-bong

It does not require much working out that we are going to have to move fairly quickly, with no stops for collecting, if we are to reach the awaiting jeep and Mr Kim before dark. A drink and a light snack sustains us before we start our descent, a steady trot that plays havoc with the knees. We stop for a brief respite and refreshment at a large stone-built communal refuge divided into large dormitories and bunks, where it appears that every Korean on the mountain is spending the night. We press on. The light is fading fast now, as with some urgency, we climb and leap from one giant boulder to another along a dried-up riverbed, where there appears to be no path. We find the track as the light finally disappears and darkness descends. Luckily we all have head torches in our bags, which we quickly put into action, freeing up our hands and allowing us to negotiate the rocks safely. We can see other torchlights flickering through the trees as Korean hikers head up the mountain to the refuge for the weekend. At 8.00 p.m. we find Mr Kim where we left him, in the jeep—such a welcome sight; he informs us that he has found a minbak in a neighbouring village, a few kilometres away.

We arrive not knowing what to expect, but as we approach our spirits drop as what we find is the worst so far, the pits—and expensive! For a price, a family have kindly moved their children out of a room for us to move in. There is no lighting, toilet or bathroom, no washing facilities and several families share an outside cold-water tap, with no drainage, about 20 m (65 ft) away round the corner. I am tired, hungry and not amused and whilst Mark and Peter sort the day's collections out, I go in search of some food. I let Dr Park, who accompanies me, know of my disappointment and disapproval. 'What's the driver been doing all day?' I ask him. He explains again about the difficulties posed by a bank-holiday weekend, with many people in the mountains needing accommodation for the night. I'm still not happy, and as we return to the minbak, Mark can hear me reiterating this to him. Dr Park apologetically promises us better tomorrow night.

All I could find in the way of food was a small bar in the village offering pindatok, an omelette of bean flour and mixed vegetables, cooked quickly by an old woman on a filthy gas ring cooker. I fetch Mark and Peter to eat this meagre meal and we return for an early sleep. The room is very dirty, and I choose to sleep fully clothed, whilst guarding seed from a family of marauding rats that seem to be wearing heavy boots whilst traversing the



Korean women harvesting rice in the paddy fields

ceiling for most of the night. I don't sleep much and rise early to use the communal tap before it gets busy and muddy.

By 8.00 a.m. we are packed, washed and back in the village, where we eat more pindatok from the same woman who was making them last night. I wonder, did she ever actually go home? or did she stay up all night making lots of omelettes for the many hikers descending upon Chiri-san? She is nevertheless pleased to see us again, imagining we cannot wait to try her speciality again, and we are soon tucking in, with a can of cold tea from a vending machine. Not the best way to start the day.

Mr Kim is sulking, having been told by Dr Park that we were not happy with last night's situation, and drives on to our first stop like a man possessed, leaving a dust trail behind as we roar up a dirt track into another part of Chiri-san National Park. On either side of the road the paddy fields, yellow with ripened rice, are full of women harvesting the crop and others

threshing it to remove the seed before it is made into stoops to dry in the heat of the day. Some work bent over double with babies strapped to their backs, without a murmur from the child. This is real teamwork, but where are the men? As we drive into the village at the end of the road, dispersing tables and chairs in the slipstream of the speeding jeep, several children run to greet us, clamouring for our sweets and for their photographs to be taken with us. In a small café we find all the men squatting round low tables playing ch'anggi, a Korean version of chess, obviously awaiting the delivery of harvested rice from the fields.

We leave the village on foot, Mr Kim staying behind to look after the jeep again, and head for the mountains along a forest track leading to Seisuk-Pyung-Chun. The first collection is *Pinus densiflora*, followed by a shrub resplendent in its crimson fall colour through the surrounding greenery, *Sapindus japonicum*. This small, rare, deciduous tree, about 5 m (16 ft) high, is the first recording of this species, a member of the family Euphorbiaceae, in this locality. We are all excited, especially Dr Park, who is not keen to move too fast through the forest today, as he didn't manage to get much sleep last night either.

We are stopped for lunch in a forest clearing adjacent to the river when Mark starts gesticulating wildly (mouth full of Spam): there in the canopy is a large specimen of *Kalopanax septemlobus*, a member of the ivy family, Araliaceae, with lobed leaves closely resembling those of a maple. It's got ripe black fruit on, which is unusual, as plants in this family do not usually bear ripe fruit until later in the season. As I am the official tree climber, I don the climbing harness and with the rope begin to climb the trunk and main branches, which are covered with cutting prickles. By the time I get down, I need some surgery to repair the puncture wounds in my calves and arms. What we do in the name of science!

This is an interesting piece of forest with *Pyrus ussuriensis*, one of the wild pears used in the hybridisation of the large Chinese pear that we see in all the markets and are regularly eating on this trip. With it we find *Syringa pubescens* subsp. *patula*, a medium-sized lilac bearing delightful, elegant pale violet flowers in spring. 'Miss Kim', a choice cultivar of this species, is a selection from seed-raised plants collected in South Korea in 1947; with fragrant



Syringa pubescens subsp. *patula* from Sorak in flower
in the Oleaceae collection at Kew

purple flowers fading to pale blue, it should be included in every connoisseur's garden.

We decide to finish early in the field today, as we have to drive to Chinju City to find accommodation. As we make our way back, we come across a family picnicking on a rocky bluff; they offer us some pindatok and a drink of beer that has been cooling in a bucket of water, which we share with them gratefully. Amongst the group are two beautiful little girls aged about seven years old, dressed in their Sunday best. Each has a gentian; one has tucked it in her hair, the other holds the flower carefully. Mark jokes that he would like to take one home for Lesley, and I'm not sure whether he means a gentian or a little girl. Reluctantly we take our leave of the family, thanking them for their kindness.

At the village we find Mr Kim waiting in the jeep, and the men in the café are still playing ch'anggi, looking a little more worse for wear than when we saw them this morning. Judging by the number of empty bottles strewn around the table, they have spent the day consuming soju, a pretty potent



Young girl with gentian

liquor made from distilled grains. As we drive along the road, we notice the hedgerows are full of *Platycarya strobilacea*, an interesting member of the family Juglandaceae, closely related to *Pterocarya* but with erect cone-like fruits instead of the wingnuts.

Back in Chinju City Dr Park finds us a good hotel, with the luxury of hot water and a toilet. The bedding is crisp, clean and dry, and we are all happy—this lifts our spirits, which have taken a tumble over the past few days. He also says that we can call England tonight after dinner. We eat more bulgogi, have a couple of beers and try to get

through to England on the telephone, but with no joy, despite calling from the main post office. We have an early night after a game of cards, as we are all very tired. I don't sleep much; Peter is snoring very loudly, and Mark rears up in his sleep at one point, shouts 'Is there a dog in the room?' and goes straight back to sleep. I wonder what he's dreaming about and what's going to happen next? In the morning no one believes what I say or what went on in the night.

It's Monday, 9 October—Hangul Day, the celebration of Korea's indigenous alphabet, invented in 1446. When Korea was liberated from Japan in 1945 it was declared a national holiday for everyone in Korea, except Dr Park and Mr Kim today. We celebrate by having a Western breakfast in a coffee bar followed by a walk round Chinju Castle, a walled fortress built in the Koryo Dynasty on the highest ground in the city. We buy a few souvenirs, including some vases turned from the wood of *Fraxinus mandshurica*, the Manchurian ash, with Hangul characters carved into them. Mark goes into bartering mode and gets a good price, much to the disgust of Dr Park, as this is not the done thing, and then we head off south across a bridge to



Cleaning freshly harvested rice on Namhae Island



A fruiting branch *Neolitsea sericea*

our final collecting area this week, Namhae Island. At Meejo-ri Dr Park has taken the precaution of prebooking our yogwan, because of the holiday; Meejo-ri is normally a small fishing village right on the end of the island, but this week it has been taken over by the rice harvest, and every free square metre of hard surface is covered in the yellow husks of the drying rice. The women rake it repeatedly to speed up the drying process, and several small teams of women dehusk and remove the unwanted chaff by taking advantage of the light breeze, a technique that we use on a smaller scale to clean our dry seed.

We leave our main bags and, without wasting any time, drive to a small natural monument, a piece of remnant evergreen forest on the coast just by Meejo-ri. As we walk along the coastal road toward the preserve, we are joined by a group of inquisitive young boys with fishing rods; they are highly amused when we take their rods and immediately catch a small fish from the sea. The children follow us to the woodland but soon decide that fishing beats botanising and leave us. I am debating whether or not to join



Tetradium daniellii with developing fruits in September by Kew Palace

them, especially as it is a bank holiday, but before long we are in the fenced woodland and adding numbers to the bag.

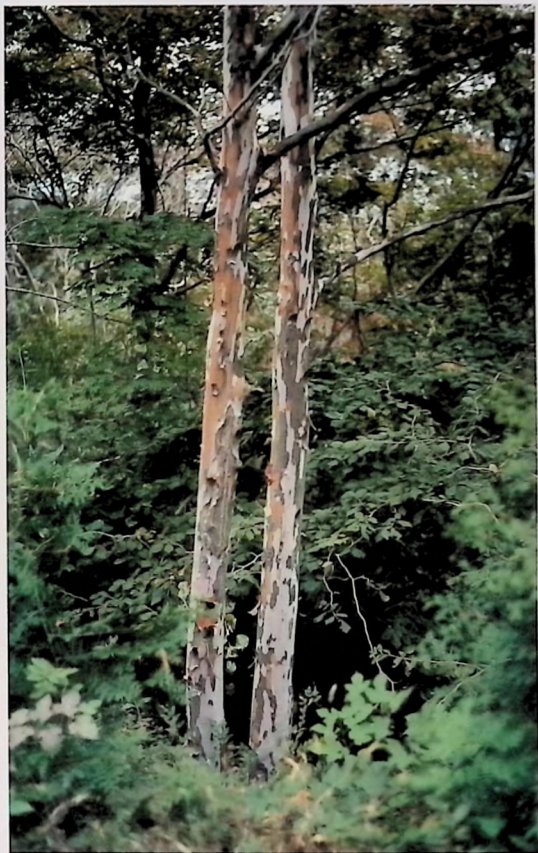
The woodland is made up of *Neolitsea sericea*, *Ligustrum japonicum* and *Euonymus japonicus*, all evergreen elements, with an interesting deciduous tree on the woodland edge which I have been struggling to grow in the arboretum for the last few years, *Carpinus coreana* var. *major*. At Kew this makes a scruffy, shrubby tree with an untidy habit; it does not grow with a leader and central stem like any other hornbeam. Despite lots of time spent trying to train it, I have just about given up, and I am pleased to see that here in its natural habitat it grows in exactly the same way. Found growing with the hornbeam is *Tetradium daniellii*, another deciduous tree that in my view is underplanted in UK gardens, as it is one of the few hardy temperate trees that flowers during late summer and early autumn. Here it has flowered and now bears the full reddish-purple fruits and their shiny black seeds.

We return to our yogwan, where we are told we can have a bath. Much time is wasted waiting for the water to run hot, to no avail; we give up and comfort ourselves with bulgogi in a nearby bar just before everything shuts

down for the night. After another bad night spent listening to the roar of Peter's snoring, I prepare for a day on the mountain, which we can see in the distance from our window. The weather looks promising as the sun makes its way up above the trees into the sky, and I can hear the chugging of small fishing boats leaving the harbour for a day's fishing amongst the thousands of tiny islands in the South Sea. We drive into the forest on the lower flanks of Kum-bong; everything has been cut and the secondary regrowth is very young. However, there is lots of new material, and with seed, so we begin the collecting almost immediately with a plant that has us all baffled, including Dr Park. It has pinnate leaves and strange bright red fruits resembling polystyrene packaging material which contain black seeds. Dr Park suggests *Sambucus sieboldiana* var. *pendula*, but we are very doubtful (it is later identified as *Encstaphis japonica*; wait until chapter 7 for the anticlimax!). Further along the track we find a wonderful *Sorbus alnifolia*, normally a tree in cultivation, but here it is a shrub, bearing very large red fruits, dangling in large, lax trusses. It's not on our wanted list, but it's too good to walk past and it's soon in the bag—Mark and Peter both promise to give it the cultivar name 'Tony's Dangler' as soon as it fruits in the garden back at home!

We next come upon a tree we are all excited about, and the happy expression on Mark's face sums it up: a lone specimen, only about 4 m (12 ft) tall, of *Quercus dentata*, the daimio oak. Mark cuts a piece with several large leaves intact; the lobed leaves on this species can be up to 35 cm (14 in) long and these aren't far off that. We have to scratch around for acorns, but finally find enough for a collection and move on. Before entering Hallyo-Haesang National Park, we pass two familiar climbing roses in full fruit, *Rosa wichurana* and *R. multiflora*, but hesitate to make a collection as we have many growing well in the species rose garden at Kew and these need plenty of room in cultivation.

Dr Park shows his ID card to park officials, and we are allowed entry free of charge, much to the treasurer's relief. The road we are now on was cut through the forest within the last three years to give the monks quicker access to the Bori-am Temple, at the top of Kum-bong. Growing at around 400 m (1300 ft) elevation in this deciduous woodland we see *Cornus kousa*, the Japanese strawberry tree; the tiny flowers and larger white pointed bracts that make this plant a winner in early summer are long gone to be replaced



The marbled trunks of
Stewartia pseudocamellia var. *koreana*

by masses of fruits. These are pendulous, red and strawberry-like, and it's easy to see how the common name came about. Growing with it under the dark canopy of the oaks is *Viburnum cerosum*, with its red fleshy fruits, and *Photinia villosa*, another red-berried shrub.

As we climb higher in elevation to around 650 m (2080 ft), the oak forest changes to ash with the occasional red pine, and amongst these appear the magnificent decorative trunks of *Stewartia pseudocamellia* var. *koreana*,

straight, with flaking lace markings, resembling pythons climbing into the canopies. There is plenty of seed; the wide-spreading white flowers must have been a show earlier this year. A second show is about to begin as the leaves are beginning to turn yellow, and as this is one of the better autumn-colouring species of *Stewartia*, the overall effect will bring these forests alight in a few weeks time. Carl Linnaeus founded the genus *Stewartia*, honouring John Stuart, the 3rd Earl of Bute and Princess Augusta's horticultural advisor, at Kew. What a superb ornamental genus to have named after you!

We finally reach the Bori-am Temple and are treated to an overwhelming view out to the East Sea and the tiny fishing boats between the many islands. As we leave the temple to make our way down the south-facing flank of the mountain, Mark finds Dr Park's white bush hat on a step and quietly hides it under his sweater. He then asks Dr Park where his hat is. Park pretends not to be too bothered by the loss but offers to buy the beers tonight if anyone finds it. A few minutes later Mark dons the hat and carries on looking at plants until Dr Park realises that he's wearing his hat. He takes it in stride, enjoying the banter and leg-pulling, and we all have a good laugh.

We need to collect seed from the black pine, *Pinus thunbergii*, which is starting to creep in on the maritime side of the mountain, but we are having great difficulty distinguishing it from the red pine, *P. densiflora*, as they seem to be intermediate in characteristics. Judging there is possibly some hybridisation between the two species, we make a collection that best matches the description but also decide to make another collection from the pines growing right on the coast to satisfy ourselves that it is true, as it is a maritime conifer that grows at sea level. We eventually make the bottom, where the jeep is waiting, and leave for Sun'chon City, but not before collecting the pine and a shrubby *Malus toringo* growing in a ditch by the roadside. We make it just in time; the heavens open as we leave, and the rain makes driving very difficult.

Tonight after a bath Dr Park takes us to meet his father-in-law, who lives in a small town renowned for its wonderful seafood and as the home of the long-necked turtle fishing fleet. We are to dine out at an exclusive restaurant highly recommended by Dr Park. Before entering the restaurant, we choose the live fish we'll later eat from large tanks on the street outside, pointing them out to an adept netsman, who catches them and places them in a large

bowl bound for the noisy kitchen. We all play safe, settling on creatures known to us back home, but Dr Park and his father-in-law are unfortunately a little more adventurous. Some odd-looking sea creatures that would be more at home in the seaworld aquarium join our humble selections, and the meal looks to be deteriorating rapidly. As we sit at our table, Dr Park enters carrying a tray of beers, holding true to his word on Kum-bong this afternoon; he recounts the hat story for his father-in-law's benefit, and we all share another laugh about it. The chefs soon follow, serving up the creatures we selected: first the crabs and other shellfish with quail eggs, crayfish and kimchi—very nice—and then a huge pile of finely chopped white cabbage covered in finely chopped live squid and octopus tentacles, still writhing over the cabbage. We have to show our host that we are enjoying this special banquet, but it is difficult. The twisting seafood latches on to my chopsticks as I move in to try it, and I cannot release it into my mouth without using my teeth to pull it off the end of the stick. I swallow. I can feel it sliding down, attaching itself to my throat, and seeing the expression on my screwed-up face Dr Park tells me to drink some soju to wash it down. It doesn't help. I gesture to the others that it tastes good and for them to help me out, but all take a sudden liking to the kimchi, for some reason. We return to our hotel in Sun'chon City, a thirty-mile drive, and collapse onto our mattresses to enjoy a badly needed good night's sleep.

This morning it is foggy with showers—a good day, I suppose, for driving back to Kwangnung. We leave around nine o'clock and arrive at the bar opposite the arboretum in the early evening, where all the arboretum staff are waiting for us to find out how the trip went. Mr Choi is there to discuss the proposed trip to the island Ullung-Do and the arrangements he has made for us. It all sounds great, and the evening turns into a sort of celebration, complete with the bar's finest bulgogi. Mr Choi, with loud cries of 'Ajimah!' (Korean for 'lady'), has the waitress running backwards and forwards for more food and beer. Just before midnight Dr Park leaves to catch the last bus home and Mrs Choi arrives to find Mr Choi (who was only to have popped out for a few minutes to greet us) a little worse for wear; she is not happy and sends him home.

The following three days are spent cleaning seed and carrying out all the other usual and necessary domestic chores associated with an expedition. I

arise early one of the mornings; it is still dark outside and looking at my watch, I make it 6.00 a.m. I can hear someone chipping away at ice frozen in a washing bowl outside—Mrs Fu, getting things ready for washing. I snuggle back into the warmth under my duvet and go back to sleep. The sun streaming through the window and the noises of forestry workers eagerly eating downstairs in the staff canteen, preparing for their day's work ahead, waken me again later. The thought of that cold shower is no encouragement to get up, but there is work to do and people to meet, so I face it. It is exceptionally cold this morning, as Mrs Fu breaking the early morning ice from her bowls reminded me, and I literally run in and out before drying off. It develops into a beautiful autumnal day, and as the clouds lift from the valley bottoms, the forested flanks of Sori-San, which I have not seen in over a week, come into view. The change is quite remarkable—autumn has really moved in, and the colours are dazzling. The grass is white with frost, and it crunches under my feet as I walk across to the offices to see Dr Park. 'There are problems in the office', he tells me. It seems Peter used the telephone to call England yesterday, and it has caused some bad feelings. In future every communication must go through Dr Park. I apologise and assure him it will not happen again.

After lunch Mr Choi stops by to see our work and notes and offers to take us across to his office to use his library. I find Krüssmann's *Manual of Cultivated Conifers* and check the information on *Pinus thunbergii* in relation to *P. densiflora*. It turns out the two species do indeed hybridise in the wild, producing *P. densi-thunbergii*. Luckily we have made several collections on Kumbong and are sure that we have the hybrid. Mr Choi enters the office carrying a large bowl of fruit, and we are treated to a feast of peeled and chopped Chinese pears and the fruits of the Chinese persimmon or kaki, *Diospyros kaki*. This is a much larger fruit than that of *D. lotus*, which we saw in Osack Yaksu, about 7 cm (3 in) across, resembling a tomato but bright yellow. When ripe, they are very juicy, but when hard and unripe they dehydrate your mouth with a single bite. We have seen these fruits being sold in markets throughout our travels in Korea, and growing on trees in small orchards around rural dwellings, but this is our first taste and they are delicious. Later in the afternoon, Dr Park and Mr Choi take us into Seoul to

change our Sterling travellers cheques into Korean Won, as there are no banks on Ullung-Do. We have also arranged to meet Mr Kim Un-Cho again for dinner, this time at his home; apparently he has some news for us.

I have never met anyone so pleased to see us. We tell him tales of our experiences over the past few weeks in Korea, taking care not to embarrass our hosts, and list the many plants we have seen and have safely stowed in the collection bag. He is elated and on the spot offers Mark and me jobs in his new arboretum, which we both decline. So what is the news that Mr Kim has for us? He whispers as though the room is bugged. 'There are four Americans also in South Korea collecting woody plants, headed by Sylvester March from the National Arboretum in Washington, D.C.' He slips me a piece of paper across the coffee table. 'This may be of use to you on Ullung-Do'. It is the full itinerary of the American party, who had visited South Korea in the spring and marked up flowering plants with high horticultural merit as part of a USNA programme to develop ornamental plants sufficiently hardy for the United States. Their next collecting area is on Ullung-Do, where they are to arrive two days later than us. We thank Mr Kim for his news and hospitality and make our way back to Kwangnung—by train, bus and taxi. I am so tired when we get back, I fall into bed and go straight to sleep.

We spend the next day sorting and packing cleaned and dried seed and placing herbarium specimens in clean, dry newspaper, as it will be several days before we get back to check and change things. We are well on top of seed cleaning, and there is very little outstanding from our previous field-work. To be ahead of the game, we pack our rucksacks with the bare minimum, literally a change of clothes and a couple of luxury items each, as we will have to carry everything with us on public transport and we are uncertain about the accommodation facilities on the island. Once we are on top of everything, I have a power nap, as tonight will be a long one.

At 8.30 in the evening, we wait for Mr Choi at the entrance to the arboretum. It's a clear night, the sky bright from the stars and a full moon; the temperature is already well below freezing, the grass crisp beneath our feet. Mr Choi arrives with his wife and two children, the younger a baby on her back in a homemade papoose. As the bus for Seoul pulls up, the young

boy gives Mark and me a present, two sweet chestnut seeds for good luck. Today is 16 October, the second anniversary of the 1987 storm that has provided us with the opportunity to be here seed collecting.

The main railway station in Seoul is pandemonium, even at midnight, with people shouting above the noisy departure announcements of the Tannoy system. About fifty percent of the men appear to be drunk, either lying around on any available floor space or attempting to make their way through the concourse, stumbling and bumping from one person to the other. One intoxicated person falls into Peter, who has already had a bellyful of this by now. Peter fires a string of verbal abuse at the man, which sobers him right up, but we are too quick for him and are soon in the ticket office, booking on the overnight train to Taegu.

The train journey is very comfortable, and we manage to get some sleep in the reclining seats. At four o'clock in the morning we arrive in Taegu, the third-largest city in South Korea and home of the country's most famous and largest Buddhist temple, Haein-sa Temple. We are met by Dr Yong-Shik Kim, a lecturer in landscape at Taegu University, a close friend of Mr Choi and an aide of the 1982 expedition. Given the hour, he takes us back to his home, where we have coffee and talk about life in general. He is very excited about us coming to Taegu, albeit for a short stopover (before we take a bus to Pohang, where we are to catch a ferry to Ullung-Do). Yong-Shik has made many trips to Ullung-Do in the past as part of his studies on *Camellia japonica*, and after looking at our wanted list gives Mr Choi lots of advice on routes and collecting stations to help the trip run more effectively. Before embarking on a short field trip we are treated to an American breakfast of ham and eggs in a large hotel—a real indulgence but none of us really enjoy it: we would prefer pindatok with a side dish of kimchi instead.

Yong-Shik and Mr Choi flag down two taxis, and we drive to the outskirts of the city to natural monument number one: a sheer cliffside, completely fenced in for protection, with the naturally occurring small tree *Platycladus orientalis* (previously known as *Thuja orientalis*) growing out of every available crevice. I am reminded of the wall separating the Duchess Border from the Duke's Garden back at Kew, where three plants of this, the Chinese arbovitae, grow successfully out of joints in the brickwork. We attempt to collect seed from them, but to no avail. Most are out of reach without the safety of

the rope that we have left at Kwangnung to save weight, and the trees that we can get to have long since shed their seed, leaving only empty cones.

We take a bus back to Taegu, collect our bags from Yong-Shik's flat and, after farewells and thanks, catch another bus for the long ride to Pohang. We have timed our arrival in Pohang to coincide with the departure of the ferry, but when we check in to the booking office there is bad news. No sailing today—a typhoon in the East Sea has whipped up the seas and no ferries will be leaving until further notice. We were warned back in Seoul that when you leave for Ullung-Do at this time of the year, you build in spare time and take enough provisions to last at least ten days. It is not uncommon to be stuck on the island for several days longer than anticipated because of bad weather; little did we know it would be the other way round.

We decide to find a comfortable yogwan close to the ferry terminal and settle down to a beer whilst discussing what we should do until the ferry sails. Mr Choi suggests a site not far away that may be of interest to us; he'll arrange for permission to collect there. If the ferry does not sail tomorrow, we will make an excursion to a forest surrounding a temple on the lower slopes of Naeyon-Bong in nearby Kyongju National Park. In the hotel I have a hot bath with Body Shop Raspberry Ripple bubble bath and lemon soap—what a luxury—and after dinner (*bulgogi*), I write a letter to Sally before having an early night, which I need so much.

At nine o'clock next morning, Mr Choi comes by to say he'll check the state of sailings at the ferry terminal before breakfast. He returns with a look of dismay on his face: although the weather looks good here in Pohang, it is bad out at sea; the ferry is going nowhere, and there is nothing we can do about it but sit tight. Mr Choi thinks it will almost certainly sail tomorrow, however, so Plan Two, collecting in Kyongju National Park, will kick in after breakfast.

The park entrance is a short bus ride from Pohang, and after a brisk walk of about 300 m (960 ft) we are at the magnificent and imposing Posong Temple. Every roofbeam and rafter is hand-painted in an array of bewildering colours and decorated with Buddhas in meditative poses staring out at you with scowling eyes. Here, many nomadic Buddhist monks take time for prayer and rest before moving on to one the other thousands of temples in the Korean mountains.

The surrounding vegetation is as interesting as the temple, with some of the largest trees of *Zelkova serrata* and *Sophora japonica*, the Japanese pagoda tree, that I have ever seen. All these specimen trees are protected by high metal railings with informative labels identifying them; they too are under the natural monument scheme that preserves so many of Korea's natural beauties. After a brief respite we leave the temple and head up into the park, following a steep, winding track to a tremendous waterfall that cascades from the side of the mountain into a large deep pool. We leave our daysacks with Mr Choi, who uses this opportunity to rest and cool his feet in the cold water, and move off into a steep gorge in search of new collections. Amongst the oak canopy we find the occasional *Celtis sinensis*, standing out by its glossy foliage, but the collection of the day has got to be *Lindera glauca*, a deciduous shrub about 3 m (10 ft) in height, bearing a few fruits: we have to search and sample every plant we can find in order to make a reasonable collection. The wood of this plant is used in the production of incense sticks in China.

As we push through the thick vegetation, climbing higher up to a scree visible from below, we come across a deciduous shrub growing on the edge of the woodland understorey in granitic spoil, *Rhododendron mucronulatum*. This is a popular plant in the winter garden at home, with its bright purple flowers appearing before the leaves between January and March; this hillside must have been alight early this spring with the wealth of fruits on all of the plants. We head back and find a plant of *Cornus walteri* growing in remnant forest close to the temple; we think it is planted, but Mr Choi insists it is wild so we attempt to make a collection. All the fruits are high in the canopy, out of our reach—until Mark climbs onto Mr Choi's shoulders and is able to pick several of the black globose fruits. By the time we return to Pohang, the temperature has fallen dramatically and you can see your breath in the sea air. The saving grace is the thought of another hot bath in the yogwan before dinner.

We wake up early the next morning to a stiff breeze blowing off the sea; chances of our catching a sailing ferry are not looking good. There is a loud knock on the door, and Mr Choi enters the cluttered room with a huge smile on his face. He has been to the ferry terminal—the boat will sail at midday. We all punch the air in delight and promise Mr Choi the best bulgogi on Ullung-Do tonight, with as many beers as he can drink.

We pack quickly, as though the ferry is about to depart immediately, leaving us with almost five hours to kill. As we return from breakfast, I spot a mini people carrier parked by the side of the road. We look through the window and spot several plant presses and a copy of *The Vascular Plants of Ohio* on the back seat; this must be the transport of the Americans—who else would have plant presses and such bedtime reading? The bad weather and delayed sailings mean that they have caught up with our itinerary.

We make our way onto the ferry, find comfortable seats below deck and right on time we set sail, bound for the elusive Ullung-Do, a small volcanic island about 268 km (166 miles) northeast of Pohang, no more than 10 km (6 miles) wide at its broadest point and rising steeply from the storm-ravaged East Sea between Korea and Japan. By order of Korea's King Yeji it was captured from pirates during the Shilla Dynasty, and until 1884 it remained a military outpost; since then there has been some migration to the island, which now boasts a population of some twenty thousand people. The mountains on the island—overshadowed by the highest peak, the extinct volcano Songin-bong, at 984 m (3149 ft)—play host to over forty species of plants that occur nowhere else, including two maples. Ernest Wilson and Dr Takenoshin Nakai visited this island several times in 1917, when it was known as Dagalet Island. Since then there have been many other forays by eminent plant collectors, but few of the plants indigenous to the island have found their way into cultivation in the Western garden. We hope to put an end to that.

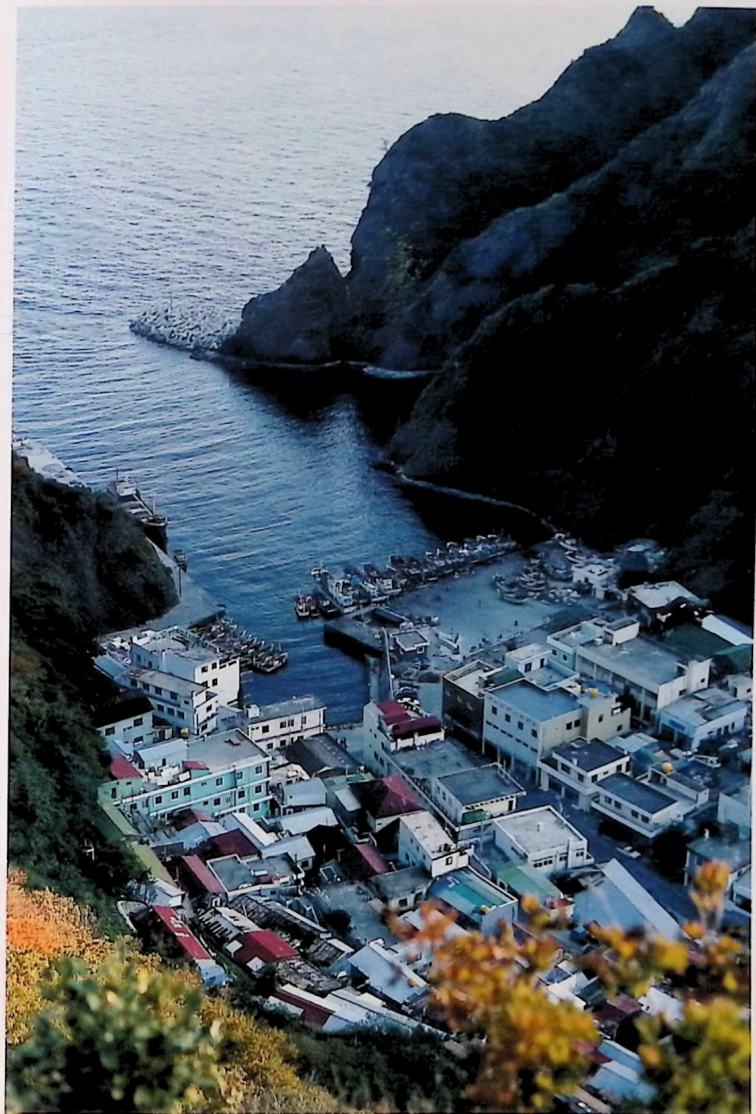
As soon as we are on the sea, we go in search of the American team; it doesn't take us long to find them. I've met Paul Meyer, director of the Morris Arboretum in Pennsylvania, several times before in England and clearly remember that he is well over six feet tall; he will definitely stand out from the shorter Koreans by towering above them all. The other members of their party are Sylvester (Skip) March from the National Arboretum in Washington, D.C., Peter Bristol from the Holden Arboretum, Bill Thomas from Longwood Gardens in Pennsylvania and their Korean guide. We meet up on deck, engage in greetings and introductions and swap stories and plant names from the previous four weeks on the mainland. It's good to talk and get news from the West, but before long we are forced below for shelter and safety, as there is a real swell building up from the remnant typhoon.



Approaching the remote island of Ullung-Do in the East Sea

Many sorry-looking passengers sway from side to side, trying to hold themselves together on their way to the bathroom. We, on the other hand, enjoy several English-language films that are being shown in a cinema below deck then catch up with the Americans again before we reach the island. We plan to meet up for a drink in the next few days before we leave for our return journey to the mainland, leaving the arrangements to our guides.

Seven hours after departing Pohang we are coming up on Todong, the capital and largest town of Ullung-Do. It is hidden away on the southeast coast, in a very steep-sided valley between two forested mountains, resembling a small fishing village on the Pembrokeshire coastline in Wales; it is not until we are almost there that we can see the harbour and the *Han Il Ho* speedboat ferry, which must wait for the seas to quell before it can return to Pohang. We say good luck and goodbye to the Americans and quickly disembark; they are amazed that we are carrying everything we need on our backs, including plant presses, with no vehicular support. Mr Choi finds us



The picturesque harbour of Todong

a very comfortable yogwan, clean with piping hot water, and we retire to the Boo-me-rang bar for dinner, a few celebratory beers and a discussion about the next few days' itinerary.

We are up with the larks and packed ready for the field by 7.00 a.m. We go in search of breakfast, eventually finding a café open, and ask the lady preparing the stoves if we can have pindatok. She seems to understand what we want, offers us a table and begins to cook. Lots of small pickle-type dishes begin to appear, and, worried, Mark returns from a quick glance into the desperately dark and dirty kitchen, his nose turned up in horror. 'It's the congealed blood and eel heads broth!' he shouts—and leaves. The Seoul experience has left him badly scarred and he's decided he cannot face it again. We all follow him out, and as we hurry up the street, we can hear the lady shouting Korean abuse at us. No other food place is open this early in the morning, so, missing out altogether on breakfast, we head for Songin-bong, which translates as 'mountain of the good people'.

We leave Todong along one of a few miles of metalled road on the island and then head up a steeply grooved track, flanked on either side by a tall grass, *Miscanthus sinensis* var. *purpureus*, through rough agricultural land. We are temporarily forced into the grass to make way for a farmer struggling to control a huge brown bullock being led by a ring in its nose down into town. Pointing to the beast, Mr Choi shouts, 'Bulgogi!' The mere thought has our mouths watering.

We continue along the track. There is the occasional tree on the edges of a degraded, mixed woodland—a lime, *Tilia insularis*, and the Japanese raisin tree, *Hovenia duleis*, with shiny foliage and an abundance of what appear to be the gnarled, shrivelled-up fleshy fruits from which it gets its common name. Under these trees we find the self-clinging *Hydrangea anomala* subsp. *petiolaris*, climbing the tree trunks and scrambling over rocks through the vegetation. It is good to see this popular garden plant growing here, in its natural habitat, rather than in its usual spot on a north-facing wall back at home. At about 450 m (1440 ft) elevation we move into rain and secondary woodland made up primarily of *Acer pictum* subsp. *okamotoanum*, one of the two indigenous maples on Ullung-Do, the other being *A. takesimensense*. The latter species is very infrequent, and we manage to find only one small

specimen; its leaves have begun to turn orange and it bears no seed. We search every specimen of *A. pictum* subsp. *okamotoanum* frantically, however, and begin to feel pretty dejected when, after about an hour, we have not found a single seed, nor any sign that there has been any.

Peter is excited about a herbaceous plant with a large orange fruiting head, growing in the dappled light of the maples; he initially thinks it is *Arisaema heterocephalum*, so we take time to collect seed and a herbarium specimen. He promises to confirm its identity on return to Kew. This is a good time to stop and don the Goretex before we get too wet, as the rain is starting to become a bit more persistent now and visibility through the trees is extremely low. We all decide that we are in need of some sustenance, so break out the emergency ration kit, Embassy Spam and some slightly mouldy rolls that we brought from the mainland. Mark sets up the kitchen in the shelter of the largest maple and begins to prepare lunch, finely slicing through the luncheon meat with his Swiss army knife and scraping the mould off the bread before making up the sandwiches. How little we knew the importance of these tins of Spam when the ambassador so kindly proffered them five weeks ago in Seoul. Even Mr Choi is getting to like it and pulls three cartons of milk out of his daysack as a token contribution to the picnic, ensuring himself a roll in the bargain.

After lunch the going is difficult; the rain has turned to hailstones that sting my face on their way down, making the track very slippery. We nevertheless reach the summit of Songin-bong, where growing all around us is a small, tough, multi-stemmed tree, the Japanese rowan, *Sorbus commixta*, on the very brink of winter dormancy with only a handful of yellow leaves still intact. Again we struggle to find seeds, and looking up into the crowns is painful with the driving hailstones. Out of the corner of my eye I see a very large, bedraggled rat run across a small clearing in the low bamboo, quickly followed by another. I look on the ground where the rats first showed themselves and find partly decomposed red rowanberries, which the rats have been collecting for their winter larder. Inspection determines the seed inside the rotting flesh is good, so we spend the next ten minutes along with the rats, collecting from the ground around the summit. Mr Choi surprises us all by pulling the Korean flag out of his bag, Peter pulls out the Union flag

again and surprises Mr Choi, and Mark surprises Peter by pulling a pair of his still-white Y-fronts out of his bag for a photo shoot. What a pity that the weather is so bad today—the view from this vantage point must be stunning.

Mark is soon concerned about Peter's health and well-being, as his waterproof clothing is not really up to the elements we are now facing here on Songin-bong. We decide to make our descent and head down into shelter and a more hospitable climate at lower elevation. We hike a different way back to Todong, past the Pong-nae waterfall to Jeodong, another fishing village just around the coastline, with the most incredible smell—never to be forgotten—of thousands of dead squid, threaded onto bamboo poles and drying on racks in the sun. Once back at our yogwan, we process the meagre collections from our fieldwork before taking a bath and some light refreshment. Mr Choi joins us to discuss the day; we tried not to show our disappointment in the lack of seed on today's plants in front of him, but our morale, which had taken a bit of a tumble, must have been clearly apparent. He suggests a two-day trip to the other side of the island, where the trees may be more freely fruiting. He did warn us back at Kwangnung that seed might be lacking on the island, but we had not really taken that on board. Anyway, we are here now, and we must make the best of it. Mr Choi's idea of going across to the north side of the island sounds good, and we will plan something along these lines for tomorrow. Mr Choi goes in search of ferry information whilst we dine alone in Todong, avoiding the café where we almost breakfasted this morning, followed by an early night.

We wake to a beautiful day on Ullung-Do: blue sky and little wind, which means that the sea must be calm—essential if we are to save time getting around the island. Given the nature of the terrain, there are virtually no interlinking roads between towns around the west or east coastline. Breakfast is skipped again, as we are in a hurry to catch a small ferry in the fish market. The harbour is full of large motorised fishing vessels, their masts strung with large mercury lamps ready for the evening squid fishing expedition. The squid boats leave Todong for the depths of the East Sea in darkness of night and attract the squid by the intensity of these lights. It is believed that this fleet of squid boats, like the Great Wall of China, can be seen from outer space.

We board a fishing boat-taxi arranged by Mr Choi and make ourselves as comfortable as possible on the coiled-up nets; the skipper fires up the



Squid fishing boats with the mercury lamps in Todong harbour

inboard engine, raising a plume of black smoke into the air, and sets sail. We chug steadily counterclockwise around the island, passing several fishing boats returning to Todong or fishing with lines closer to the coast. After about twenty minutes we dock on a small quay where, remarkably, there is a single-decker bus waiting to take us to Chonbu, the small village which is to be the start of our trek.

We make our way into the centre of the island, the huge crater, Nae-lee-bong, which was left from the once active volcano; now tilled and farmed, its fertile soil is home to a huge herb-growing industry. Once across the crater we enter a beech forest of *Fagus japonica* var. *multinervis*. Disappointment again: there is no seed, just thousands of seedlings on the forest floor from last year's heavy seed mast. Normally we would not lift plants but take only seed; however, as there are so many and this is an important tree on our target list, we carefully lift about ten plants and wrap them in damp moss to take back to England with us. We push on, finding two evergreen shrubs in fruit, *Camellia japonica* and *Daphniphyllum himalaense* subsp. *macropodum*, a strikingly beautiful plant with leaves resembling those of a rhododendron. We drop down into Chusan and walk the northern coastline, heading for Tae-

wha in the northwest corner of the island. Mr Choi assures us that a bus will be along soon, but it fails to show. We stop for refreshments and a rest and carry on, finding a massive landslide that has dropped everything including the road into the sea. We attempt to traverse it but finally give up as the sea makes it impossible to pass, leaving the only option: to turn around.

Back along the road we find an alternative route and decide that we must hurry, as it is now 5.00 p.m. and it will soon be dark. We are all feeling very weary and take a few minutes' rest under a small, isolated, spreading tree by the side of the road. It turns out to be *Zanthoxylum ailanthoides*, and it has plenty of ripe fruit on it, about to shed the seed, which we collect. Suddenly we hear the sound of a vehicle approaching; Mr Choi flags the long-wheel-base jeep down as it comes into sight—it appears to be a taxi running between Chusan and Tae-wha. After speaking with the driver, Mr Choi announces, 'One thousand Korean Won each to Tae-wha'. The treasurer replies, 'That's far too expensive, we'll walk'. Peter, who is looking pretty fatigued by now, goes straight into a turn, desperately wanting a lift for the rest of the journey. But Mark has already jumped in the back, laughing, shouting, 'I'm joking'. Peter is not amused as he climbs in the back to join him, and we head off over the mountain, finally arriving in Tae-wha as it begins to get dark.

Mr Choi finds us an excellent minbak overlooking the sea, which we can hear clearly but not see. It is clean and warm, and the family who own it are very friendly. The mother asks if her son and his friends, who are gathering outside, can meet us, as they are intrigued by our visit and would like to practise their English with us. We agree, and in double-quick time they are in our room, giggling and smiling, practising the rudimentary phrases they have recently learnt at school. They follow us to the only restaurant in the village and watch us through the windows all night. Mr Choi apologises in advance to us: the owner has no bulgogi and after several days of squid, beef sounded inviting. 'They only have Chinese food', says Choi shrugging his shoulders, 'and they only have sweet and sour pork and chicken in black bean sauce left'. We can't believe it, coming all this way to be treated to a feast of Chinese food. 'Four portions of each and lots of rice', we reply. As fast as the food comes out, we clear the plates, making up for all the missed



Squid hanging up to dry in the small port of Tae-wha

breakfasts and packed Spam lunches. The chef is flattered and cannot believe how much we have eaten so quickly.

We return to our minbak to watch a World Cup football qualifier on the television. South Korea beat China by one goal to nil. We then have a few problems with the lights, as, for some reason, the master lightswitch for the house is in our room, and we keep switching off the whole house by mistake. Our hosts find it highly amusing.

This morning as I lie in bed, I can smell fish—outside, now in daylight, the entire seafront, as far as I can see, is covered in squid drying on racks. A quick recce of the area and we find there are two large deciduous trees on the neighbouring property, left over from remnant forest, and they are cov-

ered in seeds. One is *Acer pictum* subsp. *okamotoanum* and the other is *Celtis chosieniana*, and after getting permission from the owner, we are soon climbing them and making two more valuable collections, now making the trip to the island well worthwhile. *Celtis* is not one of my favourite groups of trees, but this particular species seems to make an attractive medium-sized tree to 25 m (80 ft).

We leave Tae-wha in good weather for the final leg of our journey on the island to climb over another mountain, T'aeha-dong, situated on the southern coastline. On the summit of T'aeha-dong occur two conifers more associated with the Japanese flora, *Pinus parviflora*, the Japanese white pine, and *Tsuga sieboldii*, a Japanese hemlock.

A short journey around the coast on a fishing boat taxi followed by a short bus ride and we are back in Todong, after what seems like a week's travel. We are all exhausted, but there is still one location to visit before we call it a day on Ullung-Do. On one of E. H. Wilson's visits to the island he found a small cotoneaster, with arching branches and an abundance of matt, crimson-coloured berries, which was later named after him—*Cotoneaster wilsonii*, Wilson's cotoneaster. It grows with *Abelia insularis* on the hills above Todong, in a small, dedicated reserve.

Despite our weariness, we make one final climb to the summit of a promontory between Todong and Jeodong to search for it amongst the ground vegetation and grasses. We are out of luck and fail to find it; however, we do find a terrific, tagged specimen of *Sorbus commixta*, with signs of a previous visitation from our American friends. On the way down, after a pause to watch the hustle and bustle of Todong from above, we come across several paper mulberries, *Broussonetia papyrifera*, a wonderful economic plant in the family Moraceae. It has orange globular fruits and rough, hairy leaves that vary in shape from simple to unusually lobed, and its bark is used for making paper in Japan. This is the last collection of the trip.

Tonight we take Mr Choi for dinner and a celebratory drink in the Boomerang bar before looking up the Americans in the five-star Todong Hotel. We find Peter Bristol cleaning seeds on his own, whilst the rest of the team are out for the evening; it appears from our short chat that they have had the same problems as we have, with a shortage of good seed. We leave him to his seed cleaning and go in search of his fellows to say our goodbyes, soon



Cotoneaster wilsonii, an endemic species to Ullung-Do

finding them in a noisy, smoky nightclub having a whale of a time on the dance floor. They obviously haven't walked around the island, as we have today. Mr Choi is very uncomfortable and uneasy and I can't say that I am surprised, so we leave to have another quiet drink in the peace of the Boome-rang bar on the way back to our yogwan.

At 1.00 p.m. the following day we catch the *Han Il Ho* speedboat ferry, and after a superb cruise of less than four hours, we are on the mainland at Hupo, just north of Pohang. The next twenty-four hours are spent traveling, through the night, back to Seoul and then Kwangnung on a series of buses and trains. We are physically and mentally exhausted when we finally arrive at the arboretum, but there is no time to lose. Once Mrs Fu leaves for home, Peter heads for her kitchen and serves us up a mouthwatering egg and chips. Now is the time to begin reducing the levels of garlic in our bodies in preparation for our return home to our wives!

We have much to do now, following a very successful expedition, in preparation for our return to the UK. There is work needed on the seed collections and herbarium specimens (both the ones just brought back with us from Ullung-Do and the ones we left back here); there are preparations for

a lecture to the arboretum staff about Kew Gardens and, the best of all, a farewell party in the bar opposite the arboretum with all our new friends. It's a great party that goes well into the night, with lots of OB beer, soju, and an opportunity for me to sing the theme song from *The Beverly Hillbillies*, 'The Ballad of Jed Clampett'. Dr Park has a dance with a dried squid, and I present Mr Choi with my flashing red bow tie, which he has admired so much on this trip.

It's the early evening of our last day in Kwangnung, and the temperature is a good ten degrees below freezing as we walk across the grounds, the white grass crunching beneath our feet. This feels like the right time to be leaving Korea; winter is literally just around the corner, with temperatures that regularly drop to -32°C (-25°F)—not the time to be taking cold early morning showers in the Kwangnung bathroom. Before we leave for Seoul next day, we take in the surrounding scenery one last time. Spectacular is an understatement—there is not a single shade of green amongst the yellows, reds and oranges of the deciduous elements on the mountainside. It seems so long since we were in the mountains of Sorak-san yet the time has passed quickly, and we will soon be back at home with our families, looking forward to a fairly mild English winter, compared to what's in store here in South Korea.