kisaeng and actors sokpyŏn, sang

p.490, 25:29a) Abolish all the ch'anggi (婚妓: kisaeng) and yorak (妓女: female musicians, actresses?) in the capital and provinces. (note: Do away with all the registers of kisaeng (妓籍: kijŏk) and make sure that all of them have designated husbands (ch'ongbup'unfu), and do not allow them to play music. If one has to (婚宴) entertain people with (婚宴) use a petty official to (婚宴) get musicians (工入: kong'in) to do it. When envoys or guests arrive and there is anyone who as before gets kisaeng (婚妓: ch'ŏnch'ŭm) to offer them wine, play music or go to bed with them, both host and guest will be dismissed from their posts and have his name expunged (from the list of officials.)(end note)

indented: Kisaeng were established as tools to seduce men into lust and depravity (婚妓之设, 海濱引誘之具). Nothing could be worse than to transform an entire age (generation) and lead it in the direction of debauchery and profligacy (放靡). According to the Li-chi, "In the courtyard of an official (office) you don't talk about women." If even talking about women is prohibited, how much more so (worse) is having intimate relations with them (犯賤)? In ancient times from the court and the kuo-miao (郊廟: the kuo-she and the tsung-miao 宗廟) down to the offices of officials, the alleys and bywas (in the streets), all matters pertaining to government and education, laws and commands, clothing, food and drink, institutions practiced and music were (in accordance with Heaven's principles, and for this reason every person practiced these matters and were at ease in their customs, and without thinking about it every day did what was good and kept wrongdoing (crime) at a distance. In later ages, from the court and the official yamen down to the alleys and byways of the towns all regulations and institutions became totally ignoble (不體: kuch'a). Moreover, it only happened that people sought what was convenient to them on the basis of human desires (人欲之取便). And for this
kisaeng and actors - 2 - sokp'yŏn, sang

p. 490, 25:29b) reason, even those people who practiced these matters (government, laws, music etc) and were at ease in their customs also began to flow day by day into evil, but they did not realize what was happening. This was the reason why the (moral) way of the age fell into filth (wu 汗), and confusion grew more and more by the day. Even though they used strict punishments and lofty laws (ch'un-fa 剥法), yet still they were not able to prevent people from entering into wrongdoing (crime). If a bright king were to appear, he would be obliged to rectify everything, and what more so than the practice of having kisaeng and musicians in official quarters leading people into depravity?

Some might say that: In the reign of our Changhon taewang (Sejong) there was a discussion at court about abolishing official kisaeng. Everyone said: He strongly under Sejong) is a courageous and upright man; he definitely will advocate this. Then they asked Hŏ Chu, and he disapproved (of the suggestion), saying: 'There is nothing wrong with taking (using?) goods that belong to the government (officials). (kwarmul ch'wi chi mubang 官員取之無妨). If you abolish them, then court officials young in age when they are guests in the provinces will definitely will do corrupt things and risk (punishment) by seizing (women?), and will fall into criminal action! For this reason (because of Hŏ Chu's opposition) the discussion at this time came to an end. Hŏ Chu was a famous minister and his opinion must have been the result of what he had seen.

To this I would reply that if man's feelings and desires are let loose (not restrained), then they become even more lustful (burning). Man's desire always originates from what he sees or hears; it was for this
kisaeng -3- sokp'yön, sang

p.490, 25:30a) reason that the ancients (ancient people) had to respect appearances (gave respect to what other people could see of their own behavior?) and gave up lewd sounds (music) and kept bad women at a distance.

(寧其瞻視而放淫聲遠邪色也).

But at the present time (the officials) keep these lewd kisaeng, and once they hear that an envoy or guest is coming, they have the kisaeng make up their faces and don fine clothes to wait for the guest's arrival.

25:30b) Then they pour out the wine and urge them to drink (yu chi) and they play music to arouse them (tell them, "These women are house kisaeng (panggi) (t'iao-chih). They have them sleep with them, and they openly have them sleep with them.

The envoys and guests also say: "There's nothing wrong with taking something that belongs to the officials (government) is there? (kwanmul ch'wi chi mubang). There's nothing wrong with sleeping with an official kisaeng, is there?), and thus do not show the slightest reluctance to do so. Because of this they get dragged by their feelings and mired in their desires which results in their doing harm to their conduct of government affairs and their damaging morals and teachings (因以事應溺欲, 官政, 僞風教); there are so many people who have lost their basic mind (pomsin) that I cannot count them all. Any person whose goodness is not robbed from him because of the existence of this system (of official kisaeng) has to be a superior man. (夫有此而不為所奪者上也), but you can't hold every person responsible (for proper conduct when he is faced with temptation?). It is possible for every man to lead a life at ease and without error if this did not exist (if you did not have a system of official kisaeng), and if there were people who were not able to overcome their desires and seized (took away, forcibly violated?) the wives and daughters of the people, falling into criminal and perverse behavior, much such would be the lowest of
men. Basically it is not worth discussing the (idea, fact) that a state should establish institutions (systems, laws) and yet not strive to clarify li (etiquette, proper behavior, proper moral standards) and laws (fa) nor strive to rectify men's minds, but (rather) only establish in advance these "tools" (the kisaeng) for the benefit of the lowest (most depraved) of men for the purpose of satisfying their private lusts. How is this principle? (此豈理也：何是其理?)

If we follow this opinion (that of Hŭ Chu), then the love of wealth would also be something that human desire could not do without. Thus fearing that men might fall into crime (stealing), we might construct a system in advance in which there would be nothing wrong with people obtaining property (wealth) by unrighteous (improper) means and (having set this up) wait (for the envoys and guests to arrive) to give it to them. (i.e. we might then establish a system where we rob property from the people and keep it on hand in the magistrate's yamen to give to envoys and guests when the come for a visit).

At the present time even thought the envoys bearing royal orders who come to visit the magistrate's yamen in the provinces are sadaebu (scholars and officials) in name, but in most cases they are just people who carouse around into the wee hours of the morning (yuryŏn). When private guests come to call in the homes of the village streets, even though they may be the commonest and lowest of types, I have never heard of them staying for long periods of time as guests and cohabiting with women (p'yŏnganja). It is the situation (i.e. the provision of official kisaeng to visitors) that causes it to be this way. (se sayŏn ye). If you look at it from this point of view, then the opinion of Hŭ Chu also appears to be a common (worthless) view, and noone should entertain any doubts about the need to abolish kisaeng and female musicians (ch'anggi). Moreover, if one talks about the
p.491, 25:3la) present situation, at a time when in the capital they are selecting (kisaeng) who have not yet been abolished, the behavior of the sadaebu (scholars and officials) is debauchers and libertines (hwangman mimi). When these flower girls (hwado) are abolished and done away with, then this evil will come to an immediate end. In recent years when large parties have been held (p'ungjongs), they have temporarily brought in kisaeng from the countryside many and court officials have fought with and insulted one another in their competition over the kisaeng. One can also see how wrong this is. Moreover, they (the kisaeng) are people, too. The people on top (of society) have not been able to instruct them in proper moral standards, but instead enter their names on the registers of kisaeng making it impossible for them to have designated husbands; and if they want to take a husband, they immediately punish them for a criminal action. What kind of regulations, what kind of system is this?

indented note: According to the laws of the Great Ming dynasty, officials and the sons and younger brothers of officials are both prohibited from being intimate with kisaeng girls (female entertainers). In our country during the reign of Chungjon in kimyo year (1519), (kisaeng) were once abolished, but then a bunch of people were able to get their way and the system was restored.)(end note)

At the time we respectfully received an imperial edict (from the Ming court) we abolished the practice of holding "false mountain" parties (kasan uhl). I note that the practice of holding "false mountain" parties originally came from the Hu (Muchen, Manchu?) customs; not only is it extremely irregular (pu-ching), but it constitutes a great mistake in terms of the fact that we should respectfully receive (and carry out) an imperial edict. Furthermore we summon the uin(actors, kwangdae-entertainers, comedians, acrobats etc) from the 8 provinces.
and they are kept in the capital for months on end; they cause the
bankruptcy of the families among the people, they lead men's minds
astray. To anybody who sees (this), it is obvious that the harm they
do is extremely serious and not small. Therefore it ought to be
completely abolished.

Indented note: Some might say that even though this is a low
type of game (party) and extremely irregular, it has been a long practice for
us to do this when receiving imperial edicts (from China). To abolish
arbitrarily, on our own authority This is because
this all of a sudden would not be convenient. 我国
that our country has long practiced base customs and has not
yet changed them. It is not something which the law codes of China
have, and whether it is abolished or not is not something that the
Chinese court need know about.

However, if it is not convenient to abolish this arbitrarily
then we should prepare a communication setting out the reasons to be
sent to the (Korean court), and then abolish it. (end note)