

dence that the church was capable of sustaining and perpetuating itself for the next 192 years. Ruiz de Medina drops hints that there may be Korean documents supporting his thesis, but again, he offers no direct evidence of such documentation other than hearsay on the part of several Korean families "with a Christian tradition of more than three centuries."

The second difficulty with Ruiz de Medina's argument is that the ethnic Koreans in Japan, of whom there were many, were not part of the Catholic Church in Korea but rather Koreans members of the Catholic Church in Japan. This did not make them any less Korean nor any less Catholic, but it does not establish them among the founders and early leaders of the Catholic Church in Korea. One is not certain whether Ruiz de Medina is attempting to assert the role of Japan or the Jesuits or perhaps both in the founding of the Catholic Church in Korea, but virtually all of the historical section of the book concerns activities that take place outside of Korea. While the historical data and supporting documents shed much light on the role of Koreans in the Japanese church and tell a great deal about the Western missionaries and their interest in Korea, the argument for the earlier date of the founding of the Catholic Church in Korea is not sustained.

Ruiz de Medina admits that he does not speak or read Korean and in footnote 22 on page 31 makes the incredible statement that he is unaware of any uniform system for the romanization of the Korean language. Yet the McCune-Reischauer system came into use in 1939, the Yale system in the 1950s and the Korean government Ministry of Education system in 1976. The McCune-Reischauer system of romanization is the standard for most Korean scholars.

This glaring lack of linguistic competency perhaps highlights the area where further research needs to be done if the full story is to be told of Christianity in northeast

Asia in the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries. Someone needs to follow up on Ruiz de Medina's vague hints concerning a Christian community in Korea in the 1600s and those families with a Christian heritage of 300 years. It may very well be the case that the Christian community of the 1600s were members of the crew of the Dutch ship Sparrow Hawk, which ran aground in Korea on August 16, 1653. On September 14, 1666, eight members of the crew escaped in a small fishing boat and made their way to Nagasaki, where word of their exploits almost certainly became known among the Christian community. Hopefully, Korean scholars or Westerners who are as fluent in Korean as Ruiz de Medina is in Japanese will take up the challenge and continue the story that he tells so well in this most controversial and interesting book.

Hamel's Journal and a Description of the Kingdom of Korea 1653-1666

Hendrik Hamel

Translated by Brother Jean-Paul Buys

Seoul: Royal Asiatic Society/Seoul

Computer Press, 1994. 107pp. Paper.

*Reviewed by Daniel J. Adams,
Hanil Theological Seminary, Chonju*

In the seventeenth century the Dutch had well-established trade routes between Batavia, present-day Jakarta; Taiwan, which was under Dutch control from 1624 until 1661 as one their East Indian colonies; and the Japanese port of Nagasaki, where the Dutch had a trading post at Deshima. In the summer of 1653 the Dutch ship Sperwer (Sparrow Hawk) set sail from Batavia for Taiwan with a crew of sixty-five and the newly appointed governor of Taiwan on board. After discharging both the governor and cargo in Taiwan, the Sperwer set out for

Nagasaki, the next port of call. Unfortunately the ship encountered a severe storm and on August 16, 1653, ran aground on the rocky shores of the southernmost Korean island of Cheju. The ship's book-keeper was a young twenty-three-year-old sailor named Hendrik Hamel from the Dutch town of Gorinchem. For the next thirteen years Hamel kept a record of the experiences of the thirty-six who survived the shipwreck. *Hamel's Journal and a Description of the Kingdom of Korea 1653-1666* became the first account of Korea to be written in a Western language.

First published in Dutch in 1668 and in another edition in 1669, the book was translated into French in 1670, German in 1672 and English in 1704. The English translation appeared again in 1918 and 1971. Korean editions were published in the 1930s and in 1954 and from 1961 to 1965 a Japanese translation appeared. The English and Korean editions were in fact based on the French translation that contained numerous inaccuracies and textual errors. This newest translation of Hamel's work was carried out by Brother Jean-Paul Buys, a member of the Taizé Community in Korea. Buys was born of Dutch parents in Indonesia and has lived in Japan for seven years and in Korea for seven years. With the aid of the Dutch Embassy in Seoul, he was able to obtain a copy of the seventeenth century manuscript that was reprinted at The Hague in 1920 and, as he states in his "Translator's Account" at the beginning of the book, "With the aid of a Middle-Dutch dictionary I set about making the first translation of this text into English...."

There is no doubt that Buys' translation will become the definitive edition of Hamel's journal. The text of Hamel's work consists of three parts—the journal itself, questions asked by the governor of Nagasaki along with Hamel's answers and a description of the kingdom of Korea. Hamel was not an educated man, and his journal and description of Korea reflect not only the perspective of a seventeenth-century sailor

but also must be understood within the context of thirteen years of cultural isolation in a totally foreign land. Korea was at that time known as the Hermit Kingdom, and any foreigners who happened to find themselves in Korea were not permitted to leave.

The journal tells of the initial kindness shown by the Koreans, the long trip to Seoul to visit the king, an attempted escape by two of the crew resulting in their imprisonment and eventual deaths, the terrible famine from 1660 to 1662 in which thousands died and the final distribution of the remaining survivors (eleven had died) to three cities in Cholla Province: Namwon, Suncheon and Yosu. Hamel's observation concerning the kindness shown by the governor of Cheju is worth noting. He wrote: "We were taken care of by a heathen in a way that would put many a Christian to shame" (p. 8).

Perhaps the most amazing encounter that Hamel had was a meeting with Jan Janse Weltevrete on October 29, 1653. He too, had been shipwrecked on Korean shores in 1627 and was one of only three survivors. They were brought to Seoul and entered into service at the royal court. Seventeen or eighteen years earlier the other two Dutchmen were killed during a battle against the Manchus and only Weltevrete survived as the lone European in all of Korea. He served as interpreter and liaison between the crew of the *Sperwer* and the king and his court.

Although treated reasonably well by the Koreans, the crewmen were still captives, and they longed to return home to their families. Several attempts at escape failed but finally on September 4, 1666, Hamel and seven other crew members were able to escape in a fishing boat and make their way to Nagasaki. On September 14 they were called before the governor of Nagasaki and questioned concerning their adventures. Among the questions asked by the governor were: "Had any of us ever been to Japan, and how did we know the way?" None of the eight had previously been to Japan but friendly Koreans gave them navigational

directions so that they were able to find their way, first to Gôtō and then to Nagasaki.

At least two of the sailors from the Sperwer have been identified as Christians; one was either a Quaker or Mennonite and the other was a member of the Reformed Church. Hamel himself made frequent references to Divine Providence and in his *Description of the Kingdom of Korea* makes several significant observations concerning religion. In his description of Buddhism he notes: "Many monks believe that long ago all people spoke the same the same language, but when people built a tower to climb into heaven the whole world changed" (p. 61). One wonders just where this story that is so similar to the Tower of Babel came from. Hamel also noticed the so-called Buddhist trinity (actually a Buddha image with two bodhisatvas) and another member of the crew, Mattheus Eibocken, thought "that somehow the shadow of the Holy Trinity was concealed in this" (p. 76, fn. 15). One rather questionable observation of Hamel's was that Buddhist monasteries were often used by nobleman as whorehouses and that the monks were much inclined to drinking. Having no way of knowing the accuracy of Hamel's comments, this reviewer can certainly say that such is not the case at Buddhist monasteries today.

In the seventeenth century there was considerable trade between Korea and Japan. Japanese traders from the island of Tsushima established a trading post in the southern Korean city of Pusan. In addition, there was also some contact on the more official governmental level that made use of the Tsushima-Pusan connection. When the government officials in Seoul discovered that Hamel and his seven companions had escaped to Japan they summoned Weltevree, now about seventy-years of age, for questioning. Negotiations began with Japanese officials for the release of the remaining crew members of the Sperwer.

Arrangements were made for them to depart Pusan in July of 1668, but they did not reach Nagasaki until September 16 because of bad weather. After being questioned by the governor of Nagasaki they were allowed to sail for Batavia, where they arrived on April 8, 1669 and were reunited with Hamel. In 1670 they all returned to Holland and their Korean adventure came to a close.

One crew member, however, chose to remain behind in Korea where he had a Korean wife and family. Hamel says nothing in his journal concerning relations with Korean women, and Buys suggests that this omission was intentional considering the fact that many of the men had wives and children back in Holland. Although none ever returned to Korea, several expressed a strong desire to do so if the opportunity were to arise, and this may have been because of second families back in Korea. Even today in Cholla Province one occasionally hears rumors of light-complected Koreans who are said to be the descendants of the crewmen of the Sperwer. Hamel himself died in his hometown on February 12, 1692. He never married.

Hamel's Journal and a Description of the Kingdom of Korea 1653-1666 is a fascinating account not only of Korea itself but also of Korean-Japanese relations of the time and the part that the Dutch played in this relationship. Jean-Paul Buys has provided an excellent translation of Hamel's text along with notes, comments on the text, illustrations, sample pages of various early editions of the book and a listing of Korean words and transliterations as originally written by Hamel. Although an unlearned sailor, Hendrik Hamel has provided us with one man's view of what life was like in northeast Asia in the latter half of the seventeenth century, and he showed remarkable strength of character during what must have been thirteen very difficult years. In this age of globalization we can all profit from a reading of this most interesting book.