

## KAESONG, KOREA

**K**aesong, located in the center of the Korean peninsula, is the southernmost city in North Korea. The city is surrounded by the Songak (송악산, 1,600 feet) and Pongmyong mountains. The city's topography is mostly low hills, apart from the mountainous northeast region. Mt. Janam (340 feet) stands within the city center, and around half of the city is forested with pine trees.

The local climate is typically moderate and warm, with an average annual temperature of 50° F. January, with an average temperature of 21° F, is the coldest, while August, with an average temperature of 77, is the warmest.

Due to the climate and soil, Kaesong is fruitful agricultural land. The primary crops include rice, maize, soybeans, wheat, barley and ginseng. Livestock and silkworm farming are also common and fruits and vegetables such as peaches, apples and persimmons are grown locally; white peaches are a local specialty. The textile and handcraft industries supplement local commerce.

PART 1

개성



## INTRODUCTION



**MY HOMETOWN**, Kaesong (개성), Korea, is about a two-hour train ride north of Seoul (서울), the capital of South Korea. Kaesong is a fair-size city; it was a capital of Koryo (고려) Dynasty in the olden days.

After World War II, when Korea was divided into North and South at the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel line, Kaesong was made part of the South. I was a young student then. But when they redrew the line after the Korean War just a few years later, Kaesong became part of the North.

So I cannot return to my hometown because it is now in North Korea, which is ruled by a dictatorship and closed to the outside world. We are not allowed in, and I never found out what happened to my mother and our relatives who stayed in Kaesong during the Korean War. It's heartbreaking, because I have been to the demilitarized zone (DMZ) and have been able to drive very close to Kaesong, to the point where I can actually see my hometown, but I cannot go there.

This book records the memories of my childhood in Kaesong, as well as my life in the years since then. It is my wish that my grandchildren read my story and use it as an example in their lives. I hope it will help them understand where they came from. My story is their story, too.



*The author, Kyong Seon Park, when she was 42 years old.*



*My father, Nam Jin Park, as a boy and a young man in the early 1900s.*



## BEGINNINGS



**THIS STORY STARTS** with my father, Nam Jin Park (박남진) and my mother, Keum Sum Whang (황금섬), in the 1920s, in the time before wars took over our lives and changed them forever.

I am the second daughter of my parents. My sister, Kyong Sook Park (박경숙), was six years old when I was born on March 24, 1931.

At that time, my father and his three brothers, even the ones who had wives and children, lived with their parents. When my father and mother were married in the early 1920s, my mother moved in with his family, which was the tradition in Korea at the time. As was typical in those days, my parents' marriage had been arranged through their families, and my sister was born at our grandparents' house.

My father was the third child of five in his family. He had three brothers and one sister. My mother was also the third child in her family of five. Like my father, she had three brothers and one sister. Both my mother's family and my father's family were considered well-off. They were upper middle class.

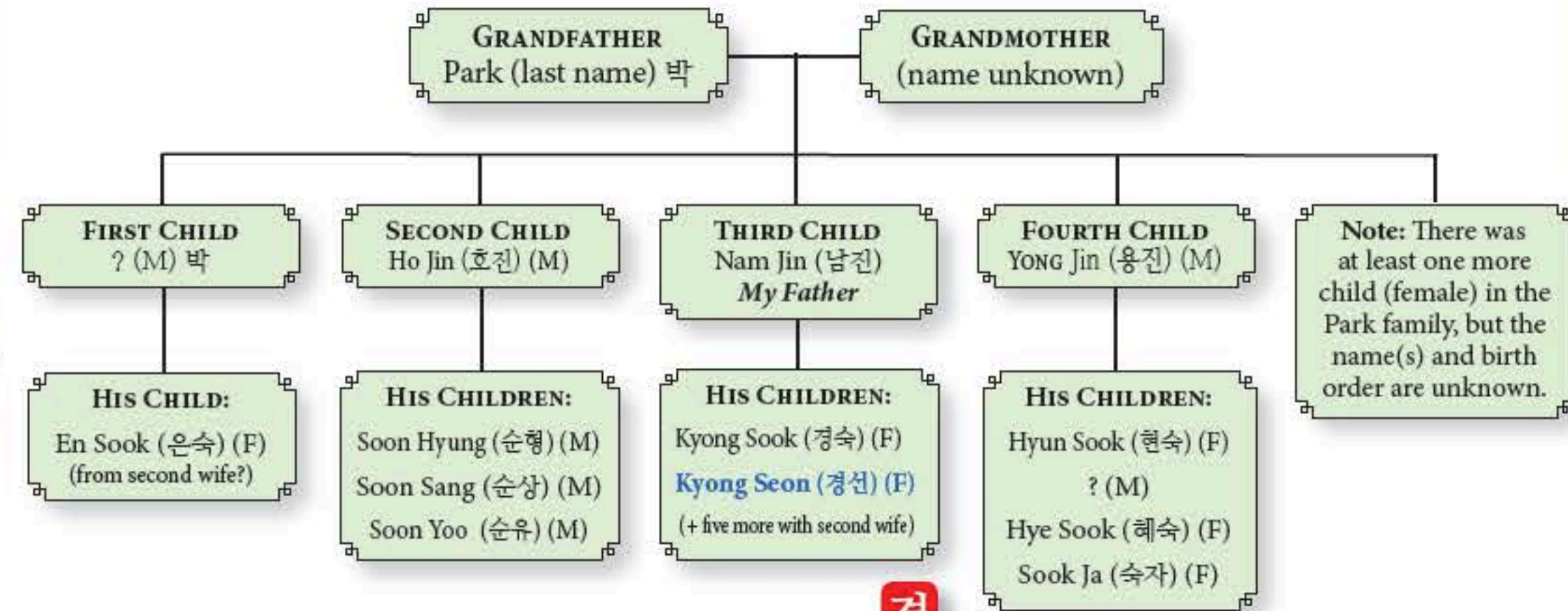
My father made a living in the mining business as a developer of mines. He became very wealthy. However, he used his business as an excuse to travel all the time. While he was away, he met another woman and strayed from our family. The reason my sister and I were born six years apart is because my father was with this other woman



*The only picture of my mother, Keum Sum Whang, in her late twenties, sometime in the 1930s.*

# 박

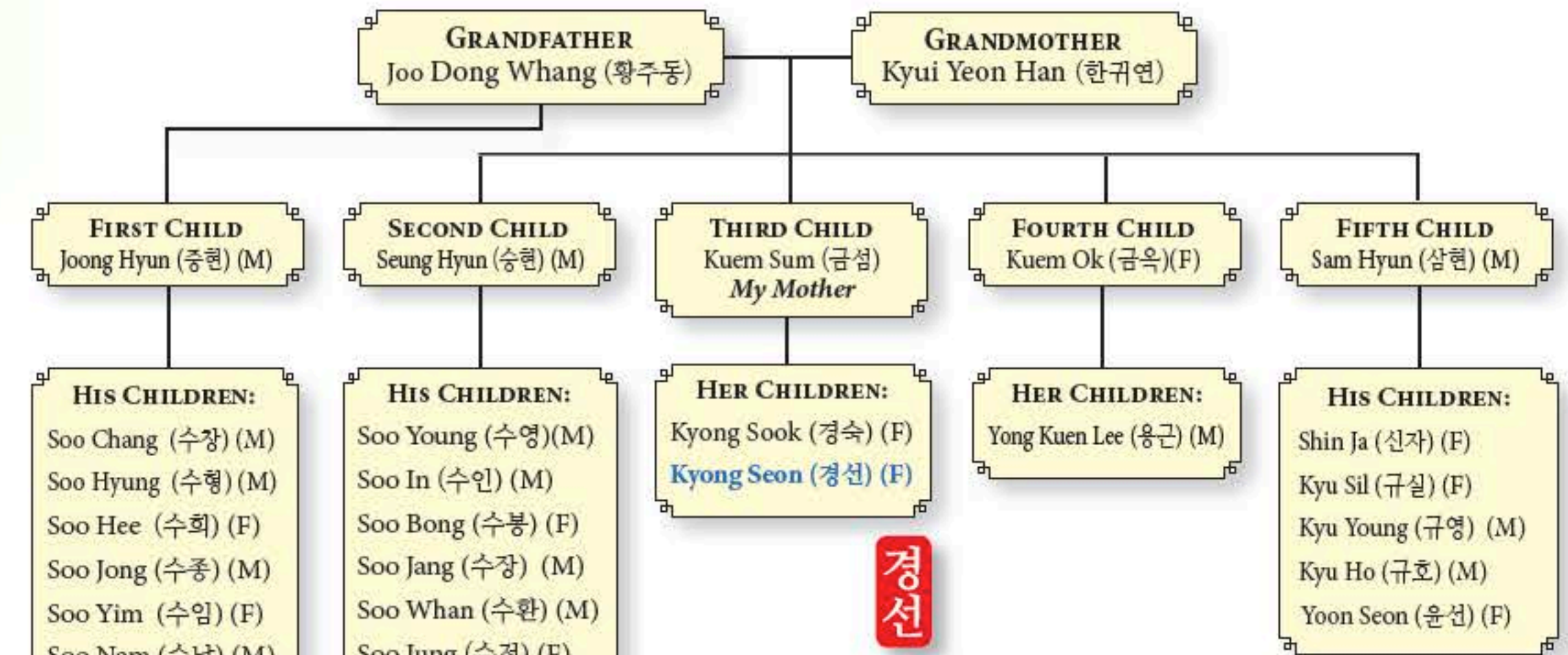
## Park Family Tree



경선

# 황

## Whang Family Tree



경선

