

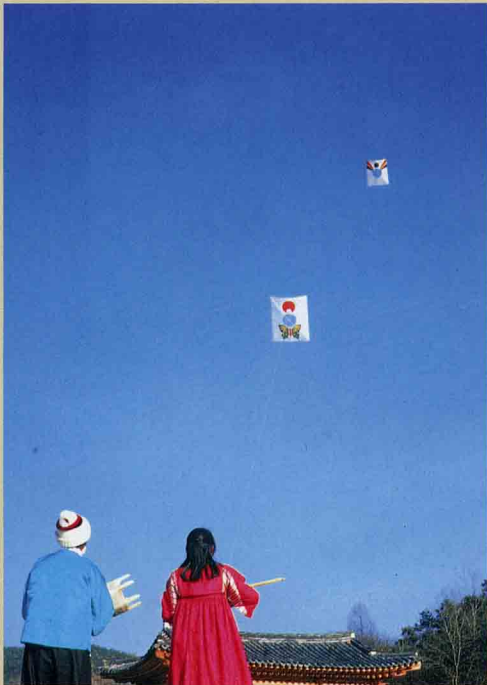
Yŏn nalligi

Kiteflying, *yŏn nalligi*, has long been a national pastime for Koreans, especially during the New Year's season. Even nowadays, contests are held throughout the country in winter.

Kiteflying usually reaches its peak on Taeborŭm, the first full moon of the new lunar year. On this day in the past, it was customary to write one's name and birthday and the phrase "Bad luck begone, good luck stay" on a kite (*yŏn*) and let it fly away in the hope of ensuring good luck throughout the new year.

The "kite fight" is the most popular kite game. As the object of the game is to cut an opponent's kite string, a mixture of glue and crushed glass or pottery is used to coat the string to make it tough and abrasive. The trick is to maneuver one's kite so the string is over the opponent's kite string and then alternately pull and release it in a sawing motion to cut the opponent's string. Other contests include competitions to see who can fly their kite the highest and the longest.

The tailless "shield" kite is the most common kind of Korean kite. It is a rectangle with a bowed top and a



hole in the center. The bowed top enables it to fly high and far while the hole makes it resistant to strong gusts and gives it great maneuverability.

Of the many other kinds of Korean kites, the diamond-shaped *kaori yŏn*, or stringray kite, is the second most common variety. Sometimes a number of them are strung together to make a long kite. Kites

in various shapes such as dragons, phoenixes and other birds and animals are also popular.

The earliest record of kiteflying in Korea is contained in Korea's oldest history book, *Saenguk sagi* (*History of the Three Kingdoms*) which was published in 1145. According to the account, a star fell from the sky in 647, the first year of the reign of Queen Chindŏk of the Shilla Kingdom (57 B.C.-A.D. 935) and it was regarded as a bad omen for the queen against whom a rebellion was raging. Kim Yu-shin, the general who was leading the fight against the rebels, sent a large burning kite into the sky one night and spread the story that the star had returned to heaven, a fortuitous sign, and thus succeeded in suppressing the rebellion. ♦