

RENOWNED FIGURES IN KOREAN HISTORY



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Editor's Note

The Korean people have lived as a single nation on the same land for over 5 000 years since the dawn of the human history. Over the protracted time they have created and developed their own national culture with their industrious labour and inexhaustible resources while defending the sovereignty of their country from the invasion of the aggressors with ardent patriotism and matchless courage.

The spiritual and material wealth they have created—typically, the world's earliest metal type and iron-clad boat, and charming Koryo celadon—are substantial denominators of the wisdom and talent of the Korean people.

This book introduces anecdotes about some illustrious Koreans who played a landmark role in promoting the national development, divided into three parts of military commanders, scientists and technicians, and people of literature and arts.

We hope this book will help the readers have a better understanding of the time-honoured history and brilliant culture of the Korean nation.

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Military Commanders

Using a Carp

It was in 28 when foreign aggressors invaded Koguryo (277 BC–AD 668).

The aggressors encircled and attacked the Winaam Fort, which was one of the bulwarks in defence of the capital of the country. They, however, met with Koguryo troops' stout defence. So they took the tactic of making the troops and other people in the fort surrender under stress of thirst by besieging it for a long time.

The fort stood on a rocky area, and there were few springs. The fort's source of water supply was a pond in it. But the water began to decrease owing to a prolonged drought.

Taemusin, the eighth king of Koguryo who reigned from 18 to 44, became quite uneasy. If the situation continued the people in the fort might collapse before the enemy, the king thought.

At the time Ul Tu Ji, one of the top government officials, proposed the king a trick he had conceived. Ul said: According to our agent, the enemy is waiting for water in the fort to dry up, seeking to launch an attack when our people break down under stress of hunger and thirst. We know the enemy troops are also exhausted as they have come a long way without eating properly owing to our tactic of leaving the fields empty while defending the fort. So, if we make them "recognize" that there is plenty of water in our fort, they will withdraw realizing that theirs is an absurd tactic.

Then Ul asked the king to allow him to catch a carp from the pond and take it to the enemy commander along with wine.

The king approved the proposal.

Ul caught a carp from the pond, wrapped it with a water plant and sent it to the enemy commander along with wine and a letter signed by the king.

Seeing the carp writhing in the water plant the enemy began to vacillate because they “knew” that there was plenty of water in the fort.

As long as there was plenty of water in the fort it would be unreasonable to wait for its people to collapse under stress of thirst.

The enemy commander soon decided to withdraw and wrote a letter to the king of Koguryo. The letter read, “My king, without



thinking of my stupidity, ordered me to bring troops to reprimand Your Majesty. So I had to cross the border of your country and come here. But I've been at a loss to know what to do. Then, fortunately, I've received the food and the letter associated with your sincerity, and I'm struck with boundless joy by your quite mild and polite words. Now that I have what I should say to my king, I'll return."

The enemy force finally began to retreat.

At the sight the king of Koguryo said, "I'm sure there is no parallel like this tactics in history. What a wonder it is to repulse such a powerful enemy by using a carp! Ul's stratagem deserves Heaven's praise."

The Koguryo troops, in high spirits, continuously made surprise attacks on the retreating enemy at all points, inflicting wholesale deaths upon them.

Koguryo's Famous Commanders— Miru and Nyuyu

In February 246 tens of thousands of troops of an invader nation attacked Koguryo both from the north and the south. The Koguryo forces annihilated and captured some 6 000 of the enemy troops in two battles on the Piryu Stream and in the Ryangmaek Valley.

Tongchon, the 16th king (227–248) of Koguryo, began to feel carried away with the victory.

He said, "The enemy's large force is no better than our small one. The enemy commander is a famous general, but his life is now at my disposal."

Underestimating the enemy, he had the armoured cavalry,

5 000 strong, pursue the foes. This was his gross error.

As the saying goes that “He that slights his enemy dies by his hand,” his reckless pursuing ended in a bitter defeat, deceived by the enemy tactics. He retreated with only over 1 000 armoured cavalry soldiers. After taking the Hwando Fort, the second capital of Koguryo, the enemy continuously chased him. By the time he retreated to Namokjo (South Hamgyong Province at present), reaching Juk Pass, almost all his cavalry soldiers had dispersed and he himself was in danger. The enemy encircled and closed in upon them in order to capture him alive.

Then Miru, a general of Koguryo, entreated the king, “Your Majesty, I wish you would escape from here.” The general went on to say he would check the enemy’s advance.

The king, however, said, “No! How can I try to be alive alone when my mistake has caused this adversity?”

“Your Majesty, it’s not right. It is a subject’s duty to give himself up for the sake of the country. But you’re in charge of the state affairs,” said Miru.

“Thank you. But how can I face the sky after I survive alone with all the subjects dead?”

“Your Majesty, subjects’ death will be worthwhile only when their country remains secure, so I wish you to escape soon so that the subjects’ death would not turn out worthless.” Now tears began to flow from the king’s eyes.

“Thank you, Miru. As there are loyal subjects like you, I believe Koguryo will never be ruined. I’ll leave here as you wish,” the king promised.

Miru, together with his death squad, frustrated the enemy in their attack.

In the meantime King Tongchon had a safe escape through the forest. Miru got wounded and fell in the battle ground.

After having a narrow escape King Tongchon gathered his dispersed troops in a valley. Meanwhile, Miru was brought to a Koguryo camp on Ryuokku's back.

When the king's party reached Namokjo the enemy rushed in, putting the Koguryo king in danger again.

Then Nyuyu proposed to take good dishes to the enemy commander pretending he would surrender, and give a party before stabbing him.

The king asked, "Do you think you will be able to get away after stabbing the enemy commander in their camp?"

"The subjects and soldiers here will survive, then, I'm sure," said Nyuyu.

"What? Wouldn't you be sorry for your death?" the king urged.

"How could I feel sorry about my death when I know it will not be worthless?"

"Are you sure your death will not be worthless?"

"Your Majesty, please allow me to do what I propose. If a subject lays down his life to save his country from crisis, it will remain an honourable deed forever, I dare say," Nyuyu replied.

Now the king raised him to his feet, embracing him, and said, "Your sacrifice will never be worthless."

Nyuyu prepared and took a spread to the enemy commander.

Satisfied that Nyuyu, a famous general of Koguryo, had brought a spread to him, the enemy commander came up to the table. At the moment Nyuyu swiftly took a dagger from under a plate and stabbed the commander in the chest. Then he also got rid of some other commanding officers of the enemy before dying a heroic death.

Having lost their commanders, the enemy force was torn apart. The king of Koguryo, taking advantage of the moment, destroyed the enemy units one by one, thus changing the situation radically.

At last the Koguryo army annihilated the enemy in hot pursuit until they recovered all the land temporarily occupied by the aggressors, and won the war.

Through Wonderful Tactics

Myongnim Tappu (67–179) was the first chief minister and a patriotic military commander of Koguryo who distinguished himself in wars against foreign invaders until he was well over 100.

In 172 foreign aggressors invaded Koguryo. Having received the urgent report that large enemy forces were intruding into the country, Sindae, the 13th king of Koguryo who reigned between 165 and 179, immediately called his ministers including Myongnim Tappu, the chief minister, into his palace.

“Large enemy forces are invading our country. What shall we do?” the king asked.

The ministers were all silent. They were surprised to hear of the invasion of the large enemy forces. And they knew the country was not prepared to cope with them.

After a good while a minister said, “If we don’t counterattack the enemy because we are not ready to fight, they will make lighter of us and act more violently. So we must go to war right now.”

Another minister said, “He’s right. Although the enemy is large in number and our troops are less, we will have nothing to be afraid of if we fight making good use of the topography of our coun-

try with steep mountains and narrow roads, I think.”

Other ministers nodded.

Then Myongnim Tappu took a step ahead towards the king.

“I don’t think so,” he said.

The other ministers looked doubtfully at him.

“Why?” asked the king.

“According to the rules of war, one should know about oneself first and then about the enemy. The abovementioned suggestion is a measure based on the awareness of our own situation, but not on the idea of the enemy’s situation, I think,” the minister replied.

“The enemy’s situation?” asked the king.

“Yes, Your Majesty. Knowing about the enemy means knowing their weakness. If the enemy forces are to intrude deep into our country, they have to cover a long distance. Then they will run out of provisions they’ve brought, and they won’t be able to bring any more because of the long distance. If we take advantage of this and leave the fields empty and hold the fortresses for several days, the enemy will be unable to fight any more because of hunger. Then we should attack them with strong troops, and they will retreat without resistance. If we take the opportunity to strike the enemy using steep mountains and narrow roads, we will win the war with ease, I think,” Myongnim Tappu explained.

After a while of thought, the king decided to follow his plan.

The king soon gave an order for the entire country to leave not a single grain of cereals on fields and not a handful of salt in villages and to be fully prepared to fight in every fortress.

Afterwards, the enemy forces came so far to attack the Winaam Fort, cheated by Koguryo troops’ tactics of allurements.

But unable to break the stubbornly resisting fortress, the en-

emy had to encircle and hang round it.

Having run out of provisions at last, the enemy, hungry and tired, gave up and were going to retreat.

Then Myongnim Tappu led thousands of his soldiers to take up a position in a field, and when the enemy entered the field, he had the left and right accesses of the field closed and launched an all-out attack, thus exterminating the invaders.

It is said that not even a single horse of the enemy survived the battle.

Ulji Mundok

Ulji Mundok (late 6th century—early 7th century) is a patriotic commander of Koguryo who rendered distinguished services in the war against foreign aggressors.

Born at the foot of Mt Sokta (in Sokta-ri, Jungsan County, South Phyongan Province), he, from his childhood, practised military arts like horse riding and archery. He became a military officer before being promoted to minister-level officer.

In 612, when Koguryo was attacked by three million foreign invaders, he became the commander-in-chief of the Koguryo army.

The enemy's naval force, which had advanced into the vicinity of the Walled City of Pyongyang (North Pyongyang), attacked the fort only to be driven away by a powerful counterattack of the Koguryo army, losing 35 000 troops.

Now the enemy formed a detachment of 305 000 troops to detour in an attempt to pass the front and attack the walled city. When they left, each of them had to carry food for a hundred days, weapons and accoutrements but they were too heavy. So the en-

emy soldiers buried the food in their bivouac before leaving. A few days later they were faced with hunger.

At this juncture, Commander Ulji went alone into the enemy's camp to know the latter's situation, and "negotiated" with the enemy commander. In the course of this he found out that the enemy was in disorder and suffering from food shortage. He made up his mind to employ the tactics of clean field and decoy to destroy the enemy.

He had the Koguryo army make believe to fight the enemy and retreat seven times a day, luring the enemy to a spot 12 kilometres away from the walled city. Now the enemy found the defence of the city too strong to attack.

Then Ulji wrote and sent a poem to the enemy commander.

The poem reads:

Thy divine tactics has got through astronomy.

Thy mystery tactics has mastered geography.

Thou have already performed great feats in battles.

So how about return home with satisfaction?

After reading the satirical poem when they were already extremely exhausted with starvation and continuous fighting, and dispirited to know they could hardly break the defence of the Koguryo army, the enemy began to retreat. Ulji Mundok commanded the Koguryo soldiers to attack the enemy front and rear when they were halfway in Salsu (river) to cross it, dealing a heavy blow to the latter. Only about 2 700 of 305 000 enemy troops survived the battle.

Yon Kaesomun Strikes Terror into Enemy

Yon Kaesomun (?–660) was a famous patriotic military commander of Koguryo. He came from an aristocrat's family; his great-grandfather, grandfather and father had been in the post of *mangniiji*, the highest government position of Koguryo, successively.

In his childhood he was courageous and good at martial arts. He was upright, and his great build gave him dignity.

At the early age of 15 he was employed as an aide to the king. During his growth the internal and external situation was very complicated. An aggressive foreign country was interfering in the internal affairs of Koguryo with an undisguised scheme of conquering the country. And Yongryu, the 32nd king of Koguryo who ruled from 618 to 642, and some other high-ranking officials were cowardly enough to succumb to the aggressive force. Displeased with this, Yon staged a coup in 642 and took the post of *mangniiji*, who held all the reins of the country.

He took a hard-line attitude toward the aggressive foreign country. When the enemy sent an envoy to interfere in the internal affairs of his country, Yon took a resolute measure of shutting the envoy up in a cave. He put efforts in to the preparation for coping with the aggressors' imminent large-scale invasion. His general strategic goal was to detain the enemy on the defence line until they ran out of food and lost morale while it began to be cold, and advance to their rear to block their supply and withdrawal routes so as to annihilate them through attacks both in front and in rear.

In order to attain the goal he consolidated fortresses and positions. He made sure that important fortresses and positions were

provided with lots of war supplies and that different kinds of advanced wall-defending equipment were fixed while reinforcing walls and digging moats deeper.

Besides, he allocated able people to their proper posts. This can be proved by the fact that he appointed Yang Man Chun as lord of the Walled City of Ansi. Yang later kept his honour as a celebrated commander by leading the nearly 90-day-long resistance warfare to victory, thus leaving his name in history.

Yon also strengthened the strategic defence points on the way to the capital city, and newly built the walls of the capital city. He always believed in the power of his country. So he always maintained a hard-line policy, striking the enemy out of wits. Having watched for a chance to invade Koguryo, the aggressor country launched the invasion of Koguryo by mobilizing one million strong armed force in 645.

Yon organized and mobilized the Koguryo army and people for the struggle against the aggressors, and mercilessly beat off the enemy. The commander of the enemy force presented a bow and fine silk fabrics to Yon before fleeing. Yon, however, chased the aggressors as far as to the northern border, annihilating many of them.

Later when the aggressors invaded Koguryo again, he employed versatile tactics to repel them successfully and safeguard the sovereignty of the nation.

As the enemy suffered such telling blows from Yon Kaesomun there came a story that even a child stopped crying in the enemy country when they were told, "There comes Kaesomun."

Commander Ondal

Ondal was a famous military officer of Koguryo in the late 6th through the early 7th century.

According to *Samguksagi* (Chronicles of the Three Kingdoms), Ondal was so poor that he, wearing patched clothes and old shoes, wandered through streets to beg food for his blind mother. He looked very shabby, so he went among the people as Ondal the Fool.

Phyonggang, the 30th king (559–590) of Koguryo, had a daughter, who often cried as a child. Whenever she cried, her father jokingly said, “You often cry, and I am afraid you won’t make a gentleman’s wife. So you’ll have to marry none other than Ondal the Fool.”

Later, when the daughter grew up, the king decided to marry her to Mr Ko. The princess said in protest, “Your Majesty used to say you would marry me to Ondal. What’s made you change your words now? Even an ordinary man hates telling a lie, and I dare say, Your Majesty, you have to keep your words. They say a king cracks no joke, and Your Majesty’s order now is something wrong. I’m afraid I can’t obey your words.”

The king got angry and said, “If you’re not going to obey me, you are no longer my daughter. I can’t share my home with you. Leave here, and go anywhere you like.”

The princess left the royal palace, and managed to get to Ondal’s home.

Ondal’s mother, however, refused to accept her, saying her son was too miserable to be a match for a woman of distinction and that such a woman could not live with them as they were poor.

Then the princess said, “Our forefathers said, ‘Even a *mal* of grain or a *ja* of cloth may be indispensable.’ If we share one mind, I believe we can live together irrespective of wealth and distinction.”

The princess thus succeeded in persuading Ondal and his mother to accept her, and managed the household affairs using the money she obtained by selling her trinkets.

One day, asking Ondal to go and buy a horse, the princess said, “Please do not buy a horse from a dealer, but surely choose a horse which was abandoned from the national list as it is thin and drawn from illness.”

Ondal bought such a horse, and when the princess fed the horse well, it daily grew fat and got well. With the help of the intelligent princess, Ondal developed his strength and wisdom, and soon mastered outstanding martial arts.

At that time warriors from across the country gathered on Rangnang Hill in Pyongyang on March 3 every year to hold a meeting in which they competed in strength and martial arts through hunting. Present at the meeting were also the king and his ministers.

Ondal caught the most animals while running ahead of others at the meeting. So the king appointed him as high-ranking military officer.

In 577, when a foreign nation invaded the country, Ondal fought as vanguard leader.

When confronted with the enemy on the field of Paesan, Ondal incisively grasped that the enemy were exhausted after coming a long distance. Their military discipline slackened, with their position out of order. And the enemy thought that the battle would start only after positions were put in order on both sides. Accord-

ing to Ondal's correct decision there took place a surprise attack against the invaders and it produced an amazing effect. The enemy's position turned into a scene of utter confusion. In the grip of fear they began to flee. Now Koguryo troops, in high spirits, kept attacking the enemy raising a battle cry, thus winning a great victory.

The king conferred on Ondal a high peerage, called *taehyong*.

Though in a high place, Ondal never forgot his pledge to devote his all to his country and people until he died in battle.

Yang Man Chun and Battle to Defend Walled City of Ansi

Yang Man Chun was the lord of the Walled City of Ansi. The following is what happened during the battle to defend the fortress in 645. An aggressive foreign country that had long prepared for invasion, sent hundreds of warships and a one-million-strong army to invade Koguryo by land and sea.

After taking some fortresses temporarily, the enemy force began to attack the Ansi fortress in late June.

The fortress was situated on a very important strategic point.

Only after taking the fortress would the enemy be able to advance southwards without worry. And if Koguryo lost it, it would be difficult to check the advance of the invading enemy.

The fortified city was being defended by a 100 000 strong army and people under the command of Yang Man Chun.

The battle was fierce from the outset because the 150 000 strong Koguryo reinforcements were defeated in an enemy trap. Thus the fortress became utterly helpless.

Yang Man Chun, however, never wavered in the least, but encouraged the army and people to repel the enemy's attack. He had previously achieved internal unity, fortified the city thoroughly using natural features of the locality and set aside food, firewood and war equipment a lot. Meanwhile, he had intensified the military training of troops, made clear the duties of officers and men, and appointed talented soldiers as commanders, putting them in charge of things fit for their ability.

Yang thwarted every step of the enemy's attack by dint of flexible tactics.

He organized steady assault-team activities inflicting losses on the enemy's manpower, weapons and combat equipment and exhausting and striking the enemy with terror.

When a corner of an earth heap the enemy had made by mobilizing 500 000 people for 60 days, crumbled, Yang immediately ordered his army to launch a counterattack taking the earth heap and smashing the enemy. Still, the enemy obstinately launched six or seven attacks a day, and the fierce battle to repulse them lasted for over 80 days. In the meantime the summer passed followed by the autumn.

One day on the ramparts there were flags of various colours fluttering and troops armed with bows and spears standing while glaring down.

Looking at the scene of the fortress the commander of the aggressors burnt with anger, and issued a fiery order for his men to attack the fortress quickly.

At the moment an arrow flying from somewhere stuck into his right eye, and then the gate of the fortress opened wide with Koguryo troops flooding out at a time.

Having narrowly escaped from death, the enemy commander hurriedly collected remnants of his defeated troops and ran away.

The fierce battle of 88 days ended in the defeat of the aggressors. The enemy commander who had lost one eye had to withdraw his aggressive force and flee. His troops were so embarrassed to see their commander blind in one eye that they kept the fact secret. It is said that there was none of his portrait showing his front face.

As to Yang Man Chun's exploit, it is written in *Samguksagi* (Chronicles of the Three Kingdoms) that the lord of the Ansi was truly an uncommon hero.

Leading Two Wars to Victory

Kang Kam Chan (948–1031) was a plain man of small build, but he was fond of reading from his childhood, which might explain how resourceful he was.

In 983 Kang won the first place in a state examination, and was assigned to different government posts before being promoted to the highest post in Koryo (918–1392), a feudal state of Korea.

He played a great role in bringing two wars against foreign aggressors to victory in 1010 and 1018 respectively.

In 1010, 400 000 foreign troops invaded Koryo. Unfortunately, the main front of Koryo troops collapsed owing to the carelessness of their general commander Kang Jo who neglected his duty. This caused a serious situation in which the invaders were coming close to the capital city of Kaegyong (Kaesong at present).

At that time not a few of the feudal government officials suggested that they should capitulate.

Kang Kam Chan reasoned with them, "It is a difficult war, so

we should avoid the enemy's attack before taking a measure to recover gradually, I think."

Expressing his opinion like that, Kang told the king about his plan: "As the enemy intends to catch you, Your Majesty, alive to make you surrender, I think you and the government should temporarily take refuge into a safe place. We should leave nothing for the enemy so that they suffer from cold and hunger. We should wait for the enemy to withdraw while blocking important routes,



and organize pursuit to annihilate them.”

The king approved the plan.

The aggressors occupied the capital city of Kaegyong and went on a rampage, pillaging and destroying mausoleums, the royal palace and private houses. They, however, had to suffer from hunger and cold owing to Koryo’s tactics of leaving all fields clean. Furthermore, their withdrawal route was menaced by the Koryo army’s fierce rear attack. The enemy had to beat a general retreat ten days after their occupation of the city.

The Koryo army waged violent surprise attacks and encirclement battles on the Kuju (Kusong) and Thongju lines, annihilating tens of thousands of the enemy troops and driving the aggressors out of the territory.

In 1018, when the foreign aggressors invaded Koryo again with a 100 000 strong force, Kang Kam Chan, as front commander, led over 208 300 defence troops to take up a defence position in Hunhwajin, a border fortress. His plan was to frustrate the enemy’s elite cavalry’s attempt to attack at its initial step.

After examining the local topography carefully, he saw to it that all ox hides in fortress storehouses were gathered and linked with a long rope. And according to his order posts were driven into the bottom of the upper Samgyo Stream to be checked with the linked ox hides fixed to the posts so as to keep water from flowing. Water began to swell in the blocked stream forming a large reservoir. Meanwhile Kang put 12 000-odd cavalymen in ambush in a valley and forest along the stream.

Having reached Hunhwajin, the aggressors began to cross the stream to attack the fortress. When they reached the middle of the stream, Kang had the “ox hide dam” burst all at once. Then a hor-

rible flood from the reservoir devoured the aggressors at a time. Those who had managed to crawl out from the stream were ambushed by the Koryo cavalrymen. The enemy suffered from wholesale deaths without even screaming.

Though they received several telling blows, the aggressors kept rushing towards the capital city of Kaegyong. Then Kang made sure that all people evacuated the areas around the city and went into the fortified city leaving their villages and fields empty. Meanwhile, the defence of the city was further strengthened.

As a result, the enemy who had reached Kumgyoyok (Kumchonyok), had to retreat owing to Koryo's tactics of leaving all fields clean and attacking the enemy in the rear.

In accordance with his operations plan, Kang encircled and annihilated the enemy on the Kuju line with sudden rear and front attacks. Only thousands of the 100 000 aggression troops fled alive across the Amnok River. This was later named Sweeping Victory in Kuju, one of the Three Great Victories in the Middle Ages including the Sweeping Victory in Salsu and Admiral Ri Sun Sin's Sweeping Victory over the Japanese Armada off the Hansan Island in 1592—recorded in the history of Korea. The battle is still told and retold as a legend about Kang Kam Chan.

Kang was a talented military strategist who, on the basis of his correct understanding of the aggressors' weakpoints, employed flooding, ambush, chasing, leave-fields-clean and other tactics to frustrate the enemy's attempts to attack, thus helping Koryo win two wars.

Ever-victorious Strategist

Koryo in its closing days suffered from acute social and class antagonisms and extremely confused state order owing to the feudal rulers' corruption and vicious exploitation. To make matters worse, it was often enveloped in flames of war due to foreign aggressors' invasion and plunder.

In this period of time a man distinguished himself by spending his whole life to national defence in order to save the country from the crisis and defend the destiny of the people. It was Choe Yong (1316–1388), a famous patriotic commander in the history of Korea.

Choe was born to a renowned family. When he was 15, his father in his deathbed told him to regard gold as stone. Bearing in mind his father's words Choe adhered to integrity for his immovable creed of life.

He was an unusually strapping man. From his childhood, he had intelligent eyes and looked dignified.

As he had never lost any of his over 100 battles against foreign invaders his name served as a synonym for fear to the enemy and for victory to the Koryo army and people. Even at his name, the enemy shivered screaming, "Grey-haired Manho Choe is the most horrible!" (Manho means a military officer.)

Old historians described Choe Yong as follows:

"He was calm when he faced the enemy on the front, and never looked afraid even in the shower of arrows. He tightened discipline in commanding troops, thus ensuring victory, and beheaded any soldier immediately when they took even a single step back. Thus he won lots of large and small battles without any defeat."

It happened when Choe was nearly 70. Japanese pirates invaded the south seaside of Koryo killing the local people at random and plundering valuables.

The government dispatched Commander Pak In Gyu there, but he lost the battle and died in it. Then the pirates behaved more insolently, and the harm to the people worsened daily. Learning this, Choe Yong bravely went to the front.

On arrival at the south seaside, he collected local troops again to go to war. But the pirates' resistance was unusually strong.

Choe soon gave orders to beat charge. The troops, however, hesitated to charge because the pirates were frantically shooting arrows from behind groves and rocks.

Observing the scene, Choe slightly bit his lip. The situation was



really unfavourable, and they might avoid battle for a while before taking a chance to charge. Choe, however, did not withdraw his order.

“Follow me!” he shouted to his troops rushing on horseback to the enemy’s position while shooting arrows at the pirates.

Then an arrow shot by one of the pirates flew into his lip, and blood was dripping from the lip. Regardless of it, he kept shooting arrows.

Now the pirates began to flee, and the Koryo troops, in high spirits, charged raising a battle cry. All the pirates fled without resistance. Only then did Choe pull out the arrow from his lip.

He now reproached the troops, saying, “How can you fight when you are seized with fear before the enemy get frightened?”

Overcome with shame, the troops realized another aspect of the secret of Choe’s victory in every battle. To say nothing of outstanding tactics, they should be fearless to shoot even a single arrow earlier than the enemy—with no time even to pull out an arrow from the lip.

The country raised Choe to the rank of *sijung*, a high government post, in recognition of his exploit. He, however, declined, saying that if he became *sijung*, he would not be able to go to war at will and that he would accept the post after completely purging the country of the Japanese pirates.

Kim Jong So, Gallant Commander in Northern District

Kim Jong So (1390–1453) was a patriotic military commander who repulsed aggressors and helped consolidate the territorial integrity of the nation during the period of the feudal Joseon dynasty (1392–1910).

With the beginning of the 15th century barbarians often invaded the northern frontier of Korea. In order to cope with this situation the government appointed Kim Jong So as governor and military commander of Hamgil (Hamgyong) Province so as to check the barbarians' invasion and strengthen the local defence.

The governor moved residents of the southern region to newly established towns to strengthen the defence of the Tuman River basin, and made sure that many new fortresses were built.

On the basis of the experience he got while working in the six-position area, he wrote the military book *Jesunbangryak* or *Stratagems for Victory*.

At that time, it is said, the aggressor got too frightened even at the mention of his name to confront him, calling him tiger

Kim did not spare himself for the defence of the country and for the safety of the people.

One night, during a party, an arrow from nowhere hit Kim's wine glass. This caused quite a flutter among the participants in the party. But Kim said with composure, "Ha! A wicked guy has tried to test me."

The episode shows how dauntless he was. He was a man of literary type as well as military type. He wrote a good hand, and took part in the writing of *History of Koryo* and *Chronology of Koryo History*.

In his days as provincial governor, he wrote a poem which reads:

*The north wind blows at the tips of tree
And the bright moon feels cold in snow.
I stand guard on the long borderline
When a yell of the long wind hits nothing.*

On the way back home after promoting the development of the six border positions, he wrote the following poem.

*Now that we have set a flag on Mt Jangbaek
And washed our horses in the Tuman River,
We feel proud of our manhood.
Whose image should we carve in the rock face?*

The poems are typical patriotic ones, which are of significance in the history of medieval Korean literature.

Young Commander Nam I

*I'll remove all stones of Mt Paektu by whetting swords on them,
And I'll dry the water of the Tuman River by letting my horse
drink it.*

*If a man at the age of 20 fails to restore peace in his country,
Who will later count him as a hero?*

This poem overflowing with manly mettle and bravery was written by Nam I (1441–1468), a patriotic young commander whose name remains in the history of the Korean nation.

From his childhood Nam was good at study, and mastered

swordsmanship in particular.

It is said that his swordsmanship was so wonderful and marvelous that when he danced a sword dance in a shower, he did not get wet, and that he could leave two sword cuts on each leaf of a large ginkgo tree.

Thanks to his deep knowledge of martial arts and his agility and strong disposition, he passed the state military examination when he was 17, and was appointed as the Minister of War when he was 26.

The secret of his successful career can be said to lie in that he was unusually brave and always in the van of charge.

Giving a citation to Nam, Sejo, the seventh king of feudal Joseon dynasty who ruled in 1455–1468, said, “Nam rushed straight ahead of his men, regarded it as an honour to die in battle and always worried that he might lag behind others in battle. He was the first to display courage, and demonstrated his will to fight even at the risk of his life.”

Nam was much admired for his bravery with which he charged through showers of arrows and stones.

As the young man won promotion and performed exploits, there appeared those who were jealous of his success.

It happened when Sejo was on his deathbed. While making a round of patrol in the royal palace, Nam noticed a comet in the night sky, and said it meant the spirit of “removing the old and creating the new.” Then Ryu Ja Gwang distorted his words, and gave the king a false report that Nam had plotted treason and that he had raped the princess.

Ryu also changed the verse “If a man at the age of 20 fails to restore peace in his country” of the poem—which Nam I had writ-

ten while returning in triumph after punishing the northern barbarians—into “If a man at the age of 20 fails to take his country,” and reported to the king that Nam was trying for a coup. The then king Yejong, the eighth king of feudal Joseon dynasty who ruled in 1468–1469, had had an antipathy for Nam because he felt awesome about the great mettle of the young man who had become the Minister of War at the age of 26.

Knowing this, Ryu lied to the king that Nam was plotting a coup. As a result, Nam was tied up and exposed to an atrocious torture to be forced to tell about his “traitorous plot.”

The man of great mettle protested that he had never plotted treason. Then he was beaten until his bones were crushed and his flesh burst open. Still, it was impossible to depress his righteous spirit.

After all, the young commander died a grievous death owing to traitors’ intrigue.

Admiral Ri Sun Sin

Ri Sun Sin (1545–1598) was an illustrious military strategist who held the command of the sea through successive victories and made a great contribution to the Korean people’s victory in the Imjin Patriotic War (1592–1598) against the Japanese aggressors’ large-scale invasion.

While organizing and commanding scores of naval battles, Ri developed new naval tactics, and set an example in comprehensively applying medieval naval tactics.

The offensive and defence tactics with the turtle ship, the world’s first iron-clad ship, in the van; the completion of naval movement

tactics relying on warships equipped with powder weapons and cannons; the organization of a naval landing party and the creation and application of offensive tactics against the enemy stationed at port in cooperation with the naval landing party; fire-attack operation; and the formation of diversified battle arrays including the linear type and the echelon type—all these were the results of his ingenuity and comprehensive introduction and improvement of previous naval tactics.

The offensive and defence tactics with the turtle ship in the van can be cited. The turtle ship, in battles, was always in the van of charge destroying the battle array of enemy warships, and it moved close to the flagship of the enemy to destroy it with gunfire or impact, thus disrupting the enemy's command system. This tactics was widely used in many battles including the battle off Sachon, the battle at Tanghang Port and the battle off the Hansan Island.

The turtle ship could be in the van of battle thanks to its special structure. It was all covered with iron armour like the back of a turtle, and there were sharp daggers, augers and so on to prevent the enemy from getting on. So people inside the ship had no fear of being hurt.

As to the power of the ship, old publications say, "When they are confronted with the enemy, they cover the ship with purple eulalia so as to hide the augers and daggers so that the ship could be in the van. When the enemy attempt to climb it, they get stabbed by daggers and augers, and when they dare to get close to the ship, they get in a shower of bullets from it, so they hardly dare fight against it. In this way the ship has made very many achievements in large and small battles."

Ri Sun Sin applied and completed his tactics of naval movement relying on warships equipped with powder weapons and cannons.

There had been earlier mobile naval operations relying on cannon-equipped warships in Korea, and Ri further developed and perfected the tactics. He had warships loaded with cannons such as *chonjachongthong* and *jijachongthong* and cannon balls. The cannons were capable of exterminating the enemy's manpower en masse and destroying warships as well.

Jijachongthong could throw a shell or a round stone as far as four kilometres. It could fire 200 egg-size balls at a time, and the balls could kill and injure enemy troops crowded on a ship.

Well versed in marine configuration and weather, Ri Sun Sin employed tactics of allurement and ambush and deceptive tactics a lot.

A typical example of allurement and ambush tactics came in the Hansan Island naval battle that remains in the world's medieval history of naval battles. On the morning of July 8, 1592 Korea's fleet advanced to Kyonnaeryang where the enemy's warships were at anchor. Kyonnaeryang was unfavourable for movement of large warships because its strait was merely 500 metres in width and it had lots of reefs. And if the situation turned unfavourable, the enemy might flee to the land.

Ri ordered his ships to retreat, and the enemy elatedly followed several Korean ships that were "retreating." When the enemy ships had passed the narrows, Ri beat the drum, and the alluring ships turned back forming a line to link up with those standing by there. At a sign from Ri, the Korean fleet, with turtle ship at the head, launched a general offensive, encircling the enemy ships. Then the Korean fleet massed its fire upon the enemy, the smoke

and sparks, it is said, seeming to fill up the sky. In the battle 59 of the enemy ships were destroyed, and no more than 1 000 of about 10 000 enemy soldiers survived.

Ri Sun Sin used tactics of concentrated attack as well. An example came in the battle that took place in the sea off Pusan on September 1, 1592. In his report to the government about the battle, Ri wrote, “This time we bravely broke through the centre of the enemy fleet of 400-odd ships, and destroyed over 100 of them by attacking all day long without being fearful or losing heart in the least. Thus we struck terror into the enemy, making them cower with fear.”

There were many other wonderful tactics employed by Ri Sun Sin, including fire attack, rational use of ebb and flow, the method of defending a port by surrounding it with wire netting and formation of different kinds of battle array.

Ri displayed his matchless bravery in every battle. During the Myongryang (Uldol) naval battle he destroyed over 330 enemy ships by mobilizing merely 12 ships. During the Roryang naval battle, which marked the end of the Imjin Patriotic War, Ri died shot by an enemy bullet while commanding the battle with drumbeats.

It happened at a “banquet to celebrate victory” in the Russo-Japanese War in 1905. Lots of reporters admired the Japanese admiral Togo Heihachiro, saying, “You’re really a war god superior to the British admiral Nelson who destroyed the combined fleet in the battle off Cape Trafalgar.” In response, Togo said, “As far as I know, Nelson does not deserve to be regarded as a war god. The man who really deserves to be called war god is Ri Sun Sin. Compared with him, I would be no better than a non-commissioned officer of his.”

Rim Kyong Op, Man of Wit

Rim Kyong Op (1594–1646) was a famous patriotic military commander of the feudal Joseon dynasty.

It was one April day in 1636 when Rim was the magistrate of Uiju. During his inspection of a fortress wall improvement project, he helped his troops carrying wall stones for good hours.

After the work he put on his official uniform and was about to shoulder his bow and quiver when he noticed the arrows loose in the quiver. He always filled the quiver compact with arrows. Now, however, the arrows were loose in the quiver, so he counted them. An arrow was missing. “Where has it gone?” he pondered.

He searched the place for the arrow but in vain. Feeling it strange, he returned to his official residence, and looked for the missing arrow only to fail.

He had never dropped an arrow. He always filled the quiver with arrows to the full, so they could not fall unless they were pulled out.

“What a strange thing!” he thought and thought. Then he suspected it was a trick by the enemy who must have stealthily approached the wall.

Now, seeing through the enemy’s scheme, he made up his mind to retaliate.

That night he selected an agile soldier who had a thorough



knowledge of the enemy's area across the river, and assigned the soldier the task of going into the enemy's camp to steal the cap of their commander over the night.

The soldier thus stole into the enemy's position and returned with the cap of their commander.

The next morning Rim gave a citation for the soldier's merit, and went out of the wall carrying the cap of the enemy commander by his side. Then he leisurely strolled up and down the riverside. After a while, the enemy commander showed up on the opposite side of the river together with his soldiers. He must be out at the report that Rim was there on the riverside.

Deciding to wait and see, Rim kept driving his horse close to the riverside.

As was expected an arrow flew from the enemy's side and dropped on the ground ahead of Rim. He told a soldier to bring the arrow. It was the very arrow of his he had lost the previous day.

The moment he took the arrow the enemy commander shouted, "Mr Rim, that is an arrow of yours, isn't it? You did not know your arrow was stolen, and I dare say even if you're beheaded you'll hardly know it. You had better be prudent."

Then Rim bust into laughter, shouting, "That's what I want to say to you."

"What?"

"What you've just said is what I want to say, you know," Rim cried.

Then he gave the cap of the enemy commander he was carrying on his side to one of his soldiers who was good at stone-throwing.

The soldier picked a stone and put it into the cap, and with full

force, threw it across to the enemy commander.

Surprised to see his cap fallen before him, the enemy commander exclaimed, “This is my cap, isn’t it?”

Observing the scene, Rim shouted again, “You see? Be careful if you don’t want to lose your head.”

The enemy commander’s hand, holding the cap, was trembling.

“As we learned, Rim Kyong Op is really a terrible warrior. How could he know his arrow was stolen? And when did he take away my cap?” he lamented.

Then he hurriedly fled from the riverside together with his soldiers for fear that somebody might behead him right away.

Divine Judgment of Kwon Ryul

Kwon Ryul (1537–1599) was a famous patriotic commander active during the Imjin Patriotic War. The sweeping victory at Haengjusan Fort, one of the three sweeping victories in the war—the two others were Admiral Ri Sun Sin’s sweeping victory over the Japanese Armada off the Hansan Island (in 1592) and the sweeping victory at the Jinju Fortress—recorded in the history of the Korean nation, was attributable to Kwon’s organization and command.

The following is an episode in Kwon’s life.

Early in February 1593, Kwon Ryul, a royal military representative, moved away to Haengjusan Fort which is 16 kilometres away from Hansong (Seoul at the moment), leading some 2 300 volunteers and government troops.

The day they arrived at the fort, Kwon ordered the volunteers and government troops to repair the fort quickly as the Japanese

invaders headed by Ukida might soon come to attack. But even a couple of days later the enemy did not show up.

One morning some volunteers saw two large boxes floating down the river flowing round the fort while fetching water from the river.

The boxes were well packed and colourfully decorated. It was strange, and the volunteers took them to Kwon without opening them.

The commander examined the boxes carefully and guessed the direction from which they had floated down before thinking for a while. Then he had them opened.

The boxes were filled with expensive silk and rare things. They must have been sent by the enemy squatting in Hansong.

Kwon distributed the goods evenly to the volunteers, and gave a strict order to immediately bring such boxes to him if they discovered them again. If they didn't do so in time, he would punish them in accordance with the military law, he added. His order soon spread both inside and outside the fort.

About the sunset the next evening another similar box floated down, and some volunteers brought it to Kwon.

Hearing the news, all other volunteers, government troops, and other people inside and outside the fort gathered to see the box. Curious to know what was in the box, they waited for the box to be opened soon.

Kwon, however, did not come out but gave a surprising order to make a pile of firewood in the yard.

Without knowing why, the volunteers and troops followed his order.

Then the commander gave another order to put the box on the

firewood and set fire.

Though sorry that the goods in the box would be all burnt away, they put it on the firewood.

When the box caught fire, incomprehensible screams like animals' came out from it. The people around looked at one another in surprise and doubtfully.

Only when the whole box was nearly burnt up crumbling did the commander come out of his office and ordered to ransack the ashes.

While searching the ashes, the volunteers and all other people were surprised to discover two skeletons and long swords there on the site.

“Oh! They were assassins.”

“Sure, they were sent to murder our commander.”

Only then did the people realize why the Japanese had sent the boxes two times. Just one year before the enemy commander had suffered a disastrous defeat in the battle at Toksan Fort against Kwon. And he was absorbed in the thought of how to attack Kwon's unit gathered in Haengjusan Fort. Then he sent the boxes in an attempt to murder Kwon and other commanders before attacking the fort.

“How did you know about the Japanese plot? You've really made a divine judgment,” an old man exclaimed.

“How could I make a divine judgment? The stupid Ukida did a ridiculous thing. The first boxes were a bait, and the second one a hook. But we are not such a foolish fish to bite the hook, you know,” Kwon said, bursting into laughter.

All the other people, too, laughed.

“That is really a foolish guy,” they said. “That's perhaps why his

father named him Ukida (*Ukida* means making somebody laugh in Korean).”

Heavenly Warrior in Red Clothes

When Ri Sun Sin is counted as the best in naval battles during the Imjin Patriotic War, Kwak Jae U (1552–1617) is counted as the best in land fighting during the war.

Born of an aristocratic family, Kwak spent his youth practising horse riding and archery and reading a lot of books on tactics.

In April 1592 hundreds of thousands of strong Japanese aggressors suddenly invaded Korea.

Not prepared for fighting, the Korean government forces broke without putting up any particular resistance, and relevant local government officials all fled.

Uiryong, Kwak’s home town, was left defenceless. Having heard the news Kwak raised a volunteer army nine days after the outbreak of the war.

At that time the government troops only kept retreating. The news of the rising of Kwak’s volunteer army soon spread throughout the country, encouraging the Koreans to fight against the invaders.

Kwak rose to fame as a distinguished commander first in the battle at Sot Ferry Point in the middle reaches of the Raktong River.

The enemy, who had invaded the land by the South Sea of Korea, had to cross the Kigang ferry if they were to go across to Jolla Province.

The ferry point was not easy to cross as it was covered with

mire. So the enemy commander sent out scouts to reconnoiter the topography and stick posts along the shallows.

Seeing through the enemy's scheme, Kwak and his men went to the shallows at night to move and stick all the posts along the mire, and hid in ambush to wait for the enemy to cross the river.

Early in the next morning, when the aggressors were writhing in the mire, Kwak gave a signal to attack the enemy, and the Japanese were annihilated.

Soon afterwards the enemy launched an attack with a large force in an attempt to retaliate.

Kwak then selected ten agile men, and had them wear red clothes and ride white horses.

When the large force of the enemy approached, the ten men rushed into the enemy's position, each cutting down his rivals in a flash before disappearing like lightning. The enemy gradually followed up the traces of the "commanders in red clothes" close to where Kwak's men lay in ambush.

When the aggressors were searching for the "commanders in red clothes" in perplexity, the commanders showed up on a cliff just before them on white horses.

The enemy started to chase them, and the latter vanished like smoke, and the valley reverberated with drumbeats and trumpet sounds alone. When looking ahead after rubbing their eyes the aggressors saw a flag covering a nearby hill before disappearing and appearing again over another hill behind it. Confronted with such a spooky situation, the enemy were seized with great fear. To make them stupefied—this was what Kwak wanted.

At last the enemy lost their will to fight, and the volunteers, who had been in ambush, shot arrows and rolled rocks down at the

aggressors all at once.

So many of the aggressors died in the battle that the bodies of the dead kept water from flowing in the river.

Later the enemy referred to Kwak Jae U as “commander in red clothes from heaven,” and would soon flee when they knew they encountered with Kwak Jae U’s volunteer unit.

One day Kwak had a smart box put on the road to be taken by the enemy. Discovering the rare box, the aggressors pushed and shoved to be the first to open the box so as to get much more “treasure” from it. But the box produced bees which stung the faces of the rogues at random. Then volunteers in ambush launched an attack, causing wholesale deaths.

Several days later Kwak had a larger and smarter box put by the roadside. This time the Japanese didn’t dare to open the box and took it to their commander, who had it thrown into a campfire.

Lots of troops gathered round the fire to see bees burn. But after a while the box blew up with a terrific explosion, killing many of the rogues around, and the enemy were howling around. At that moment agile cavalrymen of Kwak’s volunteer army took the enemy unawares and knocked down all of them.

Kwak was a versatile tactician and operations planner who gained ascendancy over the enemy by dint of everchanging tactics and good command. What characterized his tactics was to disperse, paralyse and wipe out the enemy by dint of allurements, ambush and psychological warfare—which were correct tactical measures for the volunteer unit as it was very inferior to the enemy in number and military equipment.

Kwak also employed flexible and everchanging tactics such as fierce attack by cavalry and divide-and-crush tactics, thus winning

successive victories.

While he always fought bravely in the van like a tiger in battle, he was very kind to his men. When it got cold, he took off his coats to put them on his men, and put the clothes of his wife and children on those of his men. And whenever volunteers were encircled by the enemy or in a crisis, he would save them even at the risk of his life.

So the men unconditionally obeyed his orders, and the civilians assisted them materially and morally while informing them of the enemy's situation in time.

During the war Kyongsang provincial people suffered less damage, the enemy failed to advance to Jolla Province and Ri Sun Sin's navy could fight without worry in the sea. All this was inconceivable apart from the role of the "commander in red clothes."

Samyongdang, Patriotic Commander of Monk Volunteers

Samyongdang (1544–1610) was a patriotic commander who organized a volunteer army with Buddhist monks during the Imjin Patriotic War.

When he was 13, Samyongdang went into Mt Hwangak in Kum-san, Kyongsang Province, to become a monk. He studied not only Buddhism but also Confucianism, and deepened friendly relations with the then famous literary people of aristocratic extraction. Afterwards he went into Mt Myohyang to get Buddhist lectures from Saint Sosan for three years.

In 1592, when the aforesaid war broke out, Saint Sosan called upon all monks across the country to turn out in the struggle to

defend the country. Samyongdang was the first to respond to his call and organized a volunteer army with monks in Mt Kungang. Leading the volunteer army, he went to Sunan to fight under the command of Saint Sosan.

Later he became the general commander of monks in place of Saint Sosan, and took part in the battle to retake the Walled City of Pyongyang.

Samyongdang showed not only a high level of organizing ability and military stratagem but also outstanding diplomacy until the war ended in victory for the Korean people.

The following is an episode in his life.

It happened when the Japanese proposed peace negotiations.

The feudal government of Korea had a serious discussion about who they would send as an envoy. At last they decided to send Samyongdang regarding him as a man capable of displaying the dignity of the country and adapting himself to circumstances.

As a result, Samyongdang, who excelled in scholarship and stratagem and was quite patriotic and courageous, began to act in the enemy's camp on a peace-negotiation mission in the spring of 1594. He fully denounced the arrogant acts of the aggressors through his excellent diplomatic activities, and took advantage of the disunity among the enemy commanders to drive them into a tight corner.

One day, during the peace negotiation, Kato Kiyomasa, one of the enemy commanders, asked Samyongdang, "I hear Korea has plenty of treasure. Which is the best of the treasure?"

Samyongdang calmly replied, "Korea has lots of treasure, but the best of them is in Japan."

“In Japan?” asked the enemy commander.

“Don’t you know yet?” Samyongdang asked back.

“What is it?”

“It’s just your head.”

“What? My head?”

“What makes you so surprised? Our country has put a great prize on your head. So why isn’t it the best treasure?”

Now the enemy commander became tongue-tied, his mouth agape in horror.

From then on the Japanese did not behave himself haughtily, overawed by Samyongdang’s audacity.

Samyongdang’s authority as diplomat became evident when a peace treaty was negotiated with Japan after the war ended in victory for the Korean people. At the time he was 60.

On his way to Mt Myohyang after receiving a notice of Saint Sosan’s death, Samyongdang was given a king’s order to go with the king’s message to Japan through Tsushima to conduct peace negotiations with Tokugawa Ieyas.

He knew that the Tokugawa shogunate that took power after the war apologized to Korea for their invasion, and asked for establishment of peaceful diplomatic and trade relations.

“I am a humble servant of Buddha, and I will devote myself to the sake of my country,” Samyongdang pledged before leaving for Japan, leading 120 attendants.

The old book *Imjinnok* (Chronicles of Imjin Patriotic War) contains legends about how Samyongdang wisely frustrated the enemy’s cunning attempts to test him, and made phenomenal achievements in Japan.

The following is a relevant episode.

During the negotiation Samyongdang drove the Japanese into a tight corner, leading the discussions. He imposed five conditions such as beheading the ringleader of the Korean invasion and sending the head to Korea; compensating for the loss of lives and property of the Koreans due to the Japanese aggressors; finding and repatriating all Koreans taken away as POWs; returning all treasure taken away from Korea; and tendering the Japanese king's written pledge not to invade Korea again.

After successfully concluding the peace negotiations, Samyongdang returned home the next year with over 1 500 Koreans kidnapped during the war.

The Japanese offered him lots of expensive presents as an expression of their respect for and envy of his lofty character, but he stepped aboard the ship back home without a look at them.

As seen above Samyongdang, though being a monk, was a famous diplomat as well as a patriotic volunteer commander who fought against the aggressors that had cruelly trampled upon his beloved country, out of burning hatred for the enemy and with the confidence that the right would surely win.

Eye-opener for Ryu Song Ryong

Ryu Song Ryong (1542–1607) was a man who played an important role in repulsing the Japanese aggressors during the Imjin Patriotic War.

Before the outbreak of the war Ryu Song Ryong stressed the need to boost the country's defence capabilities in view of the Japanese ambition of invasion that became undisguised as the days went by, and made sure that Kwon Ryul, Ri Sun Sin, Kim Ung So and other warriors were appointed as military commanders. It was attributable to Ryu's efforts that Kwon Ryul and Ri Sun Sin could win fame later.

During the war Ryu was at service as prime minister and governor of three provinces, striving to take various steps to strengthen their army and repel the Japanese invaders.

In 1593 Ryu established a training supervision agency and newly organized local armies so as to reorganize and strengthen the military system, and built up mountain forts. He also saw to it that garrison farms were operated for the supply of the soldiers' provisions.

Ryu wrote *Jingbirok*, a book about what he had experienced while performing his duty during the war.

The military theory he described in his book has five points: the first is to attach importance to talents; the second to establish a well-organized system of order and command; the third to map out detailed strategy and tactics after having a good understanding of the strength of both sides and battle modes; the fourth to get the command of strategic points; and the fifth to win the confidence of the people.

The following is an episode about Ryu Song Ryong. It happened in the early days of the war. The Japanese sudden invasion made the Korean rulers confused, and directions from the government were different from morning to evening.

One day Ryu, appointed as provincial governor, drew up a notification to cope with the Japanese invasion, and gave it to a messenger to deliver its copies to all districts without delay. But three days later the situation changed suddenly, and the notification had to be revised as its content was not appropriate.

When Ryu told the messenger to collect the copies of the notification, the messenger put out the documents he had kept with him.

Ryu accused him of neglecting his duty, and was about to punish him.

“Why didn’t you deliver the official document to all districts while it is three days since you received them?” Ryu asked.

Then the messenger said, “Recently people say the situation changes three days later. So I kept the documents as I thought they would surely be revised three days later.”

Listening to the messenger, Ryu changed his thought and said, “You’re right. The rumour awakens me. I have made a gross mistake.” Then he forgave the messenger, revised the documents and had them delivered.

This showed that the order of the country was very desultory. Afterwards, Ryu strove to correct the tangled order.

Patriotic Military Strategist

Kim Ung So (1564–1624) had a special interest in military affairs from childhood. When he was 7 or 8, Kim was already fond of playing at soldiers, for example, he made a fort with sand and soil and took branches off a tree to make model soldiers to be used in simulating an offensive and defence battle.

When it came to the part of defeat while reading a history book about war, Kim abruptly stood up and said, “If they had done this way, they would have won,” imitating a military officer commanding soldiers to smash an enemy.

During the Imjin Patriotic War Kim Ung So fully displayed his talent as a military commander in the operations to retake the Walled City of Pyongyang.

At that time Kim heard the news that his father’s illness was critical, and later received the notice of the father’s death. He, however, refused to leave his post. He did so when he received the notice of his mother’s death in 1594.

In fact, such a behaviour of his was unpardonable in view of the contemporary trend of public opinion. At the time the Confucian morality was dominant over all the others, and if one’s parents died one had to observe two-year mourning under any circumstances, and stay at the grave practising asceticism for three years in order to show that one was a filial child. One of the main conditions for promotion at the time was that one should be a dutiful child in accordance with the theory that only a filial person could become a loyalist to the government. If Kim was to follow such a moral practice, he would have to discontinue fighting and return home.

But Kim did not do so. He thought that at the time when thou-

sands, nay, tens of thousands of innocent people were dying at the mercy of the Japanese aggressors, and the destiny of the country was at stake, he would have nothing left to wish for if he only could defend the security of the country and revenge the fellow countrymen. After this happening the people put greater trust in him.

Appointed as commander of a special detachment Kim took part in the operations to retake the Walled City of Pyongyang. People were very pleased with his appointment as they believed in his burning patriotism and hatred against the enemy and his bravery and resources, and volunteered to fight under his command.

Kim established over 20 military bases in the west of Pyongyang, and smashed the aggressors who tried to come out of the walls to plunder the people of food and property. This made the enemy in the city suffer from hunger and cold.

On August 1, 1592 Korean forces launched an offensive against the enemy in the city. Kim was promoted to an officer in charge of the garrison for his repeated military exploits.

At that time, as the encirclement ring around the city was daily tightened, the enemy deprived the Koreans in the city of their houses to make dugouts and built defence facilities in different places.

Kim dispatched scouts into the fort to detect the enemy's movements in contact with the people in the fort while reconnoitering the enemy situation himself. He also decided to get rid of the commanding officers of the enemy force so as to disintegrate them from within.

Still told is the story of his killing the vicious commander of the enemy in the city with the help of the famous patriotic *kisaeng* (a kind of beauty entertainer) Kye Wol Hyang.

Kye had remained in the city with firm determination to revenge her parents, brothers and sisters by killing the enemy commander. But as a tender woman she could not kill him as he had many bodyguards. So she contacted Kim Ung So, and helped him meet the enemy commander by introducing him as her brother. Thus Kim could kill the enemy commander.

This struck the aggressors with terror, and they had to spend the harsh winter of 1592 suffering from the shortage of food and salt plus cold.

In January 1593 the Korean force began to attack the walled city. Leading a small unit, Kim Ung So launched a fierce attack before making a false retreat bit by bit as if they were unable to go on.

Misjudging their retreat, the enemy chased them. After confirming that the enemy came far out from the fort, Kim Ung So turned back his horse ordering a counterattack, and charged in the van. At the same time the main units in ambush on the right and left sides counter-attacked the enemy. Only then did the aggressors realize that they had been cheated, and began to flee towards the fort. But the Japanese troops in the fort closed the gate of the fort hurriedly, and the Japanese outside were all annihilated.

Early in the next morning a frontal attack was launched to recapture the city. When night came the aggressors hastily fled crossing the frozen Taedong River, leaving lots of dead bodies, weapons and horses behind.

Kim Ung So was promoted to the post of deputy commander of the Phyongan provincial garrison.

Scientists and Technicians

Choe Mu Son and Powder Weapon

In the latter half of the 14th century Koryo had to fight against aggressors in the most difficult situation in its history. The worst problem was the fight against Japanese pirates. The pirates would invade an area weak in defence for plunder and murder before fleeing aboard their ship when defence troops showed up, and re-invade if the troops withdrew.

At that time the navy of Koryo was not strong enough to defend the coast.

Choe Mu Son (1326–1395) grew up witnessing the damage to his country and the misfortunes of his nation caused by the Japanese pirates' invasion. So he always thought how to wipe out the Japanese pirates.

All their ships should be burnt by fire attack, he finally decided, and this gave him great delight.

He set up a laboratory in his house, and repeated experiments, thus succeeding in obtaining niter, the basic material of powder. On the basis of the success, he made powder and powder weapons, and invented methods of installing powder weapons on ships.

He proposed to mass-produce powder weapons as a state affair for national defence. Accepting his proposal the feudal government established an institution in charge of the production of powder and powder weapons with Choe as its head in October 1377.

The institution produced various cannons, arrows with five wicks and cannonballs, and renovated cannons of old types to fire

shells farther and more exactly.

He also changed the structure of the existing warships so that powder weapons could be rationally used on them. And he invented a method of preventing ships from swaying when cannons were fired and that of keeping powder safe from indoor humidity.

Cannons aboard ships were very high in the rate of hits thanks to his effort.

In August 1380 tens of thousands of Japanese pirates aboard over 500 ships invaded Jinpho (the lower Kumgang River) in Jolla Province. As vice admiral Choe went to war leading Koryo's fleet of 100 warships. Under his command Koryo troops used cannons to shower a fire burning all the enemy ships.

Later, too, Koryo's fleet equipped with powder weapons displayed their might in a naval battle off Konyang (Sachon County) in 1382, and in a naval battle off Pakduyang (Namhae County) in 1383.

Shocked by the powder weapons, the Japanese did not make inroads into Koryo at will.

Koryo was the first in the world to use warships equipped with powder weapons in naval battles.

Choe Mu Son handed down to his son Choe Hae San a book in which he described the method of making powder, and the son further developed the method and made lots of powder weapons of other types.

Jang Yong Sil, Inventor of Servant Origin

Jang Yong Sil was an inventor who developed astronomical instruments in the mid-15th century.

Jang, who had been a servant, took part in making astronomical instruments, delicate metal types and musical instruments, making a great contribution to putting science and technology on a high level in the 15th century.

Jang intensified the research on astronomical instruments.

In 1432, together with Ri Chon and other technicians, Jang made *kanui* (a measuring instrument) of wood, used it to measure the longitude and latitude of the capital city and confirmed them through repeated experiments.

And through repeated researches for a long time he succeeded in using copper to make big *kanui*, small *kanui*, a celestial globe and other astronomical instruments, and invented time measuring instruments such as balance sundial, shadow sundial, and water clock.

The copper-made instruments were very precise and accurate. The water clock installed on Poru Pavilion was an instrument automatically operated by dint of water to tell time exactly.

In 1434 Jang cast copper types (*kabinja*), making an active contribution to the development of publishing and printing techniques. He also displayed his high technique in inventing musical instruments.

Ri Chon's Contribution to Development of Science and Technology

Ri Chon (1376–1451) was a talented technician and inventor and competent military commander in the first half of the 15th century.

Born of a military officer's family in Ryeon, Kyongsang Province, Ri Chon determined to become a soldier to defend the country like his father. In 1402 when he was 27, he passed the state military examinations.

As competent military commander, Ri performed lots of exploits in repulsing foreign invaders.

And he performed greater exploits in developing his country's science and technology.

The 15th century in the history of Korea witnessed the rapid development of production and the efflorescence of science and culture including agronomy, astronomy, dynamics, mathematics, geology, music, printing technique, medicine and military science.

One of his great exploits was that he developed the publishing and printing techniques considerably. In 1428 he cast new types, thus solving an urgent problem arising in publishing books at that time. The types made of copper were small, delicate and better as compared with the types (*kyemija*) cast in 1403. The new types were called *kyongjaja* after the zodiac sign of the year 1420, and they were of two kinds, that is, big and small. This made it possible to print lots of books more easily. In 1434 he developed *kyongjaja* into *kabinja* that had 200 000 characters, and the developed types were tidier and neater.

Not content with this, he made lead types in 1436, the first of



its kind in the world.

And he invented and propagated a new method of printing. Previously molten yellow wax was poured in copperplates, and types were struck in them before the wax hardened. But the new method was to stand types in copperplates and fix them by wedging pieces of bamboo between them. This gave birth to a modern method of typesetting.

Like this, Ri Chon developed the metal types of Koryo invented for the first time in the first half of the 12th century, thus inventing the first lead types in the world and the predecessor of the modern type-setting technique.

Ri's high technology and knowledge were displayed in inventing and making astronomical instruments as well.

Together with Jang Yong Sil, a famous technician at the time, he made a celestial globe, an astronomical instrument, in 1443, and played a leading role in inventing and making lots of similar instruments such as the automatic water clocks called *jagyongnu* and *ongnyugiryun*, different kinds of sundials including a shadow sundial called *angbuilgu* and a celestial coordinate measuring instrument called *kanui*.

Veteran Physician Ro Jung Rye

Ro Jung Rye (?–first half of the 15th century) was a medical scholar and experienced physician.

He made a comprehensive and profound study of medicinal materials of Korea in the 15th century and the successive medical heritage of the nation, thus systematizing Koryo medicine and developing it significantly.

He conducted research for using domestic medicinal herbs and other materials to treat diseases, and wrote *Hyangyakchaechwiwolnyong*, a book containing the names of medicinal herbs and methods of collecting and keeping medicinal materials.

He took part in writing the book *Hyangyakjipsongbang*, the crystallization of Koryo medicine developed until then. Consisting of 85 volumes in total, the book divides diseases into 959 kinds, describes 10 706 methods of prescription, 1 479 remedies of acupuncture and moxibustion and 694 sorts of medicinal materials. It gives detailed explanation of methods of prescription, compounding, internal use of medicines and how to make different kinds of medicines. Thus the book enables anyone to use with ease medicinal materials of Korea according to diseases.

Ro was entirely responsible for compiling *Uibangryuchwi*, a book synthesizing and systematizing all of what Koryo medicine had achieved until that time. He put his heart and soul into the system of compilation and detailed contents, thus completing the book of 365 volumes in 1445, three years after the beginning of the compilation.

Uibangryuchwi, unprecedentedly large in scale, was the first medical encyclopaedia in the world.

And Ro was famous for his medical art. He was always visited by many patients as he was well known as a skilled physician across the country. He was never unkind to and never got angry with patients. If poor people of humble origin came to ask him about medicines or get treatment from him, he never refused but taught them kindly and in detail and treated their diseases. And, it is said, he was always cheerful and energetic, thus never getting bored with his work.

It is said that the then king Sejong of Korea, too, admired Ro for his profound knowledge and outstanding medical art, and ordered, "Medical art is very important in treating human life. But there are few who know its profound meaning. As Ro Jung Rye has no successor, choose a clever boy to learn medicine from him and succeed to him."

Arms Technician Ri Jang Son

Ri Jang Son was an arms technician who made a great contribution to the Korean people's victory in the Imjin Patriotic War by inventing *pigyokjinchonroe*, a cannonball that the Japanese aggressors referred to as "mystery."

The patriotic man had striven to make a powerful weapon capable of dealing a heavy blow to the Japanese invaders. At last he succeeded in inventing the aforementioned cannonball by improving *jinchonroe* which had been in use before the war.

The cannonball was a kind of time shell with a fuse, designed to be fired by a *taewangu* cannon. It was an iron one about 28 cm to 39 cm in diameter. It contained a bamboo box with a fuse in it, and the fuse was a stick with a spiral groove wound with a powder line. The time of its explosion could be adjusted by deciding the number of the spiral grooves or the length of the powder line.

Pigyokjinchonroe played a great role in the battle to retake the Kyongju Fort in August 1592. Without knowing the principle of the cannonball, many of the enemy troops gathered to see the shell, and were all shot to death by iron splinters when it burst with a terrific explosion. All the other enemy troops fled from the fort, referring to it as "mystery."

Like this, Ri Jang Son made a great contribution to the Koreans' victory in the war by inventing a new weapon.

Ho Jun and *Tonguibogam*

Ho Jun (1546–1615) was an experienced physician and medical scholar. At 30 he was appointed as official of the pharmaceutical agency. In 1590 he won fame when he cured a prince of a critical disease. During the Imjin Patriotic War he, as the king's physician, took care of the health of the king and ministers. In his thirties he already compiled an enlarged edition of a medical book. And he wrote and published *Tuchangjibyo*, *Thaesanjibyo* and *Kuguppang*, helping spread knowledge of treatment.

In 1596 he started to compile *Tonguibogam* (Encyclopaedia of Traditional Medicine of Korea). The next year there broke out the Jong-Yu-Jae Revolt, and medical officials dispersed. Thus the compilation of the book stopped temporarily.

After the end of the war the king, who recognized Ho's talent and knowledge, put him alone in charge of the compilation of the book, and provided him with over 500 medical books of the royal palace to refer to, thus offering the best convenience to him.

Without caring for his private life, Ho made painstaking efforts to compile the book. But in 1608, just before he completed the compilation of the book, the king died, and Ho was exiled to a remote place for his failure to save the king as his physician. Even in the unfavourable conditions of the place of exile Ho further accelerated the compilation of the book. At last his painstaking efforts of 15 years bore fruit—the completion of the book in August 1610.

Tonguibogam of 25 volumes, as a compendium of clinical medicine that crystallized the then medical knowledge, consists of five parts—internal treatment, external treatment, miscellaneous diseases, decoctions, and acupuncture and moxibustion. And it

describes single-medicine prescriptions and methods of acupuncture and moxibustion for different symptoms, and occasionally his own experience in treatment so that they can be used practically.

What characterizes the book is that it fully crystallizes the essence of the existing medical books so that it is convenient and useful as a medical book, and that it puts main emphasis on mental culture



and regimen in preventing and treating intestinal diseases while regarding it as secondary matter to use medicines. This theory of medicine permeates all the parts of the book.

It describes in Korean the names of all medicines in the part of decoction to encourage the use of domestic medicinal herbs and medicines, thus making it easy to collect and use medicinal herbs; and it gives origins of the theories and prescriptions described in it so as to prove that they are not the author's subjective conjectures.

The publication of *Tonguibogam* helped develop the Oriental medicine a stage farther, and made a milestone to show the extent of development of Koryo medicine.

Ho turned 60 when he completed the book. He still wrote medical books, *Sinchanbyogonbang* and *Pyogyoksinbang*. The books were compiled for the purpose of treating typhoid, typhus and malignant influenza that were called *yokryo* at that time. The con-

tents of the book were correct and concise as compared with the existing medical books, thus greatly helping treat diseases.

Ho Jun, who made a great contribution to the development of Koryo medicine, died at the age of 69 in 1615.

Ri Je Ma's Ingenious Prescription

Ri Je Ma (1837–1900) was a scholar of medicine who founded the constitutional medicine and applied it to clinical treatment in the 19th century. He was born in Hamhung, South Hamgyong Province, and lost his mother when he was very young. So he grew up under his grandparents' care.

By the time he was six he had learned the mother tongue from his grandmother. At the age of 8 he began to read the Four Books, the Classical Canon, and at the age of 15 he mastered *Chunchu* and *Jwajon*. He also read all other books including those on military science and medicine.

During his clinical practice, he devoted all his energies to the research on the constitutional medicine. In order to clarify the principle of clinical medicine he obtained and read all domestic and foreign books on medicine. And he exchanged views with prominent scholars of medicine.

At last he established his view different from the existing ones, and on the basis, accumulated his practical clinical experience. In the course of this he discovered that patients with the same disease showed different symptoms and medicinal substances had different reactions as they were different in constitution and character. Thus he concluded that disparity in functions of the organs causes diseases, that the occurrence of diseases is related to regimen and

that reaction to medicines varies according to constitutions. On the basis of the research findings he systematized the theory of the constitutional medicine.

In 1894 he made public *Tonguisusebowon*, a book of four volumes that combines his medical theory with practice.

Explaining about causes of diseases, he wrote, “The first is arrogance and luxury; the second, laziness; the third, impatience; the fourth, avarice.”

One day a rich man came to see Ri.

Ri felt the man’s pulse before the latter could say what was wrong with him. After looking at his face for a while, Ri said, “You are here to complain about your stomach trouble, aren’t you?”

“Absolutely. I have a poor digestion,” said the patient.

“Your problem is not a day or two old and I’m afraid whatever good medicine you may take will not be effective,” Ri said.

“Right. How do you know it? While suffering from the stomach trouble for several years I took all medicines including wild insam and young antler, and went to see all physicians. Then I have come a long way to see you hearing that you are good at medical art. Please cure me of the trouble, doctor,” entreated the patient.

Then Ri said, “I have a prescription for your disease, but I’m afraid it will be difficult for you to observe the prescription.”

After a while of thought the rich man said he would obey Ri’s direction as it would be better than to die.

Now Ri told him to go out to a maize field and pull out 50 stubbles at sunrise every day, and that for 15 days.

The rich man found no other alternative than to do the job for the first time in his life.

Three days after beginning to do it his appetite turned better.

Another two days later he had no stomach trouble however much he ate.

Ri's prescription belonged to the therapy of application of medicines, and more importantly, removal of the cause of the diseases through physical labour. It was also something like criticism of aristocrats' laziness.

Kim Jong Hui, Pioneer of Archaeology

Kim Jong Hui (1786–1856) was a famous epigraphist and calligrapher of Korea.

By the time he was 7 he had already been excellent at brush-writing to the surprise of all people. He assimilated the merits of successive noted calligraphers and improved them, thus creating a new calligraphic style named *chusa* after his pen name.

He was also a master painter in the literary artist's style. The pictures of orchid, bamboo and mountains and water he drew with ink were admirably vivid and elegant.

His greatest exploit was that he pioneered Korean archaeology as a new field of study.

As the saying goes that "A book that remains shut is but a block," any excellent archaeological sites and remains can be significant only when they are unearthed, studied and systematized. Kim Jong Hui explored, discovered and explained such sites and remains of Korea with his wide knowledge.

A typical example came when he discovered a monument in Mt Pukhan. In July 1816 he went up Pi Peak of the mountain. He was going to investigate what kind of monument the peak had because the peak's name carried the meaning of "monument on the top of

the peak.”

It was very hot, and he was all in a sweat while climbing up the mountain.

When he arrived at a Buddhist temple, some priests welcomed him.

“I hear there is a monument somewhere about here. How can I go there?” he asked the head priest of the temple.

“It’s just behind us, but there is no way to the place. I’ll guide you,” the head priest said, kindly guiding him up windingly between rocks. On the top of the peak he got an extensive view in all directions. Now he carefully examined the monument. It was all covered with moss and its inscriptions were invisible. While removing the moss he read the inscriptions character by character. He read several times, and identified 68 of the characters. He then climbed down the mountain in light steps.

At last he found out that the monument was the one that King Jinhung of Silla set up as a monument to his tour of the borderline.

Like this Kim Jong Hui discovered King Jinhung’s monument that had long been left unattended and mistaken, thus making a contribution to the correct study of Silla’s history of one thousand and hundreds of years before.

Kim also discovered a carved stone on an old wall in Pyongyang, and, based on analysis of two characters carved on the stone, explained that the wall dated back to the period of Koguryo.

Meanwhile, he studied household effects and weapons used by people of former days. For example, he explored Chonghae Earthen Wall near Pukchong, and studied a stone ax and stone arrow-head from the primitive ages he discovered there. Thus he disclosed that the relics were a household article and weapon used by

people of former days.

By the time he was 40, he had already investigated major monuments of the country, and collected the data to make *List of Hae-dong Monuments*.

At that time he was the first to feel keenly the need to renew their appreciation of all historical sites and remains that nobody was concerned about and which were associated with absurd legends. He collected, studied and analysed relevant materials, thus making a great contribution to the development of archaeology.

Geographer Kim Jong Ho

Kim Jong Ho (?–1864) was a geographer and realist of the feudal Joseon dynasty.

In his early days he had an interest in geography and cartology. Through close contact with realists, he got hatred against the corrupt feudal rulers, and nurtured love for his country. Thus he decided to make a correct detailed map of the whole country for the purpose of making the people know well about their land and strengthening the national defence.

At that time traffic was inconvenient, and there were not decent facilities for observation. Regardless of the difficult condition, Kim Jong Ho travelled the whole country on foot to make field surveys while undergoing all sorts of hardships.

His family was living in poverty, but he did all he could do to publish a map. It is said that his only daughter was a talented writer and that she helped him with his work, writing and carving printing blocks.

At last Kim made a map called *Chonggudo* in 1834. The map

showed not only physiographical features, including mountains, mountain ranges, rivers and lakes, but also certain features of historical geography and economic geography. But it was too complicated and complex in plan.

Noticing the demerits, he decided to make a more precise map.

He travelled across the country from Mt Paektu to Jeju Island to make field surveys and measurements for 27 years. He climbed Mt Paektu twice. In 1861 he finally made and published the *Taedongyo Map*, a map of Korea, drawn on a scale of 1 to 162 000.

In 1864 he published a second edition of the map, and compiled *Taedongjiji*, a geography book, of 32 volumes in 15 tomes on the basis of the survey data and documents he had obtained while making the map.

Despite his great service for development of the nation's cartology and geography, he was arrested on the "charge" of revealing a state secret, and died in jail.

People of Literature and Arts

Ryo Ok and *Konghuin*

I told you not to cross the river.

Why did you cross the river?

Now that you've drowned,

What shall I do, my darling?

This song is *Konghuin* written by female musician Ryo Ok who was active in the latter half period (5th–4th century BC) of Ancient Joseon.

The following tells how Ryo Ok created the lyric song.

One early morning her husband Kwak Rijago, a boatman, was taking people across a river in his boat. Then an old man with his grey hair undone made an abrupt appearance, and jumped into the river to cross it like a mad man. His wife, running after him, tried to dissuade him from going into the dangerous current, but the old man refused to listen to her only to drown.

Overcome with sorrow, his wife wailed calling her husband, and then sang a sorrowful song holding her *konghu* (a kind of ancient stringed musical instrument) in her arms before throwing herself into the river.

Back home Kwak told his wife about the miserable fate of the old couple.

Hearing his sad story, Ryo took the *konghu* in her hand, composed and sang a song reflecting her grief. The song was *Konghuin* (*Playing Konghu*).

It is said the song was so pathetic that people could not help but shed tears hearing the song.

The song shows well the beautiful mentality of the people of Ancient Joseon who regarded others' misfortune and sorrow as their own.

Tam Jing, Painter of Mural Pictures of Golden Pavilion of Horyuji Temple

Tam Jing (579–631) was a famous painter of Koguryo, and a technician who taught the Japanese how to make Indian ink and paper.

The following is what happened when Tam Jing was to draw mural pictures of the Golden Pavilion of the Horyuji Temple of Japan, which count as world-famous ones.

While staying in Japan on invitation, Tam Jing taught the Japanese how to paint and how to make and use colouring materials.

One of those days some Japanese monks, who had built the Horyuji Temple, came to ask him to paint murals on the walls of the Golden Pavilion of the temple. He accepted the request, went to the temple and made a preparation. A few months passed but he didn't start his work, for he heard that millions of foreign troops made inroads into his country of Koguryo. *Can my country repulse the large enemy force? If not, my fellow countrymen would fall into misery*, he worried constantly. Obsessed with the anxiety, he couldn't make good pigments or muster any strength to hold the brush.

As he spent several months in agony, more and more monks of the temple started to doubt him. *Is he really a famous painter of*

Koguryo? He seems to be an idler pretending himself as a painter. He is surely a false painter as he has not begun to paint yet, the monks told themselves—without any idea of his worry. Tam Jing heard such criticisms but still he couldn't hold the brush. He thought that if he painted murals under coercion, they couldn't be good works, and that even if he completed them, nobody would see or value them if they knew they had been created by a member of a ruined nation.

One day the chief priest of the temple called on him and said, "I've brought you good news. Commander Ulji Mundok of your country has defeated all the millions of foreign invaders."

"Is it true?" Tam Jing asked, springing up from his bed in which he had been lying listlessly.

Confirming that it was true, he was full of joy.

The next day he washed his body clean in clear mountain water. Then he started painting. Rejoiced at the victory of his country he, afire with enthusiasm, engrossed himself in painting, his arm dancing over the walls. Those wonderful murals came into being in this way. As the news of the completion of the murals spread, a large number of monks and other Japanese people came to see the murals, and they were all struck with admiration. They said, "This kind of mural cannot be seen anywhere else in the world. Tam Jing's skills are very marvellous."

Then Tam Jing told them, "The success of these murals is not attributable to my brushwork. You'd better know they are permeated with the soul of Koguryo people who are brave, indomitable and resourceful."

Celebrated Father and Son Painters

Ri Nyong was a famous painter of Koryo in the 12th century. In 1124 mountains were tinged with beautiful colours as autumn went on. When the blue sky gradually became more distant and mountains were tinged with red, Ri accompanied government officials as envoys to go across the West Sea of Korea to a foreign country.

Learning that Ri was well versed in painting, the king of the country asked him to give painting lessons. In those days Ri painted *Ryesonggangdo* to the king's special order.

One autumn day that year a party took place in a palace where there stood lines of gilded-tile-roofed houses to welcome Koryo painter Ri Nyong and appreciate his painting.

After the host and the guest exchanged glasses of wine and the atmosphere began to show signs of excitement, the king had Ri's painting brought.

After taking a good look at the painting, the king said, "The forest of masts (in the picture) seems to denote the sound of the prospering trade port. The picture is really a true masterpiece. It seems that I look at a lively port itself rather than a picture." Then he turned his eyes to Ri, asking, "What is the model of the picture?"

"It is Pyongnando, a large port to the southwest of Kaegyong, the capital city of my country. The port is situated at the estuary of the Ryesong River where it runs into the West Sea. So I named the picture *Ryesonggangdo* to represent a wide range," Ri replied.

"Hm, the name, too, can be said to go well with the content of the picture," the king agreed.

After a while, he went on to say, “Recently, many painters have visited my country accompanying envoys of their countries, but I’ve never seen a painter as excellent in skill as you. You’re really an outstanding painter. Thank you very much for your trouble to teach our people the art of painting and leave a masterpiece this time.”

The king, thanking Ri repeatedly, offered him rare dishes and presented lots of silk fabrics to him.

Like this Ri distinguished himself as a famous painter even in a foreign country.

One day, back home, the king of Koryo sent for Ri Nyong, and the latter went to the royal palace.

“What do you think of this picture?” the king asked Ri. “This is a present a foreign merchant gave me. I accepted it as he said it is regarded as a famous painting in his country.”

“It is my picture that I painted when I was in the country a few years ago,” Ri said calmly without any sign of surprise.

“What an absurd joke it is!” the king reprimanded.

“Please tear the paper on its back and look, Your Majesty,” Ri implored.

Tearing the back of the picture, the king discovered Ri Nyong’s sign and seal printed on it.

From then on the king admired Ri Nyong’s art of painting, and treasured him very much.

Ri Nyong’s son Ri Kwang Phil, too, won the king’s favour as an unusually talented painter. The king had his ministers compose poems, and had Ri Kwang Phil put the poems into pictures.

Ri Nyong and Ri Kwang Phil were celebrated painters of Koryo.

Poet Jong Ji Sang

Jong Ji Sang (?–1135), who was from Sogyong (Pyongyang), was a poet representative of Korea's literature of lyrical poetry between the late 11th century and the first half of the 12th century. He finely depicted with witty expressions the nature of beautiful Korea with the main stress on Pyongyang, and the customs and manners of the honest people who lived in the land.

But his life was so full of ups and downs that it is not particularly known when and how he was born and what his family background was like but that he died in 1135 after serving as a royal documentary official.

According to old records about comments on his works, his poems are characterized by delicacy, deep emotion, plenty of lyricism and strong national quality. In particular, the poet was skilled at grasping and emotionally and colourfully depicting the subtle changes of people's inner world on the basis of his rich and many-sided experience. Thus his poems are soft and yet refined in description, vivid and accurate in poetic portrayal and strong in lyrical meaning.

As a talented folk poet, who loved his native place and had a deep concern about the life of his home folks, Jong liked singing of Pyongyang, his home town that boasts time-honoured history, culture and beautiful scenery and created lots of poems depicting the life of the kind-hearted local people.

Pyongyang, *Seeing Off a Friend* and *Taedong River* are Jong's typical lyric poems that have been widely known to the public, and read by lots of people.

*The long embankment is greener
After the rainfall.
And I sing a doleful song
While seeing you off for Nampho.*

*The Taedong River flows.
When will it run dry?
The tears I drop seeing you off
Add to the flow of the river every year.*

This poem, through the bitter feelings of the lyrical hero, artistically depicts the sad and bitter experience of Pyongyangites who were long forced to part with one another, without knowing when they could meet again, at the ferry point of the Taedong River.

Jong's creative forte and talent was demonstrated by his many poems, which finely and vividly depict elegant wonders and scenic beauty of nature in a diversified way, and, on the basis of this, impressively depict the inner world of magnanimous and kind-hearted people. By creating lots of similar lyric poems, he left his name in history as a talented poet representative of his time.

Kim Hwang Won Fails to Fully Depict Beauty of Pyongyang

Renowned poet Kim Hwang Won (1045–1117) lived in the time of Koryo (918–1392). He wrote a great many poems about natural beauty as he travelled through scenic spots of the country.

One summer day, when he was in Pyongyang, he climbed Moran Hill and stood on the Pubyok Pavilion to enjoy the view. Looking down at the clear and blue water of the Taedong River meandering along the Chongnyu Cliff and the Walled City of Pyongyang and the fogged Tongdaewon Plain, he only stood enraptured at the scene for a while.

“Oh, what a wonderful scene it is! I’ve never seen anything like it before,” he was greatly impressed.

Hearing that a well-known poet had come to Pyongyang, many local government officials and scholars hurried to the Pubyok Pavilion and requested him to write a marvellous poem about the scenic beauty of Pyongyang.

Reading the words hanging on the pillars and ceiling of the pavilion, he made a grimace, because none of them was good enough to depict the scenic beauty of Pyongyang vividly. Kim told the spectators to throw away all the words as he was going to make a poem about Pyongyang’s beauty.

Then he leaned against a pillar with an arm and was lost in thought for a good while. At last he asked for a brush. Then he took it up and began to scribble words to everyone’s attention.

A river meanders along the long wall.

Hills are standing east of the plain.

He wrote in a rush, but suddenly seemed to be unable to go on.

With the brush in his hand, he looked down the pavilion for a time, then turned to the silk again, but still found it hard to go on. When he looked down at the Taedong River far down the Pubyok Pavilion, he felt as if he stood in a pavilion of the Dragon King's Palace rising over the sea; when he looked across at the fogged Tongdaewon Plain, he felt as if he stood against the handrail of Heavenly Palace over the cloud.

He found it beyond the bounds of his intelligence to describe such wonderful scenery with only a few words of poetry. Hours passed, but he was unable to continue excepting two lines. Perspiration ran down his face ruining the silk, and the spectators began to desert him one by one.

Soon the sun set and the pavilion was flushed with evening twilight. Finding himself alone, the poet snapped his brush in two and wept bitterly. "My talent is too poor to describe the scenic beauty of Pyongyang." He lamented hopelessly far into the night and left Pyongyang.

Hwadam So Kyong Dok

So Kyong Dok (1489–1546) was clever from his childhood, but he began to go to school only when he was 14 because his family was very poor.

Growing in a time when social contradictions of the feudal Joseon dynasty began to loom, he got displeased with the feudal rulers' scramble for hegemony, arbitrariness and oppression. So he gave up government service and lived in seclusion in Hwadam while pursuing academic studies and striving to educate the rising generation. So people called him "Mr Hwadam" in general.

When he was 25, he established a materialistic outlook on the universe on the basis of his unique study, practical experience and special observation of phenomena.

Touring Mts Kungang and Jiri and other scenic spots, he composed lots of poems singing of the beauty of the country, and put forward a materialistic outlook on the universe sympathizing with the people who were suffering from exploitation and oppression.

In his late years he made public some papers including his treatises “Record of Principles” and “Theory on Spirit” that describe the philosophy he had studied all his life.

He held in his treatises that the motive power for the evolution and development of all things in the world as well as changes in their motion lies in not God or something spiritual but in material substances, and that the great combination of the material substances constitutes the sky and the earth, while the minor combination, different things. And he judged that all sorts of things and phenomena as types of existence of material elements are related to and dependent on one another, and are in steady motion.

Like this So tried to consider the essence of the natural world and the law of its development from a materialistic and dialectic viewpoint, albeit naively.

The following is an episode about So Kyong Dok.

In Kaesong there lived a famous *kisaeng* (a kind of beauty entertainer) Hwang Jin I.

One day, during a chat with aristocrats over wine at the foot of Mt Songak, Hwang heard the aristocrats referring to So Kyong Dok as the only aristocrat who had a good moral sense and was noble-minded.

At that time So had given up government service and was en-



grossed in academic pursuits in Kaesong.

Thinking that even an aristocrat who was said not to be given up to amours would yield to her, Hwang decided to visit him.

Afraid that she might be rejected if she approached So as a *ki-saeng*, she put on a student's attire and went over to him. She said she wanted to learn from him. The man welcomed her, and taught her day and night as she wanted. Several days passed like this. Pretending to be on intimate terms with him, Hwang would sit up at table until late at night before spreading her bed beside him for the purpose of sounding him. Pretending to toss about in sleep, she sometimes put her white arm on his chest and sometimes stretched her white leg across his belly.

"Ha! She must be very tired," So would say, quietly putting her arms and legs right.

Many nights passed that way, but he never fingered her body.

He only taught her to be engrossed in her study.

At last Hwang returned without any success in her attempt to tempt him, and told the aforesaid aristocrats about the fact. He was the only man not given up to amours, she added.

She also said, “I think So is noble-minded because he is a peerless scholar rather than an aristocrat.”

While reviewing his whole life, So said, “Now that I have come to have no doubt about anything through learning, I’m really in high spirits, and I’m satisfied that I’ve lived a worthwhile life.”

So left behind a collection of his works titled *Hwadamjip* of three volumes.

***Kwandongbyolgok* and Jong Chol**

Jong Chol (1536–1593) was a poet who opened up a new phase of the Korean-worded poetry in the 16th century.

Born into a family of an aristocratic bureaucrat of an average rank, he learned from noted scholars from his childhood.

After going into government service when young, he was promoted up to minister of the right.

He wrote songs, *sijo* (three-verse Korean poem) and prose in no small measure all his life. *Kwandongbyolgok*, *Chongsanbyolgok* and other lyrics and over 80 pieces of *sijo* he wrote have been handed down.

Kwandongbyolgok is typical of the Korean-worded poetry. It is a travelogue-style poem Jong wrote after touring the Mt Kungang area when he was the governor of Kangwon Province. It sings of the mountain’s beauty including a multitude of peaks like Piro Peak, fantastic rocks and cliffs, waterfalls of every description in

Manphok Valley, Chongsokjong and Lagoon Samil in the East Sea coast and moonlit Mangyang Pavilion.

His poetry includes the one he wrote while going to war during the Imjin Patriotic War.

It reads:

*When the sail is put up,
And the battleship pushes its way
Through the wide sea,
The long swords flash
Like lots of peaks rise.*

*We're advancing straight eastwards
To attack the den of the Japs.
How could we give up our land
To the Japanese brutes?*

It is said that Jong Chol was very fond of drinking. He drank both when he was delighted and when he was sad.

It happened in the year when he was 31. While going to Hamgyong Province as a royal inspector, he drank in every inn. As he was shabbily dressed, women servants made light of him, sometimes driving him out or refusing to serve wine. Then he would enjoy himself alone citing a *sijo*. *In his dress he looks like a beggar but he has a fine personality*, the women learned, and hastily prepared a drinking table for him.

After looking all around Hamgyong Province carefully, he was returning through Kangwon Province where he dropped in at an inn again in Thongchon. Without recognizing the royal inspector, the innkeeper gave him a cold shoulder. Jong, however, calmly

drank and left, saying to the innkeeper, “I’ll come back as governor ten years later.”

Then the innkeeper said in amazement, “You will not become a minor inspector instead of governor. I hope you’d better come back in new clothes at least.”

Now Jong laughed looking down at his clothes.

Ten years later, while inspecting the locality as Kangwon provincial governor, Jong dropped in at the inn again. He found it as it had been. Then he wrote a *sijo* which read: Ten years ago you told me that I’ll not become even a minor inspector, but I’ve become governor as I said at the time.

Needless to say, the inn fell into confusion preparing a treat for the governor.

Yang Sa On’s Tour of Mt Kumgang

Yang Sa On (1517–1584) was a writer and calligrapher. He passed the state civil service examination and was promoted to Magistrate of Anbyon. But without much interest in government service, he studied while touring spots of scenic beauty and historic interest.

He loved Mt Kumgang very much. Hence he adopted his pen name of Pongnae, which was another name of the mountain.

Between Janggundae and Ryonhwadae in the Lagoon Samil area of Mt Kumgang there is a rocky hill that commands a general view of the lagoon. The hill is called Pongnaedae because Yang studied there. Below the hill is Pongnae Cave in which it is said he studied while seeing the picturesque scenery of the lagoon.

Besides, Mt Kumgang has lots of legends and episodes about

Yang, including *Legend of Piraejong*.

Yang also composed lots of poems.

While working as the Magistrate of Anbyon, Yang heard that Kosong Hot Spring was good, and set out on a tour of Mt Kumgang. In Thongchon he went sightseeing to Chongsokjong before reaching Onjong-ri in Kosong via Onchon.

Having come a long way on horseback, Yang was thirsty.

Dismounting from his horse, he went to a well where a young girl was scooping water into her jar, and asked her for water.

The modest girl with pretty features made a polite bow, scooped water with a gourd, picked a handful of leaves from a weeping willow at the well and put them in the water of the gourd before offering it.

Yang felt suspicious and angry. He, however, was so thirsty that he, bellowing off the willow leaves, drank all the water. Then he asked the girl why she had put in the leaves. With glowing cheeks, she replied, "I was afraid that you might have trouble if you drank water hastily."

Yang slapped his knee, saying in admiration, "People of Mt Kumgang are as perfect as its scenery."

He went on to visit the Onjong Hot Spring and tour the mountain, and left the following poem.

*Does the earth come from the sky
As there is a mountain above a mountain?
The sky is in the middle of the water
As streams flow side by side.
This body is flying in extensive space,
And it is neither smoke nor mist nor spirit.*

*I hear all people in this world
Wish to live in Koryo.
Now touring Mt Kumgang,
I know the peaks here are all beads.*

Yang was also counted as one of the three noted calligraphers in the period of the feudal Joseon dynasty, and his calligraphy can be seen in celebrated mountains and scenic spots like Mt Kumgang and Mt Myohyang.

Kim Man Jung and *Kuunmong*

Kim Man Jung (1637–1692) was a writer. Kim took an interest in writing Korean-worded novels thanks to his mother who was very fond of reading and actively helped him with his literary study.

Typical of his novels that still remain are *Sassinamjonggi* and *Kuunmong*.

Kuunmong is a multi-part novel Kim wrote to console his mother in her worry when he was in exile. One day a man from Kim's hometown told him that his mother was ill, and he had a heavy heart. Unable to go to take care of his mother in sickbed, he felt guilty of being an undutiful son.

His mother Yun had got widowed in her early age. She had devoted all her affection to her posthumous son, bringing him up with great care.

And the son had been loyal to his filial duties. While engrossing himself in study, he had actively helped his mother with the housework. To console his mother who was fond of hearing tales,

he had read interesting books to her or told her about stories that he had read or heard from others. When running out of stories to tell, he even went to a neighbouring village to ask elderly people for stories so that his mother would not feel lonely.

However, now that he could not obtain even a single pack of medicine for the treatment of his mother, or tell her even a single story she was so fond of, he felt heartbroken.

Then an idea popped into his head. *I cannot go to see my mother, but I can write and send stories to her.* With this thought Kim hastily held his brush. After writing a story throughout the night, he bound the sheets of paper into a book, and took it to the man from his native town.

“Is this a medicine?” the man asked.

“No. It is a story I have written,” Kim replied.

“Wow! Do you mean you wrote this thick book overnight?” the man exclaimed, looking at the book.

“What else could I do? I wrote the story thinking it would be better than medicine for consoling my mother,” Kim explained.

Later the story was edited to be widely known to the public. The story was the novel *Kuunmong*.

Well-versed in astronomy, geography, arithmetic and tunes, Kim opposed the theory of *chonwonjibang* that the sky is round with the earth being square. Recognizing that the earth is round, he played an important role in editing and compiling a Korean map.

Female Painter Sin Saimdang

Sin Saimdang (1504–1551) was a famous painter. Sin was good at composition, handwriting, painting and embroidery. When she was 7, she was already able to paint landscape and grapes vividly to the admiration of people. She painted hundreds of pictures of landscape, flowers, birds, fish and wild animals on picture albums, hanging-scrolls and folding screens.

Kangnung where Sin was born and grew up was a beautiful place, and she made efforts to show the beauty in her pictures. In particular, her pictures show scenes of everyday life, and they were attractive and representative of national sentiments.

Typical of her works that still remain are *Eggplants, Grapes, Wild Ducks, Wild Geese* and *White Heron in Lotus Pond*.

It is said that when she painted a picture showing worms and put it out in the yard to dry in sunlight, chickens gathered and pecked at the worms in the picture relentlessly.

The following happened when Sin attended a wedding ceremony.

While Sin was talking with some women, she saw a woman, who had arrived late at the ceremony, come out unhappily after attending the party.

The women each asked her what was wrong with her, but she only sighed, her eyes drawn to her red skirt.

An edge of the skirt had a stain the size of a plate.

“Why is the skirt wet?” they asked.

“This is a new skirt, and I spilt meat soup on it. I would not worry if it were mine. I knew I had to wear a new skirt as this is a rare festival for me, so I borrowed it from my neighbour. What

shall I do now? I have not got money to buy silk like this and make a substitute," she lamented.

The other women were all sorry for her.

Then Sin went up to her, and examined the skirt before saying, "Don't worry. I'll hide the dirty spot." Sin immediately took up a brush and painted a bunch of grapes on the skirt. The grapes looked so lifelike as if fresh from the vine.

Sin now said, "I am sure you can barter this easily for the material of another skirt at the market."

When the woman took the skirt to the market, wealthy ladies scrambled to have it, bidding up the price. So she sold it for a price several times higher than its original cost. Then she bought red silk and made a new skirt with it, which she gave to her neighbour. And she took the remaining money to Sin. Refusing to receive the



money, Sin said she had learned drawing not to make money, and told her to buy a skirt for herself with the money.

Later, it is said the woman learned to draw from Sin.

Sin also was a good mother who took much trouble to educate her children. She had four sons, and every day she gave them tasks and put them under strict control. Under her influence her sons studied hard, and became famous figures of their time.

The third son Ri I learned the mother tongue when he was three. When he was 8, he composed poems to the amazement of people.

The youngest son was a famous calligrapher of his time.

Pak Yon and His Teacher

Pak Yon (1378–1458) was a music theoretician, composer and instrumentalist in the 15th century. And he was one of the three great musicians of old Korea.

At his proposal the feudal government established a musical instrument agency to make different kinds of instruments. A large orchestra was also formed.

His works have been handed down recorded in the music book attached to *Sejong Sillok* (Chronicles of King Sejong).

The following is an episode about the musician.

While learning at a local Confucian school, Pak, in his spare time, learned to play the flute from a man of a neighbouring village who was good at playing it.

One day, several months later, the man told Pak not to come to him any longer. Pak was disappointed by the man's words.

“Did I do anything wrong with you?” asked Pak.

“Oh, no, no,” the man explained. “But I have nothing more to

teach you. In a month you've learned all that I have. Now I know you can play the flute better than I. What else can I teach you?"

Pak could hardly entreat any more. Thus he achieved fame as the best flute player in the locality. Even the royal palace came to know this and sent for him. Then it had a musician of the central music academy test him.

After hearing Pak play the flute, the musician shook his head, saying, "This man's tunes are common, and the rhythm is not right. And he is bound to the old practices. So he is hopeless," the musician concluded.

Pak was heartbroken to know that he was not well-informed about music yet. He then visited and entreated the musician to teach him even for a few days, saying he was reluctant to return without learning anything.

Thus the musician began to teach him right tunes and rhythms, and Pak worked deep into the night day by day, assimilating what was taught.

When the teaching period came to a close, the musician said, "I'm pleased to teach you. I'll readily help you if you want to learn more."

Thus Pak kept learning from the musician for another several days. The musician taught him without attending to anything else.

Pak's musical ability improved day after day. One day, after hearing him play the flute, the musician slapped his knee with great joy, exclaiming, "You're really a master of music." And he went on to say, "Now I have no more to teach you. My talent is no match for yours. What a quick music learner you are!"

Pak said with a smile, "How can I be called a master? And how could I have learned music without a teacher who sincerely taught

me without complaining about my poor ability?”

Finally, Pak came to outdo his teacher, and worked as musician in the royal palace all his life.

Jong Son Paints Mt Kumgang on Skirt

Jong Son (1676–1759) was a famous landscape painter in the 17th century. Unlike lots of scholars of the aristocratic origin who painted abstract fancy as they pleased while drinking and citing poems at home, Jong Son painted what he saw and felt in reality.

An episode about Jong Son follows.

A family sent a silk skirt to his home, and his wife carelessly spilt meat soup on it. Knowing this, Jong Son told her to unstitch the yoke of the skirt, smooth the creases and wash the stained part.

Then he began to paint a picture on a strip of the skirt that was spread. A multitude of peaks of Mt Kumgang rose, and waterfalls like hanging rolls of silk and bottomless pools appeared in a minute. When he forcefully pulled his brush, the stain disappeared in a moment covered by fantastic rocks and cliffs. He painted similar pictures on the other two strips of the skirt.

Afterwards, the owner of the skirt came to his home, and Jong told her he was so eager to paint pictures that he had painted Mt Kumgang on the silk skirt without the owner’s permission. Now he was at a loss what to do, he added.

Seeing the pictures, the owner of the skirt rather thanked him repeatedly, referring to the pictures as peerless treasure.

Jong Son said he had nothing more to want as he realized his desire to paint Mt Kumgang on good silk, and gave the skirt’s own-

er the pictures as gifts.

The owner of the skirt, it is said, decorated her home with the biggest of the three strips.

Satirist Kim Satgat

The real name of Kim Satgat (1807–1863) was Kim Pyong Yon. He was generally called so as he wandered around the country wearing a *satgat*, a kind of conical bamboo rain-hat.

He was born into an aristocrat's family. While wandering about the country he witnessed the harsh exploitation and oppression by the corrupt and dissipated aristocrats and rulers, and the miserable life of the working people. This made him have burning hatred for the idle aristocratic bureaucrats, and sympathy for the people.

As a child he was quite clever and made unusual efforts. So he distinguished himself in his village school and was known even to neighbouring villages.

He liked to put what he saw, heard and felt into poems.

One summer evening he visited a poor peasant's home. The peasant awkwardly put a bowl of thin gruel on a straw mat spread in the front yard, apologizing for poor treatment several times.

Then the guest composed the following poem.

A bowl of thin gruel is on a four-legged table.

And the gruel reflects the sky and clouds.

Master! Don't be sorry at all.

I eat enjoying the green mountains mirrored by the gruel.

There are not a few facts that Kim Satgat, with sympathy for

the poor who had no rights, wrote indictments to solve their legal problems smartly. For example, an ox of a wealthy family gored a calf of a poor family to death, but the wealthy family would not compensate the poor for the loss. Then Kim Satgat wrote a relevant indictment to help the poor family get repaid for the calf.

Kim Satgat, with hatred for exploitation and tyranny of the rich men and aristocrats, wrote not a few poems that scathingly satirized them. One day when he dropped in at a rich family's house, he was given a lump of spoiled rice for a meal. While feeling sad to be treated as being something subhuman, he composed the poem *Beneath a Zelkova* out of boundless hatred for the miserly family.

*The wicked family gives spoiled rice
To a miserable visitor beneath a zelkova.
What an evil thing it is in the world!
I would rather return home to eat half-done rice.*

At first he began to roam out of private anger. But after coming to know about the life and sufferings of the people, he became fond of living among the poor working people, abandoning wealth, rank and fame.

Eventually he died while roaming in 1863.

Magnanimous Writer Rim Je

Rim Je (1549–1587) was a writer in the period of the feudal Joseon dynasty.

His family was good at poetry and well-versed in military science through generations. Therefore, Rim Je displayed his outstanding artistic talent from his childhood. And he never put up with injustice.

After passing the state examinations he entered government service. But when he experienced a bitter factional strife within the ruling class, he gave up government service and devoted all his energy to literary creation.

While travelling across the country he saw for himself the beautiful scenery of the land, observed historic relics left by the forefathers and witnessed the miserable life of the poor people. This experience exerted a positive influence on his writing activity.

The magnanimous and upright writer was simple and sincere, and his life was humorous. There are a lot of episodes about his life.

One day when he set out for a visit on horseback, his horse driver found him wearing a leather shoe on the left foot and a straw shoe on the right. He said, “You must be drunk as you are wearing unmatched shoes of leather and straw.”

Then Rim replied, “The passersby keeping right will say I wear leather shoes, and those keeping left will say I wear straw shoes. Whoever then would say I wear unmatched shoes?”

His words were aimed at satirizing the rough-and-tumble fight of the feudal rulers who formed different factions and attempted to satisfy their selfish interests and desires with bigoted opinions.

Rim created excellent novels. Four of them, namely, *Rat on Trial*, *History of Flowers*, *Fort in Anxiety* and *Wonsaengmongyurok*, are still available. Typical of the four novels is *Rat on Trial*. In the novel the writer used a method of personification to scathingly criticize the corrupt bureaucrats and other feudal rulers who squandered the state treasure and satisfied their private desires and interests.

The story begins with a storekeeper's inquiry against a rat that has been arrested on the charge of stealing into a state grain storehouse with its large family and eating a large amount of grain for a dozen years. As they have squandered such a colossal amount of grain, the storehouse is almost empty.

Nevertheless, the rat, instead of pleading guilty, brings to the storekeeper that acts as judge an accusation against a lot of animals and plants. As a result more than 80 kinds of animals and plants are put into custody for investigation.

The story gives a succession of arguments by different kinds of animals and plants and related things and ensuing cross-examination of them, before ending with a death penalty sentenced to the rat that is found guilty clearly.

He also wrote lots of poems on diversified themes, for example, *People of the Mountain Village* and *Bitter Cold* on the life of mountain people, *Song to Greet Lover* and *Song to See Off Lover* on the unfortunate life of women divers on Jeju Island, natural poetry, travelogues and lyrics.

He died at the age of 39, but his literary works made a great contribution to the development of realistic literature in Korea.

Ho Ran Sol Hon and Ho Kyong Ran

Ho Ran Sol Hon (1563–1589) was a female poet in the period of the feudal Joseon dynasty.

As a child, Ho was clever and unusually pretty, and thus was called female prodigy. It is said that she began to write poems when she was 5.

Her father Ho Yop did not teach her how to read and write. At that time it was not regarded as good to teach women how to read and write. She, however, managed to master the mother tongue by listening secretly to what her elder brothers read, and wrote poems. And she read and wrote more than the brothers.

After marriage, too, she wrote a lot of poems. But she regrettably died at the young age of 26.

She wrote lots of poems in her short life, but the poems failed to be handed down because at the time when women were not encouraged to learn, it must have been impossible to publish poems written by women. Fortunately some of her poems have been handed down thanks to her brother Ho Kyun.

When he was 37, Ho Kyun was appointed as a government official to guide an envoy of a neighbouring country. While meeting the envoy frequently, he enjoyed writing poems together with the guest. Struck with admiration by his literary talent, the envoy asked him for several writings as souvenirs.

Ho said he had no writings worth mentioning, producing his sister's works before the envoy.

After reading them, the envoy expressed great admiration, and told Ho to let him have them, saying that they were valuable as they were written by a woman.



Back home, the envoy edited the poems and published a book under the title of *Collection of Ran Sol Hon's Writings*.

Lots of people read the book as their favourite. Among the readers was a woman, named Ho Kyong Ran, who followed her father, a government interpreter of Korea, to the neighbouring country to live there.

Kyong Ran, too, was clever from her childhood, and made poems when she was 7 or 8. But as she lost her parents when she was young, she could not return to her country but had to live with her relatives in the foreign country.

As she grew up she gradually missed her homeland. So she felt the *Collection of Ran Sol Hon's Writings* was as precious as a handful of soil from the country. All the more important was the fact that they were written by her same sex.

Kyong Ran began to write poems after Ran Sol Hon's rhymes. Later her works were edited as a book and published under the title of *Haedongran*.

Kyong Ran was so impressed by Ran Sol Hon's poems that she went so far as to regard herself as reborn Ran Sol Hon who had already died, and took pride in it. Thus she chose Kyong Ran as her pet name.

She thought that she would die at the age of 26 like Ran Sol Hon had done. So, when she was 26, she said to her relatives, "I'll surely die this year." She, however, did not die that year and the next year. In great disappointment, it is said, she would repeat, "Then am I an ordinary woman instead of reborn Ho Ran Sol Hon?"

From Servant to Famous Painter

The caste system was very strict in the period of the feudal Joseon dynasty. For example, one who was born as a servant remained a servant all his life.

Ri Sang Jwa (1465–?), however, was so good at painting that he finally got out of his miserable status of servant, and was admitted into the royal painting office.

The following shows how Ri developed from a servant to a famous painter.

One day when he was 15, he went deep into a valley with an A-rame carrier and a sickle. As a son of servant, he had to climb mountains to gather firewood every day.

After gathering some firewood, he was drawing a pine tree that stood alone on the edge of a precipice when an adult appeared abruptly and looked at the pine he had drawn for a good while.

Then the man took out a sheet of Korean paper, spread it, put a stone on the corners and pushed a container filled with black ink to the boy, telling him to draw the old pine tree again on the paper.

Ri was at a loss what to do, and the man kept urging him. Then Ri held the brush, and drew the tree quickly.

The tree drawn by the young firewood gatherer was really vivid. After looking from the tree on the precipice to the picture, the aristocrat asked his name, put it down on his notebook and gave him money as compensation for all the rest of firewood he failed to gather that day.

From then on the name of Ri Sang Jwa was widely known from mouth to mouth, and the governor of Jolla Province heard it. Versed in drawing to some degree, the governor sent for Ri, and told him to draw a paulownia growing in the yard.

After looking at what Ri had drawn, the governor told him to draw him. The pictures drawn by Ri were quite vivid to the amazement of the governor.

The governor reported the fact to the king of the country. The king called Ri to Hansong, the capital of the country, and had him draw his profile. Looking at the picture, the king unstintingly admired Ri for his talent, freed him from the identity of servant and allowed him to work as a member of the royal painting office.

Ri was very good at painting landscapes, figure pictures, still lives and illustrations. What still remain as Ri's works include *Strolling under Pine Tree in the Moonlight*, *Landscape*, *Tiger and Flower and Bird*.

Strolling under Pine Tree in the Moonlight is one of Ri's masterpieces that demonstrate his skill of painting. The picture shows an old pine tree standing halfway up a bluff precipice, and a hillock



beneath the precipice. Vivid in particular is the old pine tree that fails to grow upright owing to harsh rain and wind. And the tree's branches swaying in a violent wind and dried drooping arrowroot vines add to the dreary atmosphere of the moonlight night in late autumn. Under the tree there are an old man and his young attendant who stroll looking up at the moon in the sky. Through the painting Ri showed his own old miserable status, the course of his life, and his strong will and firm spirit.

Ri's excellent skill of painting and powerful strokes, and the strong mettle demonstrated by his works made a contribution to the development of painting at that time, and enabled him to become one of the three great painters in the first-half period of the feudal Joseon dynasty.

Apricot Flowers in the Moonlight **Painted by O Mong Ryong**

O Mong Ryong (1566–?) is recorded as a marvellous apricot flower painter in history.

The following shows how well O painted the tree.

It was one late December evening when the snow was coming in large flakes. It was five days before New Year's Day, and O held his brush with a determination to complete a picture of apricot flowers, which he had long begun to paint at his leisure, without fail before New Year's Day.

Soaking the tip of his brush with enough paint, O began to paint the blossoms one by one with great sincerity.

An apricot branch is covered with blossoms in the bright moonlight, one part of a large apricot tree is seen in the middle of the picture's lower part, and twigs grow upright covered with blossoms that seem to emit greater fragrance in the moonlight.

After finishing the picture with satisfaction, O hung it on the door blind of the veranda so that it could soon dry, and left the place.

Soon afterwards a servant was passing by the veranda. Then he noticed apricot blossoms in bloom in the bright moonlight. He looked absently at the blossoms with great wonder for a good while before calling his colleagues passing by.

“Look over there. I think they are surely apricot blossoms unless I mistook,” said the servant. Only then did the other servants look in the direction he pointed.

“You're right. They are really apricot blossoms. How can they bloom now in winter?” they wondered.

With great wonder they only looked at one another before calling all other passersby. Then, hearing the noise outside, O's family members came out in haste to see what happened. Among them was O as well. Now he was tickled pink to know that the people were arguing about whether the tree was real or not. Managing to refrain from laughter, he put down the picture from the door blind. Only then did they realize it was a picture, and they were struck with admiration by his skill of painting.

The picture that aroused such admiration of many people was *Apricot Flowers in the Moonlight* which can be counted as typical of O's works.

**RENOWNED FIGURES
IN KOREAN HISTORY**

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