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STRATEGIC AND OPERATIONAL ASPECTS OF JAPAN'S INVATIONS OF KOREA
1592-1598

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by

Edward D. Rockstein, PhD

June 1993

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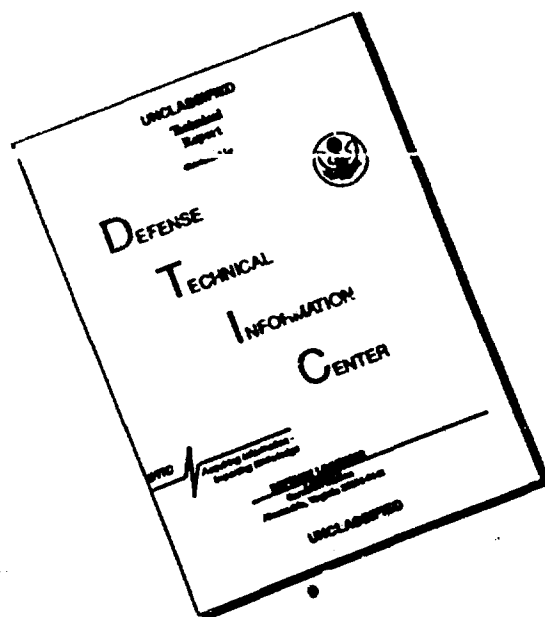
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STRATEGIC AND OPERATIONAL ASPECTS OF JAPAN'S INVASIONS OF KOREA
1592-1598

by

Edward D. Rockstein, PhD

A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Advanced Research Department, Center for Naval Warfare Studies.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

Signature: Edward D. Rockstein

18 June 1993

Paper directed by
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Abstract of
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1592-1598

This paper reviews the events leading up to and comprising the Japanese invasions of Korea 1592-1598. It attempts to place these events in their historical context for perspective and then to employ the events as historical example for gaining new insights into warfare, strategy, policy and East Asia.

Based on the history of the invasions, the paper discusses a gamut of issues which may be examined profitably in the light of the events studied. These include what happens when a predominantly maritime power fights a predominantly land power; the virtues of offense versus defense; the effects of poor integration of various types of forces into a war effort; the criticality of maintaining lines of communication; command and control issues; operational tempo; the impact of technological advancement on warfare; deception and surprise; guerrilla warfare; and war termination issues, *inter alia*.

Finally, the paper discusses the positive impact which Korean brown water dominance had on the fortunes of their war efforts over the course of the war.

PREFACE

I wish to express my gratitude to the Advanced Research Department of the Center for Naval Warfare Studies, Naval War College for their support of this research. Special thanks to Professor Michael T. Corgan of the National Security Decision Making Department, Naval War College, for his advice and encouragement; to Professor Michael I. Handel of the Strategy and Policy Department, Naval War College, for stimulating discussion and debate on strategy issues; to Professor John Hattendorf, Director of the Advanced Research Department, and Commander John Kennedy, Advanced Research Department, for their assistance on this project. Finally, my heartfelt appreciation to the staffs of the Naval War College Library and of the Gest Oriental Library at Princeton University for their patience and assistance. All errors remaining, nevertheless, are my own.

Korean words and names have been Romanized following the McCune-Reischauer system with the following exceptions: 1) words or names which have an established alternative Romanization in English have been Romanized accordingly; 2) all McCune-Reischauer diacritics have been eliminated; 3) polysyllabic Korean names have not been hyphenated (unless they already appear in English that way), although geographic designators on the ends of place names have been hyphenated; 4) non-voiced consonants in intervocalic

positions have been regularly Romanized with the "soft" Roman equivalents.

Chinese words and names have been Romanized according to the Wade-Giles system, without diacritics, unless the words or names appear otherwise in a quote or title, etc. Polysyllabic Chinese names have not, however, been hyphenated, but rather written together as a single name.

Japanese words and names have been Romanized following the revised Hepburn Romanization without marking lengthened vowels.

Any translations or summaries from Chinese, Korean and Japanese, unless otherwise indicated, have been made by me and I am solely responsible for any inaccuracies that may be found therein.

Dates are extremely difficult to work with in dealing with this period since the countries involved all used the lunar calendar together with their own reign year designations. The problem arises in that many works directly translate, for example, "Imjin Year Fourth Month Fourteenth Day" as "14 April 1592" without converting from lunar to solar calendar dating while others do the conversion. It is not always clear which a secondary source does and there is also a certain degree of internal inconsistency in some sources. Dates in the present work have been converted

employing the Kou-Ming Press' *A Sino-Western Calendar for Two Thousand Years: 1-2000 A.D.*

The outline of the main events of the war is based on the Chindan Hag'hoe's *Hanguk-sa: kunse chon'gi-pyon* (*History of Korea: Early Recent Era*) and information derived from other sources is footnoted accordingly.

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STRATEGIC AND OPERATIONAL ASPECTS OF JAPAN'S INVASIONS OF KOREA

1592-1598

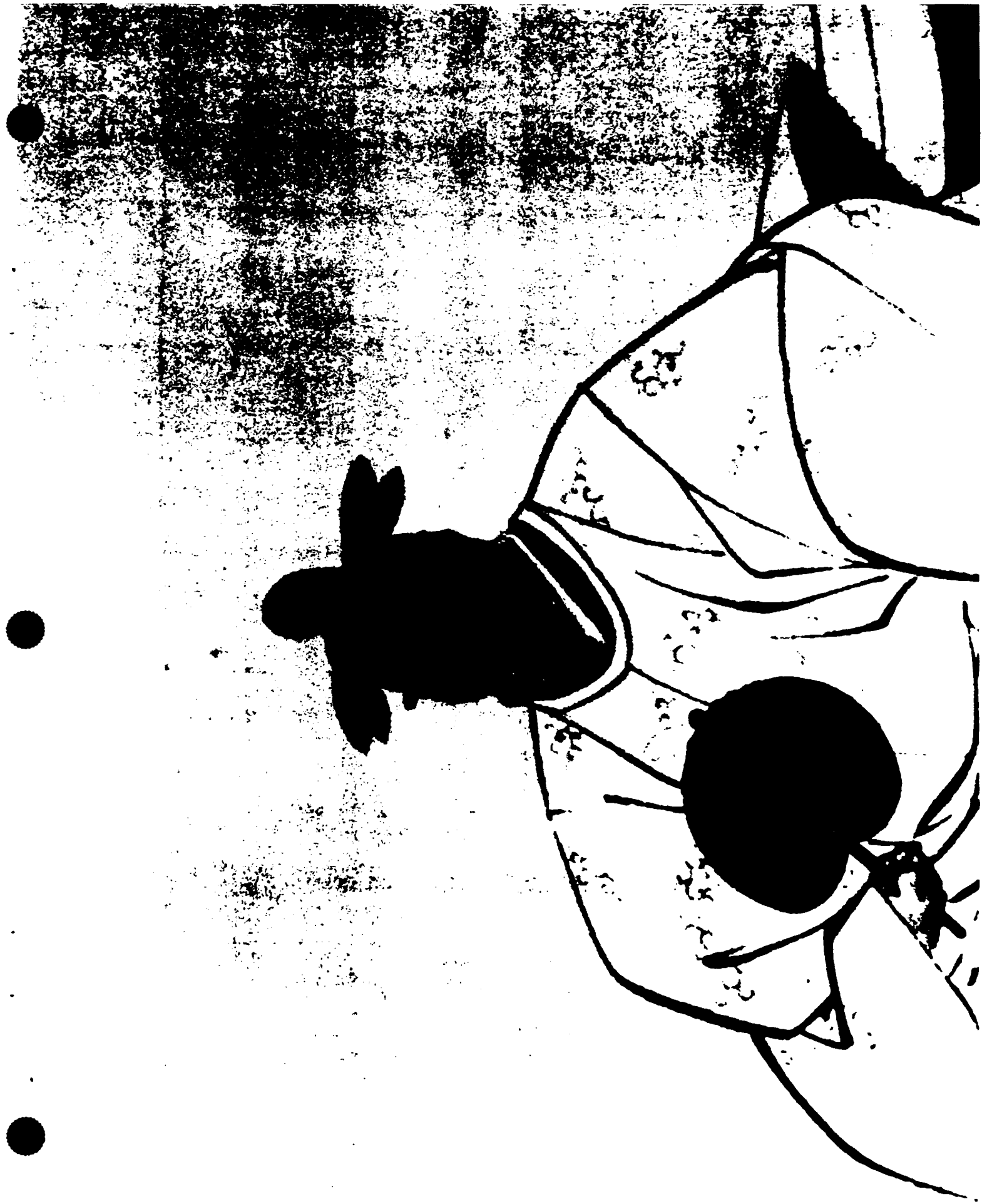
"Although I was born to a family of low rank, my mother conceived me immediately after she had dreamed that the Sun had entered into her bosom. A physiognomist interpreted this dream and predicted that I was destined to extend my authority to all parts of the world wherever the sun shines. When I came to manhood, my benevolent rule would be admired by nations in every direction. People within the four seas would all come under my influence and power."

Toyotomi Hideyoshi, winter 1590¹

Overleaf

PORTRAIT OF TOYOTOMI HIDEYOSHI

**from a painting in the Karatsu Castle Museum
photographed by Dr. Edward D. Rockstein**



Chapter I. INTRODUCTION

"Time is, time was, time will be"

Christopher Marlowe, *The Tragicall History of
D. Faustus*

History is an exceptionally valuable tool for man in getting to know and understand himself. Not only do we learn constantly by analogy, we also employ analogy in the analysis of issues and situations. Similarly, we employ analogy in the decision making processes by which we select alternative courses of action to employ in a given set of circumstances. It would seem to follow, therefore, that the examination and analysis of historical analogs of situations which we might encounter should be of considerable value to decision makers. Consequently, it should be no great surprise to note the proliferation of war games and simulations in training military decision makers today.

"Peruse again and again the campaigns of Alexander, Hannibal, Caesar, Gustavus Adolphus, Turenne, Eugene and Frederick. Model yourself upon them. This is the only means of becoming a great captain, and of acquiring the secret of the art of war. Your own genius will be enlightened and improved by this study, and you will learn to reject all maxims foreign to the principles of these great commanders."

Napoleon Bonaparte, *Military Maxims*, 1831,
quoted in Wintle, *The Dictionary of War
Quotations*

The examination of historical analogs, however, offers us an additional benefit in that it permits us to learn from the mistakes of others in contexts relatively free from our personal, professional or institutional points of view and cultures. In a

more nearly value-neutral context we may be able to learn how to recognize pitfalls and opportunities that our individual or professional proclivities might prevent or perturb within our own milieu.

"A study of the mistakes of the past will usually yield a better harvest than a study of successes. In most instances, it has been the errors of the vanquished rather than the brilliant tactics of the victor that brought success to the latter."

Chester W. Nimitz³

The events comprising the Japanese invasions of Korea 1592-1598 provide just such an opportunity for *analogizing*. Despite their remoteness in time and culture, they offer what I consider to be valuable insights into several timeless principles of strategy and operational art as well as into geopolitical and cultural-psychological factors which may still be operative in nations of a region of considerable interest in the world today. It is my hope that this assemblage of information and observations may prove of some small value to those who worry about these things today.

I will begin this study by attempting to provide some detail on the background of Japan, Korea and China in this period in order to place the subsequent events in sufficient context for them to be fully appreciated. I will add some detail about some of the key players. I will discuss the impact of evolving military technologies in the period. I will sketch out the

events of the war chronologically in some detail. Finally, I will detail my analyses of and observations about these events.

Chapter II. THE CHINESE WORLD ORDER AND THE 16TH CENTURY

The General Pattern

"It is by good faith that a small State serves a great one, and benevolence is seen in a great State's protecting a small one."

Tso-chuan

China evolved, over many centuries, as a large, somewhat homogeneous, sedentary society--a veritable *continent*--surrounded by *islands* of pastoral nomads and smaller sedentary groups. By the time of Confucius, around 500 B.C., China already had a civilization well over a thousand years old and looked back, wistfully, to a *Golden Era*.⁴ The diverse cultures and languages of China were integrated, to a certain extent, through a writing system that transcended dialects, employing ideograms. The civilizing and integrative power of writing led to the preservation and transmission of a cultural ideal. As China grew in accomplishments and power, she developed a style and strategy for dealing with the often dangerous *randvoelker*, peoples of the margins, such as the Hsiung-nu, Kok Turk, Uygur, Mongol, Khitan and Jurchen.

China developed a world view with its great, sedentary civilization as the center. The peripheral peoples came to China to trade and learn, or on occasion to pillage, but they would

continue to come because of China's greatness. The Emperor of China developed into the center of this center. He not only reigned and sometimes ruled, but also, importantly, he was the intercessor for the people with the gods. He was responsible for the proper sacrifices to and propitiation of the gods of agriculture, regulation of the rivers and canals, etc. The Emperor ruled by the Mandate of Heaven which could readily be lost through improper conduct. The Mandate of Heaven in some ways resembles the contract of government except that the contract, while involving the people of China, is between the ruler and the gods.

China came to the view that its relations with the *randvoelker* should follow, when feasible, a pattern analogous to its relationship with Heaven--one in which all legitimacy flowed from the Mandate of Heaven through the Emperor to the central kingdom, China. Peripheral nations and peoples could share in the Chinese world through ordering their societies properly and recognizing China's centrality. This was articulated through a tributary relationship. In this system, China would grant 'worthy' states patents of investiture, recognizing their rulers as kings who ruled by the recognition of the central ruler, the Emperor of China. By accepting these patents of investiture, the peripheral state recognized the superiority of China and adopted the Chinese calendar. She would, likewise, send, periodically or aperiodically, missions to the Court of the Emperor with tribute for him. This usually consisted of special local products from

their jurisdictions. In return the Emperor would bestow gifts of appropriate value on the mission. In other words, this was a sort of highly ritualized trade; moreover, the members of the mission were allowed special trading privileges while abroad in China. In this way, China both regulated trade and discouraged its growth by limiting it to select members of society who then had vested interests in preserving the system and their monopoly.

Periodically, China also would dispatch missions to the tributary states. The expenses of missions were generally borne by the hosting country. China, to keep peace with these tributary states, sometimes would send princes or princesses in marriage to the tributary. The tributary states were treated in accordance with the degree of their adoption of Chinese practice and custom. Throughout its history, Korea remained one of the closest and certainly the most Confucianized of China's tributary states. The relationship between China and Korea has been characterized by some as analogous to that between an older brother and a younger brother.

When China could not bring peripheral peoples into accord with their world order, they would attempt to isolate them; insulate themselves from them through buffer peoples; set them against one another; or, ultimately, fight them to disperse or destroy them if all else failed and no accommodation were possible.

The Korean Example

"Sadae Mohwa" ("Serve the great, emulate China") Korean Aphorism

General Yi Songgye, founder of the Yi Dynasty and the kingdom which he named "Choson," came from a family without aristocratic bloodlines. Legitimacy was at once important and tenuous for him. Consequently, recognition and investiture by China were very important for the survival of his line. The Yi, therefore, adopted a policy characterized as *sadae chuui* ("serve the great-ism," derived from a reference in the ancient Chinese classic, *Tso Chuan*⁵) with respect to China. Institutions were patterned on Ming Chinese models (*mohwa*, "emulate China," derived from a reference in the *Li Chi*⁶) and Chu Hsi-style neo-Confucianism became the philosophical underpinning for the Yi Dynasty bureaucracy.

In the early part of the Yi Dynasty the Yi normally sent three regularly scheduled missions to China--on the occasions of the New Year, the Emperor's birthday, and the birthday of the Heir-Apparent. Later, several of these were usually combined in a Winter Solstice Embassy. There were also occasional embassies for special occasions to notify the Chinese Court of the death of a king or queen, succession to the throne, investiture of a queen, designation of an Heir-Apparent and, especially the conveyance of tributary horses--between 1392 and 1422 over 45,000 horses were sent to Ming China from Korea as tribute.⁷ Many other products were also included in the tribute such as ginseng, furs, and ramie

cloth while the Koreans received silks, medicines, books and porcelains, etc.⁸

In other words, relations between China and Korea were regulated based on a paternalistic pattern with mutual responsibilities within a neo-Confucian context.

Relations on the Margins

Korea's relations with Japan were characterized within the Chinese world order as *chiao-lin* "intercourse with neighboring states" since Japan most often fell into the class of foreign barbarian rather than tributary state, although, at times, Japan assumed a tributary status with respect to China, as it did most of the first two hundred years of the Yi Dynasty.

A driving force in the Yi Dynasty's relations with the Ashikaga Shogunate in Japan were the related issues of raids by the *wako* (literally "dwarf pirates") from Japan and international trade.⁹ In 1419 Choson launched a punitive invasion of from 225-250 ships against Tsushima and Iki from Masan, headed by General Yi Chongmu. Yi's forces reportedly burned 129 Japanese ships and 1,939 houses; killed more than 100 Japanese; and liberated 131 Chinese and eight Koreans who were being held captive.¹⁰

The Ashikaga Shogun Yoshimitsu, who had been the first shogun to recognize the Ming Emperor as suzerain, later offered to suppress the pirates if Choson would provide a copy of the 6,467 volume Korean publication of the Buddhist *Tripitika* (Sanskrit: literally 'Three Baskets,' being the collected Buddhist canon). Eventually 50 copies were printed and sent to Japan. The *wako*, however, were not fully controlled despite campaigns against them by the shoguns until Hideyoshi gained control over the *daimyos* of Western Japan in 1587.¹¹

As conditions improved somewhat under the Ashikaga, Choson agreed to open three ports to the Japanese at Naeip'oo (Chep'oo), Pusanp'oo (Pusan) and Yomp'oo (Ulsan). Small Japanese enclaves called *waegwan* were established at these three sites and trade conducted through them. A brisk trade ensued at these ports with Japanese obtaining large quantities of cotton cloth and rice. The Japanese traded copper, tin, sulphur, medicines and spices. The Japanese were also allowed to fish in Korean waters. Eventually, the Koreans concluded a treaty with the *daimyo* of Tsushima in 1443 in order to limit this trade. In 1510 there was a rebellion by Japanese residents in these ports against the tight control by Korean officials and the ports were closed and the Japanese were expelled. Two years later the ports were reopened by a new treaty, but the vessels permitted to visit were reduced by one-half.¹²

The Japanese Example

"Yoshimasa, King of Japan, a subject of the Ming Emperor, reverently addresses the throne. The highest Heaven and Mother Earth praise the life and thought of China.... His Majesty the Emperor is a sage as well as a divinity...."

Ashikaga Yoshimasa, Shogun, 1483¹³

Ashikaga Yoshimitsu, the third of the Muromachi Shoguns, successfully established relations with Ming China. He accepted investiture as "King of Japan." This gave him official Chinese recognition not only with the Ming, but also with the Yi of Choson. The Koreans treated his missions as those of any other king within the Chinese tributary system.

The Ashikaga, however, were not in full control of Japan. Immensely wealthy regional lords with considerable forces also shared power. Certain of these families also had a firm grip on external trade and controlled merchant and light battle fleets. These included the Ouchi of Honshu and the Otomo of Kyushu.¹⁴ Consequently, the shoguns, in reality, were unable to function totally independently in the realm of foreign relations. Moreover, most of the shoguns after Yoshimitsu did not receive investiture from the Ming although they continued to enjoy the benefits of the tributary trade and came to depend on Chinese coinage for the domestic Japanese economy.

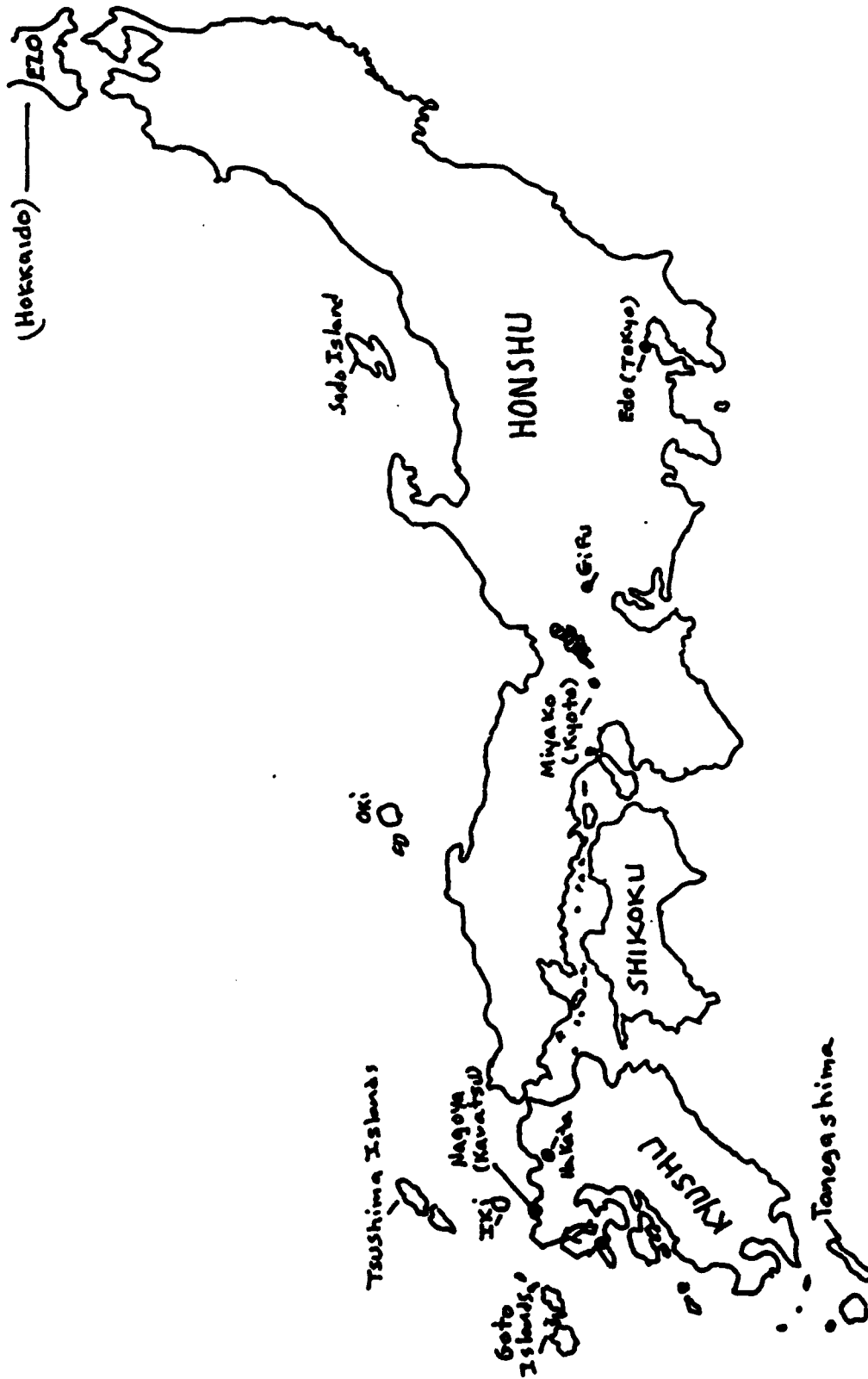
The Ming named the port of Ningpo as the official port through which Japanese missions were to pass on their way to the capital at

Beijing. Periodically a Japanese embassy comprised of ships of the shogun, of major families such as the Ouchi, of Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines, etc., would arrive. They presented their tribute which included fine Japanese swords and armor and other products of Japanese craftsmen, sulphur and silver, etc., at the Ming Court. They received silks, works of art and large quantities of minted copper coins as 'gifts' from the Emperor in return.¹⁵ In addition to the formal tribute exchange, large quantities of goods were traded through licensed Chinese brokers.

Similarly, a flourishing trade was conducted with Korea. China, however, was unhappy with the *multilaterality* of the Japanese missions and limited the number of ships permitted to three each mission as they grew increasingly horrified at the burgeoning size of Japanese missions. The Koreans were more flexible and granted the *embassies* of *daimyos* a status slightly below that of king. The Koreans were benefitting from the trade, and, more importantly from the government's perspective, they saw some improvement in Japan's restricting the predations of the Japanese marauders known as the *wako* .

Formal diplomatic relations in the Chinese world order, then, clearly had a trade component. This was a very important component, especially to the Japanese. This *diplomatic* trade was finally ended in 1547 and saw the concomitant rise in trading activity by the Kingdom of the Ryukyus.¹⁶ To the extent that the

Sixteenth Century Japan



system failed to satisfy the broader requirements for international trade, China should have expected problems. The Japanese pirates were a signal manifestation of these problems.

Chapter III. Sixteenth Century Japan

"Civilized societies, too, can obviously possess a warlike character to greater or lesser degree, and the more they develop it, the greater will be the number of men of military spirit in their armies."

Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*¹⁷

Civil Wars and Warring States

The two hundred year period from 1340-1540 was remarkable for a complex series of civil wars stemming from imperial dynastic struggles and competition among warlords to increase their individual holdings at the expense of others. It was a period that saw the rise of the Ashikaga to be the predominating warlord family and, ultimately the new line of shoguns. The Ashikaga never, however, completely dominated Japan.

In 1368, the founding year of the Ming, Ashikaga Yoshimitsu succeeded to the shoguncy. The following year Ming sent an embassy to Japan requesting that Japan rein in the wako. Some minor attempts were made to control the pirates at the time, with little overall impact. In 1376 the newly emergent Ming sent a nasty note to the Ashikaga averring that if the Ashikaga offended China, it would be easy for China to invade Japan and punish them. Five years later the Ashikaga responded with a tough reply that ended with a call for cooperation rather than hostilities.¹⁸

In 1394, two years after the reunification of the Northern and Southern Courts and the resolution of the succession of the Japanese imperial lines, Yoshimitsu was elevated to the position of Chancellor and Ashikaga Yoshimochi succeeded him as shogun. In 1401 Yoshimitsu proposed the renewal of diplomatic relations to the Ming Emperor and ultimately was invested as a king, tributary to the Ming Court. With moderately effective attempts at controlling the Japanese pirates under way (1401-1402), a more formal trade relationship between China and Japan under the guise of tributary exchange was developed and became known as the "tally trade." (A series of tallies were split; the Chinese court held one half and the other half was sent with an official Japanese embassy to China. If the tally halves fit together, then the embassy was recognized as *bona fide* by the Ming Court.)

It is interesting to note that in 1392, twenty-four years after the founding of the Ming Dynasty in China, the Yi founded their Choson Dynasty and, in the same year, the Northern and Southern Courts in Japan were reunited giving East Asia some semblance of stability for the first time in decades.

After Korea invaded Tsushima in 1419 to punish pirates there, the pirates turned their attention mainly to the China coasts despite the efforts of the Ashikaga shoguns.

Yale Professor of Japanese History, John W. Hall, points out that despite the tendency for the military to take greater and greater control of civil affairs over the whole of the period of the Ashikaga shogunate and that of the Kamakura shoguns before them, the basic polity of the Japanese state and the basic rationale for legitimacy, that of the emperor, had never been challenged.¹⁹ During the Warring States period, however, the lords began to seek greater autonomy and sole ownership of their estates which previously they had enjoyed by imperial grace and investiture.

An extremely complex and highly destructive period of intense conflict called the Onin War ran from 1467-1477. It saw the destruction of the capital, Kyoto, and marked the nadir of feudal discipline. The feudal lords fell out basically into two camps headed by Hosokawa Katsumoto and Yamana Mochitoyo. It ended when both sides collapsed in exhaustion and left the Ashikaga shogunate in impotent disarray.

Social change was wrought during the continual battling of the Warring States Period which followed the Onin War. These changes had begun much earlier, but were accelerated by the stresses of war. Those of most immediate concern were the decline of civil authority and the replacement of higher level provincial officials who had been appointed by the shogunal

government with an upwardly mobile group of warriors who came from families of little note.²⁰

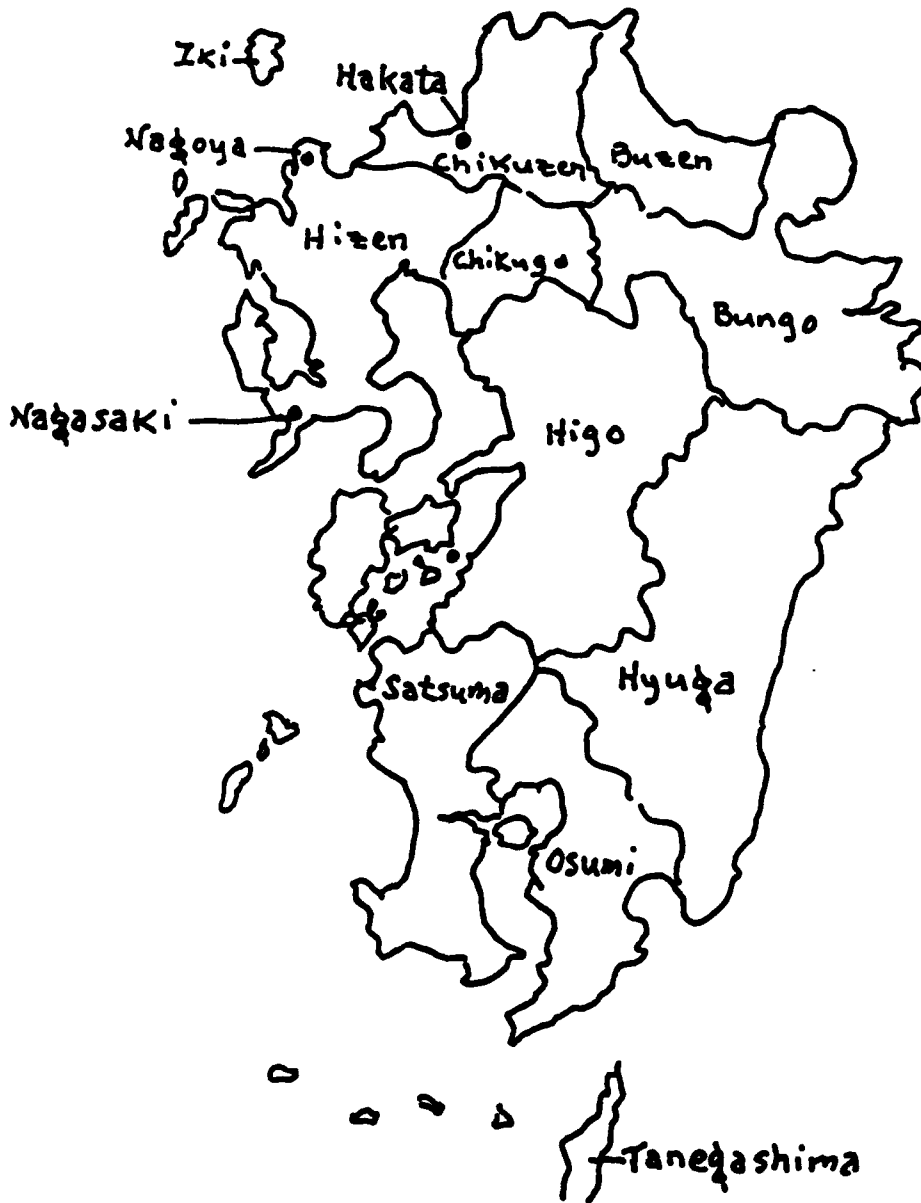
The early 16th century saw a burst of economic growth and the emergence of new industries. Mining, especially of silver reached a fever pitch and Japan became a major East Asian supplier of silver. Gold mining also developed and smelting technology was imported from China and Korea.²¹

The Intrusion of Westerners in Japan

In 1542 Japan was *discovered* accidentally by the Portuguese when Fernand Mendez Pinto and two others, who had been passengers on a Chinese junk (possibly a pirate ship) were shipwrecked on Tanegashima--a small island off Kyushu (and a hot bed of piracy).²² They had been carrying muskets and this was the reported introduction of guns into Japan. These were rapidly copied and began to proliferate²³ almost instantaneously. Within eight years (by 1550) the Portuguese had established the position of Captain-Major of the Japan Voyage and were making regular trading visits primarily to Kyushu.

In 1549 the Jesuit missionary, St. Francis Xavier, landed in Kagoshima in the far southwest of Japan and was received well by the lord of Satsuma. By 1560 there were six Jesuit missionaries in Japan and 20 by 1570.²⁴ The early missionaries were

Sixteenth Century Kyushu



extremely successful in converting the poverty stricken peasants and also made inroads with some of the nobility as well.

In 1565 a Portuguese carrack under the command of Fidalgo Dom Joao Pereira, Captain-Major of the Japan Voyage, and a small galleon of Dom Diogo Menezes, Captain of Malacca, were anchored off Nagasaki. The Portuguese ships were hit with a surprise attack by a flotilla of 80 vessels, large and small, sent by Lord Matsuura, *daimyo* of Hirado, and manned with several hundred samurai. The Portuguese were outnumbered; many of their crew were ashore; yet despite being taken by surprise, they made a good fight of it. The carrack was boarded by the Japanese raiders, but the boarders were repelled. The Portuguese ships caught many of the Japanese ships in a cross-fire of cannonade and wreaked havoc among them until they withdrew. Matsuura's force suffered 70 killed and 200 wounded, a number of whom subsequently died. This was the first recorded naval action between Europeans and Japanese and the Portuguese gained new found respect with the Japanese not only as merchants but as warriors.²⁵

In April 1586 a Spanish Jesuit, Padre Alonso Sanchez, placed a proposal before the bishop and council of notables in Manila. It was accepted without a single dissenting vote. Sanchez proposed the conquest and conversion to Christianity of China. He proposed 500 men from the Philippines lead an expeditionary

force of 12,000 to be sent from Europe (as many Biscayans as possible) together with 6,000 Visayan Indian recruits and a like number of Japanese (to be recruited through the Portuguese Jesuits in Japan)! The Spaniards were to attack through Fuchien Province while the Portuguese were to come through Macao and Canton. Matteo Ricci and the other Jesuit missionaries in China were to be recalled to Manila and Macao to act as guides and interpreters. The final arrogance of the Spanish plan was that they were going to request Rome to order the Portuguese Jesuits not to interfere in the plan, including the recruiting of Japanese troops, if they did not want to participate and that Rome should send a high-ranking Italian prelate to insure the compliance of the Portuguese. The proposal was probably never considered seriously in Spain, however, since it arrived shortly after the destruction of the Spanish armada by Drake; there is no evidence it was ever broached in Rome.²⁶

On 4 May 1586, Hideyoshi requested that Gasper Coelho obtain Portuguese ships and artillery pieces for his use in his planned conquest of Korea and China.²⁷ Coelho had said that he would do what he could (probably two carracks were the target), but this affair was stopped at a higher level within the Jesuit Order.²⁸ (If this proposal had come to fruition, it might have significantly altered the chain of events which frustrated the Japanese war aims in Korea.) British Vice Admiral George Ballard speculated that Hideyoshi may have had some intelligence about

Portuguese Fidalgos in Japan



Illustration from *Nihon no rekishi*, Vol. 9, *Tenka toitsu*

the design of the turtle ships which Yi Sunshin had been having built over the four year period of diplomatic wrangling between Japan and Korea which culminated in the invasion and, consequently, made this attempt to acquire Portuguese naval warfighting capacity to assure the safety of his fleets.²⁹

Support for the Spanish project was later reported in Manila by a group of *wako* who informed the Spaniards that they, together with troops of the *daimyo* Matsuura of Hirado and the Christian *daimyo*, Konishi Yukinaga (!), would willingly supply 6,000 or more men for the invasion of China, Borneo, the Moluccas or Indochina. The Spaniards expressed their appreciation for the offer, but indicated they had dropped the project.³⁰

Oda Nobunaga



Illustration from Turnbull, *The Samurai: A Military History*

The Rise and Fall of Oda Nobunaga

Oda Nobunaga came from a samurai family that descended from the Taira. His father, Nobuhide, a grasping 'empire-builder' had worked hard to increase his holdings. He died in 1549 when his second son, Nobunaga, was fifteen. Nobunaga excelled in military skills, but gave little attention to governing his holdings. His holding and holdings of members of his family were assailed several times by other warlords desirous of increasing their domains during the vicious internecine wars of aggrandizement during the Warring States period. Nobunaga succeeded in fending off these would-be usurpers. Nobunaga was counselled to come to an accommodation when confronted by a particularly powerful adversary, but rather chose to oppose his enemy, which he did successfully. His reputation began to spread far and wide.

Oda Nobunaga was invited then by the Emperor to help put an end to the unrest in the capital. He established himself at Gifu and eventually succeeded after allying himself with some of the other great houses including that of Tokugawa Ieyasu. He had taken Hideyoshi under his wing and had several other excellent warriors also as retainers. The Emperor next commissioned him to pacify the entire country and to bring the noble houses back into allegiance with the Imperial house.

Akechi Mitsuhide
Retainer Who Betrayed Oda Nobunaga



Illustration from Matsumoto, Stories of Fifty Japanese Heroes

Oda was making steady progress in his pacification and reunification efforts. Especially his General Hashiba Hideyoshi (later conferred with the surname of Toyotomi by the Emperor) was effective in these struggles. Hideyoshi became noted not only for his tactical brilliance, but also for his ingenuity in sieges, especially of castles previously thought impregnable. In April of 1582 he had attempted to gain Takamatsu Castle by a huge bribe. The bribe having been refused, Hideyoshi flooded the castle which was only a few feet above sea level in a swampy area. He had his engineers build an ingenious system of dikes and channels which directed sea water into the keep. He also brought in siege towers on barges and kept constant gun fire on the battlements.³¹ When the enemy was bringing in large numbers of reinforcements, Hideyoshi asked Oda for additional forces in order to facilitate his siege of Takamatsu Castle and Nobunaga commissioned Akechi Mitsuhide to raise a force of 30,000 to go to Hideyoshi's aid. Akechi, however, turned his force on Kyoto and the Honnoji where Nobunaga had taken up residence. Nobunaga died in the assault by Akechi's troops (either by his own hand or of a wound in the battle) at the age of 48.³²

The Rise of Hideyoshi

"Why then the world's my oyster,
Which I with sword will open."

William Shakespeare
The Merry Wives of Windsor, Act I,
quoted in *The Oxford Dictionary of
Quotations*³³

Toyotomi Hideyoshi



Illustration from Matsumoto, Stories of Fifty Japanese Heroes

Akechi having succeeded in killing his master hesitated about which move to make next. Hideyoshi received word of Akechi's treachery on 22 June 1582. He immediately reached a settlement with the residents of Takamatsu Castle which gained him recognition as suzerain over three provinces which he already effectively held and the surrender of Takamatsu Castle. The next day he made a forced march of 70 miles to Himeji, raised a large army and attacked, defeated and killed Akechi on 30 June.³⁴

Hideyoshi was in the right place at the right time to avenge Oda Nobunaga's death and to seize the initiative for himself, first as the protector of the interests of Oda's sons and, ultimately, for himself. He went on to complete the task of reunification which Oda had begun and was raised to the highest levels by the Emperor.

Hideyoshi launched a cadastral survey which enabled him to gain full appreciation of the potential productivity of all the lands of Japan and thereby to tax and control the land and the samurai given primacy over it. He sought to tie the peasant to the land and make him responsible for the taxes from it and to break the *daimyos'* hold by shifting them around and by pulling down their castles and fortresses.

Hideyoshi also launched the great sword hunt in 1588, taking up swords from all those who might rise up against the samurai

Tokugawa Ieyasu Founder of the Tokugawa Shogunate



Illustration from Matsumoto, *Stories of Fifty Japanese Heroes*

classes. Oda had tried this on a small scale, but Hideyoshi sought not only to disarm the peasantry, but also the powerful Buddhist monasteries with their monk-warriors.³⁵ Gradually, he strengthened his position, centralizing authority and realigning institutions to such an extent that his ultimate successor, Tokugawa Ieyasu, was able to establish a shogunate which ruled Japan in relative peace and stability for over 250 years.

Hideyoshi's Vision of World Conquest

"It is our desire to extend our ruling power over the Great Ming. A plan has been completed for sending our warships and fighting men to China. It will be carried out before many days. After completing our heavenly mission of conquering China, we shall readily find a road by which to reach your country."

Toyotomi Hideyoshi, 25 July 1591,
letter to the Portuguese Viceroy of
India³⁶

Oda Nobunaga declared in 1582 that once he had made himself master of all the sixty-six regions of Japan, he would next conquer China by force. His successor, Hideyoshi, appears to have taken on that vision together with his master's vision of unification of all Japan under the emperor.

In 1578 when Hideyoshi was being sent against Mori Terumoto in Chugoku by Oda, Hideyoshi told him that after conquering Chugoku:

" . . . I will go on to take Kyushu and take the whole of it. When Kyushu is ours, if you will grant me the revenue of that island for one year, I will prepare

ships of war, and prepare provisions and go over and take Korea. Korea I shall ask you to bestow on me as a reward for my services, and to enable me to make still further conquests; for with Korean troops, aided by your illustrious influence, I intend to bring the whole of China under my sway. When that is effected the three countries (China, Korea and Japan) will be one. I shall do it all as easily as a man rolls up a piece of matting and carries it under his arm."³⁷

There is further documentary evidence of Hideyoshi's intentions to subdue China in correspondence by written by him in 1586 and 1587.³⁸ Moreover, Jesuit Father Luis Frois accompanied his Vice-Provincial, Gasper Coelho, on a visit to Osaka in 1586 and recorded that Hideyoshi had expressed his intention to put Japan in order and then entrust the affairs of Japan to his brother, Hidenaga, while he would turn his attention to the conquest of Korea and China. Hideyoshi added that he had already given orders for the construction of two thousand ships for this purpose.³⁹

In 1591 Jesuit Alexandro Valignano brought Hideyoshi a letter from the Portuguese viceroy in Goa. A portion of Hideyoshi's reply appears at the beginning of this chapter and shows that his intentions were to conquer not only Korea and China, but that his vision stretched beyond even to India.

Hideyoshi also sent a letter to the governor general of the Philippines in 1591. He stated that Korea and the Ryukyus were already sending tribute to Japan and threatened to attack the Philippines if they did not do likewise. In 1593 Hideyoshi sent

a similar letter to Taiwan in which he mentioned that he had already attacked Korea and that a Chinese embassy had come to surrender to him. He claimed that the Ryukyus and the Portuguese (Namban) were already sending him tribute.

Hideyoshi is often regarded as a megalomaniac; however, he entered on the daunting task of reunifying a country torn by civil war in the service of Oda Nobunaga who already had designs upon China. Hideyoshi knew something of the relative capabilities of various countries' warriors and that Japanese warriors were sufficiently skilled to be in demand throughout Asia as bodyguards for kings and lords. He gathered many of the most talented fighters, artisans and administrators of his time to his fold and achieved what his master had not. He was a great builder as well as destroyer as his surviving castles show. He restructured the institutional underpinning of Japan's government before setting off on his visionary attempt to conquer Korea and China.

Chapter IV. YI DYNASTY KOREA 1392-1592

Turmoil at the End of a Dynastic Cycle

As the Yuan (Mongol) Dynasty in China waned, several rebellions broke out in Ming territory. One of the rebel groups, the Red Turbans, invaded northern Korea in 1359 and 1361. Eventually, a new dynasty called the Great Ming was founded in Nanking by Chu Yuan-chang, the leader of one of the Red turban factions.⁴⁰ There were, likewise, invasions of northeastern Korea by the Jurchens. These were suppressed by Koryo General Yi Songgye, *inter alia*. From 1350 onward, however, perhaps the greatest external threat to the Yi Dynasty Kingdom of Choson was the repeated incursions of Japanese marauders, the *wako*. These Japanese pirates were extremely difficult to deal with despite the fact that they were lightly armed as they came from the sea with little warning and raided farms and villages. General Yi also achieved considerable success against the Japanese pirates and his fame mounted.⁴¹

A New Dynastic Power Emerges

General Yi became one of the two key military commanders of the Koryo Dynasty near the end of the 14th Century. In the late 14th Century, the Mongol empire in China, the Yuan, was declining as exemplified by the reign of Toghhan Timur (at the end of the

dynasty) when the Emperor and Court are represented in the Chinese histories as corrupt and degenerate. Rebellion was abroad in China; there were intrigues in the court; and a new dynastic force, soon to become the Ming, was emerging. The King of Korea in response ordered an army to go to the aid of the Yuan. A rift between General Yi Songgye and the top commander, Ch'oe Yong, arose over the young king's abandoning of the policy of supporting the rising Ming against the declining Yuan. Yi was pro-Ming. He was one of two deputy commanders of the army under Ch'oe Yong which had been dispatched to invade the Liaotung Peninsula. Yi, however, turned his troops back at the Yalu; returned to Kaesong; deposed the King and ousted Ch'oe Yong in a nearly bloodless coup.⁴² He set another king on the Koryo throne while holding the reins of power himself.⁴³

Land Reform and the Realization of Dynastic Power

Yi then launched a long overdue reform of landholding. This was extremely important in consolidating his power against the opposition of the Koryo nobles who had gradually enlarged their estates at the expense of the government and the peasants. (All government expenses were paid from the produce of government lands.) Yi had all the land registers burnt in order to facilitate his revision of land tenure and to reinvigorate the government bureaucracy while easing, somewhat, the burden on the peasants.⁴⁴ He then was able to force the King to abdicate and

to set himself up as king and the founder of a new dynasty. He named his new dynasty "Choson" after an ancient kingdom in Korea and established a new capital at Seoul, formerly called Hanyang.⁴⁵ He sought recognition and patents of investiture from the Ming which, eventually, were only obtained when his fifth son, Prince Yi Pangwon, who had been sent to the Ming Court as an external hostage, led a coup against his nephew in what came to be known as the Revolt of the Princes and became the third king of the Yi Dynasty, King T'aejong.⁴⁶

Aristocracy, Merit Subjects & the Consolidation of Power

Yi Songgye consolidated his reign and his dynasty by breaking down the grip of the aristocracy while building up the bureaucracy somewhat in the Chinese fashion. He also created a number of Merit Subjects, heads of families that had been most instrumental in helping him to establish his dynasty. These Merit Subjects were assigned hereditary fiefs and their descendants for several generations were granted status as qualifiers in the civil service examinations. The focus was shifted from nobility to civil service overall, however, and the path to power in government lay through the civil service examination system established along lines paralleling those of China.

Bureaucracy and Bureaucratic Factionalism

To hold high office in the Yi government, *i.e.*, to become a *yangban* (literally the "two ranks," being the *tongban* or "east rank" of civil officials or *soban* or "west rank" of military officials--so named for their arrangement at the court of the king), one had to pass either the civil or military service examination.⁴⁷ In order to sit for these examinations in Choson one needed a *validating ancestor* (one had to have a blood connection). Preparation for these examinations was difficult, time-consuming and expensive. It was usually obtained through family instruction, tutors or at academies.

There were 18 grades of official positions with correspondingly greater responsibilities, power and reward as one moved up the career ladder. Furthermore, one normally was promoted only through being selected for a position which supported a higher grade. Consequently, the offices which recommended and selected officials for new positions became ones in which great power came to be concentrated.

Since the supply of qualified candidates exceeded the demand, it was natural that factions arose based on family connection, regional connection or academy affiliation. Moreover, the factions, to secure lasting influence, worked hard to place members in the personnel boards and in the organs of

remonstrance (often in relatively low level positions) within the bureaucracy in order to insure that members of their faction would prosper and be safe from political attack and maneuvering by members of other factions. The Korean monarchy did little to resolve the problems presented by this system and, indeed, often fell under the influence of one faction or another. The organs of remonstrance (the Office of the Inspector General and the Censorate, etc.), furthermore, grew so powerful and influential that even kings fell victim to them.

Often highly effective officials were removed from positions of influence or even prosecuted on flimsy grounds owing to the jealousy and influence of members of one faction or another.

Chapter V. HIDEYOSHI'S INVASION FORCE

"We go to gain a little plot of ground,
That hath in it no profit but the name."

William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act IV

Thumbnail Biographical Sketches of the Principal Commanders

Konishi Yukinaga

Konishi Yukinaga (Dom Agostinho Konishi) (1556?-1600)--was the son of a merchant whose father was one of the early supporters of Christianity in Japan. Konishi's father eventually became one of Hideyoshi's fiscal managers. Yukinaga was given in adoption to one of the samurai under Ukita Hideie. He served as Hideie's representative in negotiating peace with Hideyoshi in 1577. Hideyoshi was impressed with him and employed him in his service 1581 and he was put in charge of Murotsu in Harima, an important seaport. Konishi distinguished himself as a fleet commander in two campaigns under Hideyoshi in the drive to reunify Japan. He was sent together with Kato Kiyomasa to put down a samurai rebellion in 1588. In 1589-1590, prior to the invasion of Korea, Yukinaga was made daimyo of Uto in Higo with a revenue of 240,000 koku of rice (1,190,400 bushels of rice, 1 koku=4.96 bushels). In this post he had to subdue a rebellion of Christian barons (he had been baptized in 1583.) He was active in winning converts to Catholicism and was close to the Jesuit missionaries in Japan. Hideyoshi selected him to command the

First Division in the first invasion of Korea and he played a key role in the action. In the second invasion in 1597 he served as the Admiral of Hideyoshi's fleet. After the death of Hideyoshi in 1598, he opposed the usurpation of oligarchical power by Tokugawa Ieyasu, whom Hideyoshi had named one of five regents to secure the succession of his infant son. Konishi was one of only three leaders executed by Ieyasu after he had secured his primacy as shogun with his watershed victory at Sekigahara. Interestingly, Konishi was forced to surrender to his former comrade-in-arms, Kuroda Nagamasa, who had been Commander of the 3rd Division in the first invasion of Korea, and, ironically, Konishi's fief was turned over to Kato Kiyomasa, who had been the Commander of the 2nd Division and his Buddhist rival.⁴⁸

Kato Kiyomasa

Kato Kiyomasa (1562-1611)--was related to Hideyoshi through his mother. Kato's father died when Kiyomasa was three. Hideyoshi took an interest in him and saw to his education. In 1588 he received half of the province of Higo (250,000 koku) as a fief and moved into Kumamoto Castle. He led the 2nd Division in the invasion of Korea. He sided with Tokugawa Ieyasu in the struggle for supremacy following the death of Hideyoshi and married a ward of Ieyasu's. Ieyasu also gave him the other half of Higo and his income rose to 520,000 koku. He was an active

Kato Kiyomasa
Commander, Second Division



Illustration from Natsumoto, Stories of Fifty Japanese Heroes

member of the militant Nichiren Buddhist sect and aggressively opposed the spread of Christianity in Japan.⁴⁹

Kuroda Nagamasa

Kuroda Nagamasa (Dom Damiao Kuroda) (1568-1623)--was placed under Hideyoshi at age 10 by Oda Nobunaga. He served in the campaign to reunify Japan in Kyushu and was the *daimyo* of Nakatsu (120,000 *koku*) by the time of the Korea invasion. Kuroda commanded the 3rd Division in the invasion of Korea. He supported Ieyasu and was rewarded with Najima which he renamed Fukuoka (520,000 *koku*). While he was a Christian convert, he was not such an ardent one and renounced Christianity when it was later prohibited.⁵⁰

Shimazu Yoshihiro

Shimazu Yoshihiro (1535-1619)-- was the brother of the *daimyo* of Satsuma, one of the most fiercely independent of all the fiefs, located in southwestern Kyushu. He occupied Nagasaki in 1586 and displayed his open hostility to the Christian faith flourishing there. He fought against the forces of Hideyoshi in the Kyushu campaign, but ultimately was forced to submit. He was treated leniently and succeeded his brother whom Hideyoshi forced to retire. Yoshihiro commanded the 4th Division in the invasion of Korea, bringing a contingent of 10,000 warriors from his fief.



**General Kuroda Nagamasa
Commander, Third Division**

*Portrait Reproduced from Turnbull, *The Samurai: A Military History**

He and his son were credited with taking 38,717 Chinese heads in one day of fighting, October 30, 1598 (over a month after the death of Hideyoshi, word of which only just arrived in Korea) in a grave defeat for the Chinese armies. After Hideyoshi died, Yoshihiro opposed Ieyasu and was part of the force defeated in the great battle of Sekigahara which established Ieyasu's dominion. He was imprisoned, but pardoned by Ieyasu on condition he become a Buddhist monk.⁵¹

Kobayakawa Takakage

Kobayakawa Takakage (1532-1596)--was adopted into the Kobayakawa family. He was a highly reputed, ferocious warrior and fought well against the forces of Oda Nobunaga; however, he was also instrumental in making peace with Hideyoshi's forces. Hideyoshi gave him Chikuzen Province in 1587. Kobayakawa commanded the Sixth Division in the invasion of Korea and distinguished himself in the fighting there. He was the oldest of Hideyoshi's generals in the invasion. Together with Tachibana Masahira he routed the forces of Chinese General Li Jusung at P'yokchegwan. After the first invasion he returned to his home and died there in 1596.

Ukita Hideie

Ukita Hideie (....-1616)--was brought up by Hideyoshi after the death of his father. His fief was Okayama (475,000 koku). He was made General-in-Chief (*gensui*) of the Korea invasion. In the first invasion he commanded the 8th Division which was held in reserve on the island of Iki. During the second invasion he captured the fortifications at Namwon effectively putting all of Cholla Province under Japanese domination. He was appointed one of the five ministers to look after Hideyoshi's infant son, Hideyori to insure his succession. The five were headed by Tokugawa Ieyasu, who eventually usurped power and established his own Shogunate. The other three were Maeda Toshiie, Mori Terumoto and Uesugi Kagekatsu. Ukita opposed Ieyasu and was condemned to death, but the sentence was commuted by Ieyasu to exile to the island of Hachijojima. Ukita then became a Buddhist monk and lived to be over 90 years old.⁵²

Kuki Yoshitaka

Kuki Yoshitaka (1542-1600)--was Governor of the province of Shima. He served under Oda Nobunaga. Hideyoshi appointed him Commander of the Korea invasion fleet. In 1600 he opposed Ieyasu, was defeated and committed suicide. His son, Moritaka, served Ieyasu.⁵³

Tokugawa Ieyasu



Illustration from Matsumoto, *Stories of Fifty Japanese Heroes*

Todo Takatora

Todo Takatora (1556-1630)--served Oda Nobunaga and later Hideyoshi. He was placed in the service of Hideyoshi's brother, Hidenaga. When Hidenaga died, Todo became a monk, retiring to the famous Mt. Koya Monastery. He was recalled by Hideyoshi to be a counsellor to Hidenaga's son, Hidetoshi. He was given command of part of the Korean invasion fleet. He was one of the first to send members of his family to Ieyasu as a hostage, even before Hideyoshi's death. After the battle of Sekigahara in which Ieyasu secured the shogunate, his revenues eventually rose to 323,900 *koku*.⁵⁴

Wakizaka Yasuharu

Wakizaka Yasuharu (1554-1626)--served Hideyoshi. He received as fief the island of Awaji with a revenue of 30,000 *koku*. He commanded a portion of the Korean invasion fleet and figured prominently in several naval engagements. He went over to Ieyasu in 1600. Eventually his revenues were raised to over 59,000 *koku*.⁵⁵

The Invasion Force

Base

In March of 1591 Hideyoshi established the marshalling area for his invasion of Korea at what is now Karatsu (formerly Nagoya) on the island of Kyushu in what was then Hizen Province. Hideyoshi built a castle (which is now a museum containing many items relating to the invasion) there. The castle was a large, two-ring fortress built from scratch in six months by a large labor force provided by the Kyushu *daimyos*. The *daimyos*, furthermore, were ordered by Hideyoshi to build residences there for themselves and the town grew rapidly into a sizeable castle town.⁵⁶

Karatsu is a handsome town amidst rolling hills on the northwestern coast of Kyushu by the Sea of Japan. It remains an important pottery center today and home to several "Living National Treasure" potters directly descended from the Korean artisans carried back to Japan by Hideyoshi's forces (Hideyoshi was an ardent practitioner of the Japanese tea ceremony and there are those who theorize that one of his objectives for the invasion of Korea was to acquire highly skilled Korean potters to make tea bowls). Prior to the time of the invasion build up, however, Nagoya was little more than a village. Hideyoshi

removed himself to Nagoya in September 1592 and spent most of his time there until early in 1594.⁵⁷

Levying the Invasion Force

Hideyoshi tasked the *daimyos* of Kyushu to provide 600 men for each 10,000 *koku* (49,600 bushels) of rice that their dominions represented. This, the heaviest burden, fell to Kyushu since it was the launching area for the invasion and since some of the Kyushu *daimyos* had held out so long against the efforts of Oda Nobunaga and Hideyoshi in reunifying the country in the name of the Emperor. *Daimyos* on the islands of Honshu and Shikoku were required to supply correspondingly fewer troops in proportion to their distance from Kyushu. Furthermore, those whose lands bordered the sea had to provide two ships for each 100,000 *koku* of their projected revenue as well as ten sailors for every ten houses in their domains.⁵⁸ Hideyoshi, then dispatched Kuki Yoshitaka, who was to be the commander of his invasion fleet, to oversee the construction of several hundred ships on Ise Bay.⁵⁹ Hideyoshi may have ordered as many as 2,000 ships to be built and their construction began as early as 1586.⁶⁰

Vanguard

The invasion vanguard consisted of the First Division, led by Konishi Yukinaga, and the Second Division, led by Kato Kiyomasa. Konishi was a Christian convert, as were all of the other commanders (and a considerable proportion of the troops) within the First Division except Matsuura Shigenobu. Many of the troops under Matsuura, however, were Christian converts. Kato was, on the other hand, a follower of the militant Nichiren Sect of Buddhism and the troops of the Second Division were predominantly Buddhist. There was considerable friction between Konishi and Kato which was evidenced by the competitiveness with which each sought to outstrip the other in achieving merit in the campaign. Much of this rivalry was documented by (and probably in no small measure encouraged by) the Jesuit mission in Japan which had been kept well informed of the progress of the First Division through an active correspondence with several of its prominent Christian members.⁶¹

Command and Control

There remains today some questions about the precise chain of command for the invasion forces. Of course, Hideyoshi was the supreme commander; however, he did not cross the sea with the invasion forces and, as will be discussed later, delayed joining the forces as the supreme commander. Some sources appear to

treat Konishi and Kato, the leaders of the First Division and the Second Division, respectively, the invasion vanguard, as co-equal commanders of the invasion; however, other sources, including the Korean sources, identify Ukita Hideie as the overall invasion commander (*gensui*) despite the fact that his division was part of the reserve held on Iki in anticipation of the follow-on effort into China.⁶² Whatever the case, it is clear that there were command and control problems within the Japanese invasion forces which appear to have affected the coordination of activities and to have had impact upon the ultimate outcome of the invasion.

ORDER OF BATTLE⁶³

INVASION FORCE (FIRST WAVE)

First Division--Kyushu

| | | |
|----------------------------|-------|--------|
| Konishi Yukinaga (Higo) | ..... | 7,000 |
| So Yoshitomo (Tsushima) | ..... | 5,000 |
| Matsuura Shigenobu (Hizen) | ..... | 3,000 |
| Arima Harunobu (Hizen) | ..... | 2,000 |
| Omura Yoshiaki (Hizen) | ..... | 1,000 |
| Goto Motosugu (Buzen) | ..... | 700 |
| | | ----- |
| subtotal | | 18,700 |

Second Division--Kyushu

| | | |
|----------------------------|-------|--------|
| Kato Kiyomasa (Higo) | ..... | 10,000 |
| Nabeshima Naoshige (Hizen) | ..... | 12,000 |
| Sagara Tayofusa (Higo) | ..... | 800 |
| | | ----- |
| subtotal | | 22,800 |

Third Division--Kyushu

| | | |
|-------------------------|-------|--------|
| Kuroda Nagamasa (Omi) | ..... | 6,000 |
| Otomo Yoshimune (Bungo) | ..... | 6,000 |
| | | ----- |
| subtotal | | 12,000 |

Fourth Division--Kyushu

| | |
|-----------------------------|--------|
| Shimazu Yoshihiro (Satsuma) | 10,000 |
| Mori Yoshinari (Bungo) | 2,000 |
| Takahashi Mototane (Bungo) | 2,000 |
| Akizuki Tanenaga (Hyuga) | 1,000 |
| Ito Suketaka (Hyuga) | 1,000 |
| Shimazu Tadatoyo (Hyuga) | 1,000 |
| | ----- |
| subtotal | 17,000 |

Fifth Division--Shikoku

| | |
|----------------------------|--------|
| Fukushima Masanori (Owari) | 5,000 |
| Toda Katsunaga (Mikawa) | 4,000 |
| Hachisuka Iemasa (Awa?) | 7,200 |
| Chosokabe Motochika (Tosa) | 3,000 |
| Ikoma Chikamasa (Owari) | 5,500 |
| | ----- |
| subtotal | 24,700 |

Sixth Division--Kyushu

| | |
|--------------------------------|--------|
| Kobayakawa Takakage (Chikuzen) | 10,000 |
| Mori Hidekane (Chikugo) | 1,500 |
| Tachibana Muneshige (Chikugo) | 2,500 |
| Takahashi Mototsugu (Chikugo) | 800 |

| | |
|------------------------------------|--------|
| Tsukushi Hirokado (Chikuzen) | 900 |
| | ----- |
| subtotal | 15,700 |

Seventh Division--Honshu

| | |
|------------------------------|--------|
| Mori Terumoto (Aki) | ????? |
| Kikkawa Hiroie (Izumo) | ????? |
| Mori Motoyasu (Aki) | ????? |
| | ----- |
| subtotal | 30,000 |

| | |
|----------------------|---------|
| TOTAL Invasion Force | 138,900 |
|----------------------|---------|

RESERVES (SECOND WAVE)

Eighth Division--Honshu

| | |
|---------------------------------|--------|
| Ukita Hideie (Bitchu) | 10,000 |
| Masuda Nagamori (Yamato) | 3,000 |
| Ishida Mitsunari (Omi) | 2,000 |
| Otani Yoshitaka (Echizen) | 1,200 |
| Maeno ?? (??) | 2,000 |
| Kato Mitsuyasa (Omi) | 1,000 |
| | ----- |
| subtotal | 19,200 |

Ninth Division--Honshu

| | |
|-------------------------------------|----------|
| Asano Nagamasa (Musashi?) | 3,000 |
| Miyabe Tsugimasu (Omi) | 1,000 |
| Nanjo ?? (Hoki?) | 1,500 |
| Kinoshita Katsutoshi (Wakasa) | 850 |
| Nakagawa Hidemasa (Settsu) | 3,000 |
| Inaba Masanari (Echigo) | 1,400 |
| | ----- |
| subtotal (+minor daimyos) | 10,750 + |

Tenth Division--Honshu

| | |
|---|----------|
| Hashiba Hidekatsu (Tamba) | 8,000 |
| Hashiba Tadaoki (Tamba?) | 3,500 |
| Hashiba (Katsumotoro?)=(Hasegawa (Katsugoro?)?).. | 5,000 |
| Kimura Shigekore (Yamashiro?) | 3,500 |
| Onogi ?? (??) | 1,000 |
| Kamei Korenori (Inaba) | 1,000 |
| | ----- |
| subtotal (+minor daimyos) | 22,000 + |

| | |
|----------------|----------|
| TOTAL Reserves | 51,950 + |
|----------------|----------|

NAVAL FORCES

| | | |
|---------------------------|-------|--------------|
| Kuki Yoshitaka (Shima) | ..... | 1,500 |
| Todo Takatora (Iyo) | ..... | 2,000 |
| Wakizaka Yasuharu (Awaji) | ..... | 1,500 |
| Kato Yoshiaki (Iyo) | ..... | 1,000 |
| Kurushima Michifuse (Iyo) | ..... | 700 |
| Suga ?? (??) | ..... | 250 |
| | ----- | |
| TOTAL Naval Forces | | 6,950 |

TOTAL INVASION FORCE (Two waves) 197,800 +

KARATSU GARRISON FORCES

Hideyoshi's Retinue

| | | |
|---------------------------------|-------|-----------------|
| Hideyoshi's Fore Guard | ..... | 5,000 + |
| Hideyoshi's Rear Guard | ..... | 5,000 + |
| Archers and Musketeers | ..... | 1,000 + |
| Kinoshita Yoshitaka (Owari?) | ..... | 500 |
| Ashikaga Yoshiaki (ex-Shogun) | ..... | 500 |
| messengers, foot-soldiers, etc. | ..... | 12,000 + |
| inspecting horsemen | ..... | ??? |
| immediate attendants | ..... | ??? |
| | ----- | |
| | | 24,000 + |

Other Daimyos

| | |
|---------------------------|----------------|
| TOTAL 24 + <i>daimyos</i> |74,000 + |
| GRAND TOTAL ALL FORCES |305,000 + |

The Reserves

The reserves were to be stationed on the islands of Tsushima and Iki intermediary between Kyushu and Korea.⁶⁴ The reserves were envisioned as comprising a fresh force for the follow-on invasion of China after the conquest of Korea.⁶⁵ The plan was to move the reserves from the islands of Tsushima and Iki by ship around to the western side of the Korean peninsula and up the coast to facilitate their joining in the van for the invasion of Ming China.

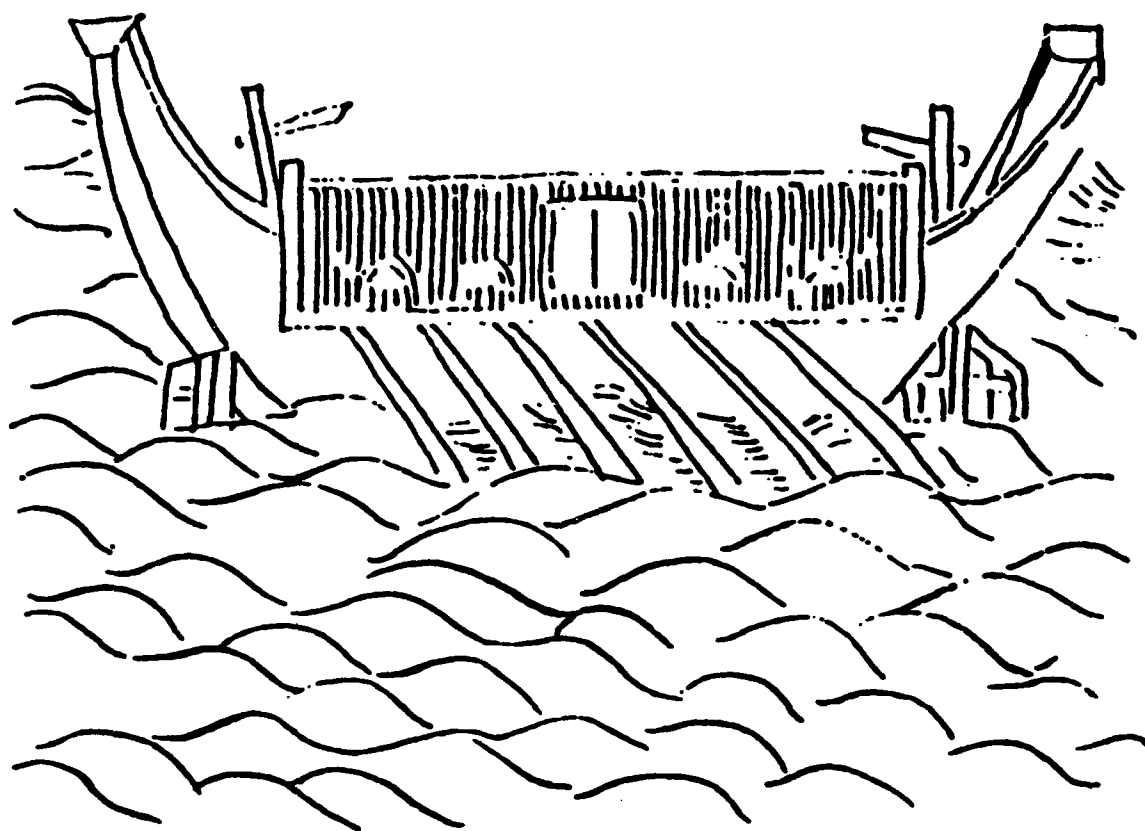
Hideyoshi's 24,000-27,000 personal troops were to man his castle and were surrounded about their periphery by the 74,000 troops of the eastern *daimyos* as a guard force in the event the Chinese should attempt a counterattack against Hideyoshi. Additionally, another 100,000 troops of *daimyos* from Honshu were similarly concentrated around Kyoto as a guard for the Emperor and the Imperial Capital.⁶⁶

Hulbert reported that the Japanese invasion forces were equipped with 5,000 battle axes, 100,000 long swords, 100,000 spears, 100,000 short swords, 500,000 daggers, 300,000 firearms ('large and small') and 50,000 horses.⁶⁷

Individual units differed in their equipment and functional complements depending upon the area from which they came and who was available. For example, among the men of Shimazu's 4th Division (15,000-17,000) there were 300 banner men, 205 hand-spear men, 200 long spear men, 1,500 musketeers, 1,500 bowmen, and 600 small banner men (armored).⁶⁸ Another example is the 700 men under Goto (from the Goto Islands) in the 1st Division which included 27 mounted warriors, 40 dismounted men-at-arms, 120 foot soldiers, and 38 bat men. These were the *samurai* of Goto's unit, the remainder were laborers, master seamen and common sailors.⁶⁹

Naval Forces

The naval forces were intended primarily to escort the troop and supply convoys and may have actually employed upwards of 9,000 troops according to some sources.⁷⁰ They were envisioned as an enabling force to scout against the enemy and to protect the troop and supply ships. They were not prepared or trained primarily as a naval fighting force.



Takabune
Wako Ship with 20-36 Oars

Illustration Reproduced from Takegoshi, The Story of the Wako: Japanese Pioneers in the Southern Regions

The Japanese Wako Pirates and Hideyoshi's Naval Forces

"Ships are but boards, sailors but men; there be land-rats and water-rats, land-thieves and water-thieves."

William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, Act I, quoted in *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*⁷¹

The wako reportedly, according to some Japanese apologists, only date back to the period just after the failed Mongol invasions of Japan. It is unclear whether this is accurate historical analysis or justification history. Certainly, Japanese freebooters made their presence felt aperiodically on Korea's coasts from the 4th century onwards.⁷² In middle to late Koryo times there was a remarkable increase in the frequency and scope of their activities and their penetrations into the interior away from the coasts grew deeper.⁷³ It is documented in the Korean official histories that they invaded Korea in 1350 and returned in 1351 with around 130 ships. Reportedly no year passed, thereafter, in Korea, until the rule of Hideyoshi, in which there was no incursion.⁷⁴ Incursions were recorded of as many as 500 ships carrying over 2,000 warriors.

The ships of the wako are described as having had both sail and oar. They had low gunwales and avoided combat with larger ships having high gunwales. They were described as having from 20 to 36 oars and to have been around 50 feet in length. This leads to the conclusion that they probably were bireme craft with two banks of oars such as were common in the Mediterranean at one

time. They reportedly were formed of wooden planking held together with iron bars (not nails) and employed seaweed to seal the planking.⁷⁵

The orientation of the *wako* was not for battle on the sea as the composition of their vessels indicate. Their vessels were transport, a sort of amphibious assault craft pre-cursor, intended to disembark highly capable ground forces for pillage and booty collection. When they did fight on the water, they tried to get in position to board the enemy and functioned as a platform for land combat warriors. Each vessel normally had archers in its complement. The archers' bows were fashioned of bamboo and were about eight feet long. The archer used his feet in drawing the bow and loosing the arrow. The bulk of the complement were armed with Japanese long swords (approximately five feet in length) which made each of them effectively masters of four square feet of territory.⁷⁶ In the 16th century these freebooters also included musketeers in their crews.

Wako flotillas often included non-Japanese--some of whom were described as "white" and some, "black," as well as Chinese and Southeast Asians. Likewise, Japanese elements were described in bands of Chinese buccaneers, too. Near the end of the 16th century there were Japanese overseas communities dotting the coasts of Asia and the kings of Burma, Siam and Cambodia employed Japanese bodyguards from about 1550 onwards.⁷⁷

Chinese Fuchow Type Pirate Ship

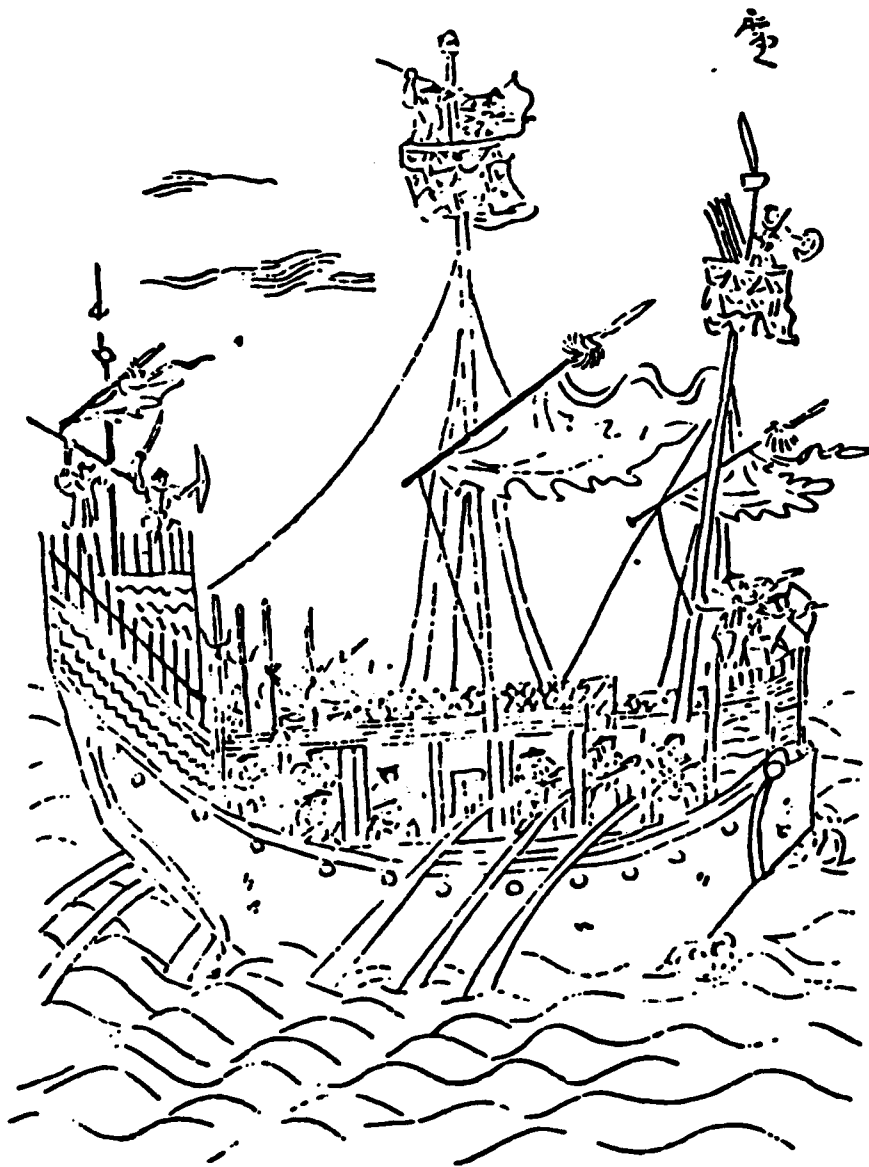


Illustration Reproduced from Takegoshi, *The Story of the Wako: Japanese Pioneers in the Southern Regions*

At an early time the *wako* extended their operations to the coasts of China, too. They were not the only pirates, however, as China had its own pirates whose ships the Japanese marauders assiduously avoided.

I have previously argued that this Japanese piracy was a reaction to the limitations placed on maritime commerce by the authoritarian Confucianist governments of Ming China and Yi Choson (more so the former than the latter). There is a body of evidence that shows that often the Japanese ships would appear in an area and seek to trade. If they were rebuffed, they would return and raid with their long swords drawn.⁷⁸ As mentioned above, coins were an important item for the Japanese to obtain from China. They traded for them and even regularly tried to borrow them as well as steal them. Major attractions for the *wako* appear to have been gold, silver and precious stones. They often resorted to kidnapping persons for ransom to acquire the same.⁷⁹

In China, the Japanese marauders appeared to favor the banks of the Huangp'u River. Repeated raids led to the building of a large fortress in 1555 at a small fishing village called "Shanghai." Shanghai grew from its humble beginnings as a response to Japanese freebooting to become one of the great

cities of the world and one which would again attract Japanese interest in a later era.⁸⁰

The End of the *Wako*

Perhaps the greatest irony of all is that the reunification of Japan started by Oda Nobunaga and carried to completion by his retainer, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, who sought to conquer Ming China and Korea, brought the *daimyos* of western Honshu, Kyushu, Iki, Tsushima and Shikoku under the control of a single military leader and brought the piracy to an end. (Some of the leaders of smaller pirate groups even became *daimyos* and some of their families have even survived into the modern Japanese peerage.⁸¹)

The *wako* fleets became the navy of the Hideyoshi era through his control over the *daimyos*, but the fleets rapidly lost their edge with their loss of mission and profit-motive; moreover, there was neither vision nor tradition to develop naval doctrine and to conduct crew training until a later era, probably largely attributable to the lack of a credible maritime threat. The result was that on the eve of Japan's first great military adventure abroad Japan had allowed its best "naval" units to atrophy. This was to have serious consequences for the outcome of this adventure!

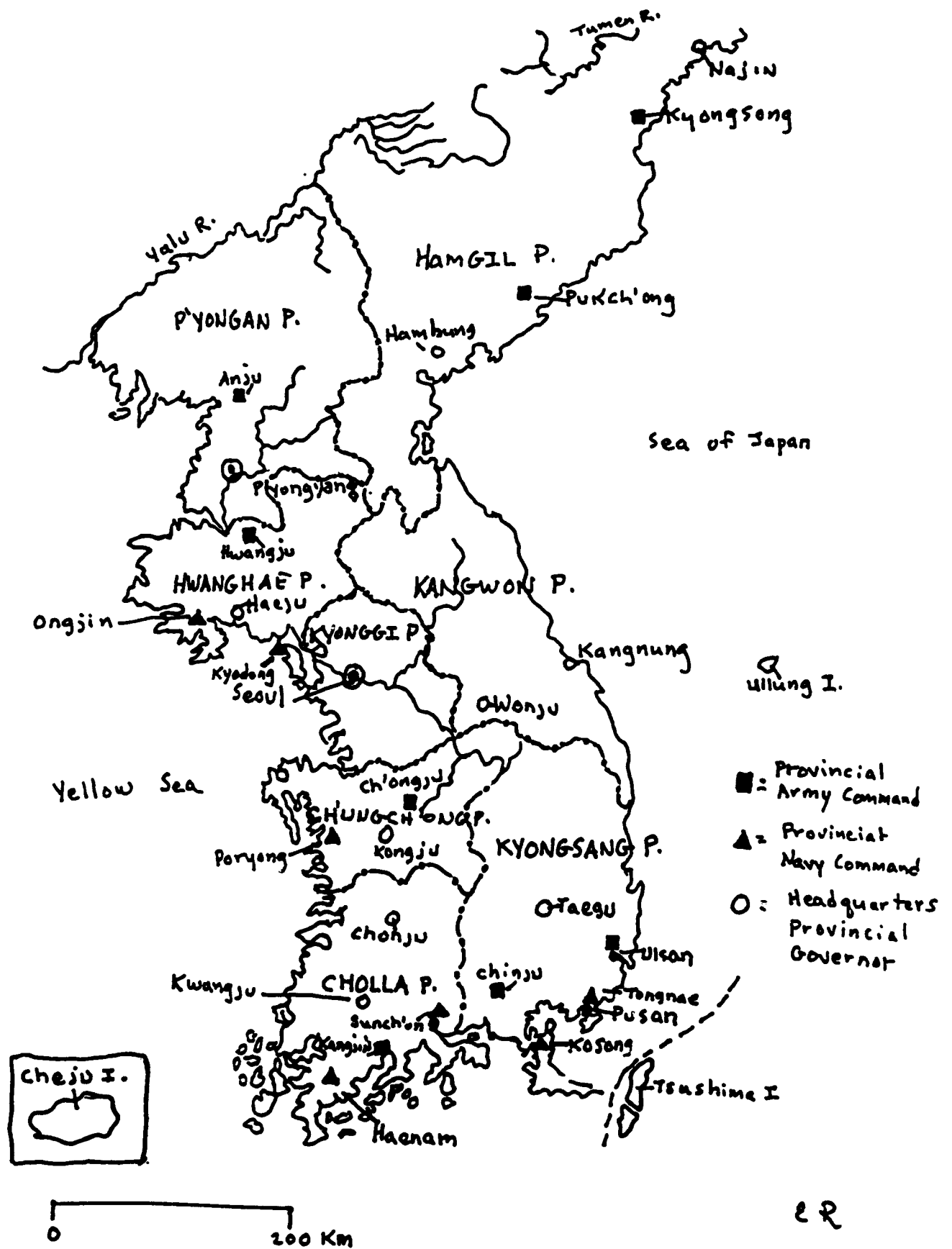
Chapter VI. YI DYNASTY FORCES ON THE EVE OF THE INVASION

Land Forces

By 1464 the Yi Kings had managed to abolish the large private military forces under the control of the nobles. Also in that year King Sejo reorganized the central government's forces into the Five Military Commands. These divided the military responsibilities for the defense of Korea into five divisions--east, west, north, south and center with each division comprising five brigades composed of four regiments each. These were national capital commands. They were built on a core of professional soldiers to be supplemented by conscripts when military situations arose.⁸²

There were military commands in the provinces as well. Each province had its own army command and navy command with several garrisons under each. In Hamgil (Hamgyong) Province and Kyongsang Province there were two army and two navy commands each in recognition of the increased threat of incursion by Jurchen or Japanese marauders. Conscript troops were grouped into teams of three in such a way that while one was activated for capital or provincial service and taken off the land, the other two were responsible for sustaining him with cotton cloth, etc.⁸³

The Eight Provinces of Korea and Army & Navy Command Locations

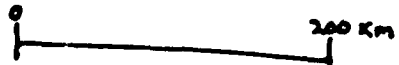
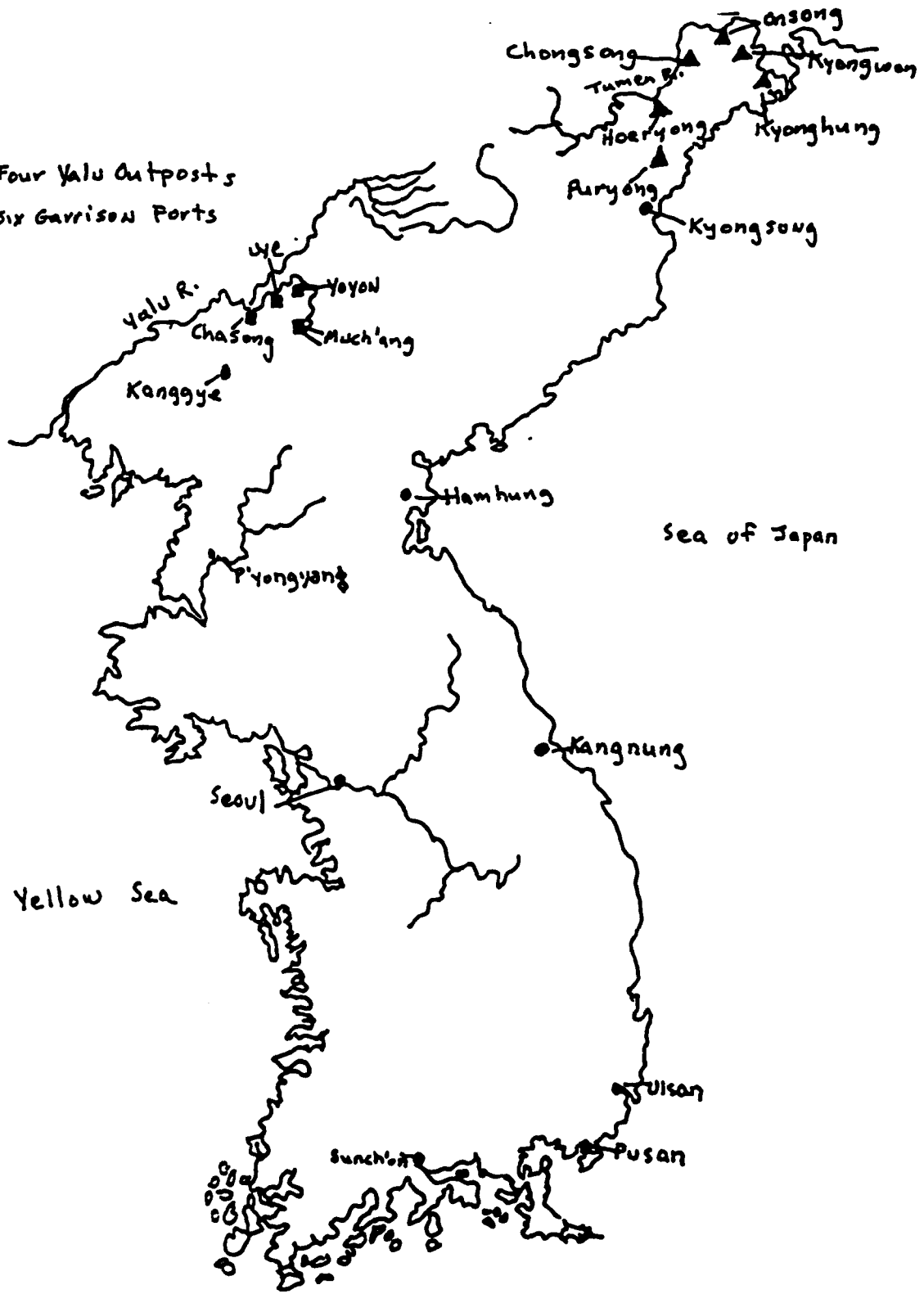


High level government positions were open generally only to those who had recognized bloodlines which validated their basic qualification for office. This was a relic of a strict caste system that had been in operation for over a millennium before the Japanese invasion. The next step to qualify for either civil or military positions was through a series of civil service examinations.

There were triennial examinations for candidates for both civil and military careers. The military examinations were in three stages. In the first stage all aspirants were tested on their knowledge of the Chinese classics, military texts and military skills. Fifteen candidates from each of the eight provinces and 72 candidates from the capital region were selected by a board of one civil and two military officials. The second stage of the process was a series of examinations held by the Ministry of War in Seoul for the 192 qualifiers. Out of these, 28 were passed and given a degree. Finally, the 28 degree holders were rated based upon their performances in competitions in archery, mounted events, etc., with three rated as top level, five rated as second level and the remaining twenty rated as third level.⁸⁴ Of course, the most desirable military posts were assigned according to the priority of the position of the candidate on the final list.

Early Yi Dynasty Border Outposts and Fortresses

- The Four Yalu Outposts
- ▲ The Six Garrison Ports



Naval Forces

"It is upon the navy under the Providence of God that the safety, honour, and welfare of this realm do chiefly attend."

King Charles V, *Articles of War* (1652)⁸⁵

The Yi Dynasty navy was a coastal defense, brown water navy. It was intended as a defensive force against the predations of coastal pirates, Jurchen, Japanese or Chinese (or Portuguese or Dutch for that matter, later on). Despite the negative economic impact of such predators as the Japanese *wako*, however, the overall investment in ships and men to man them was negligible compared to the land forces and to government-run industries other than shipbuilding. In the case of the land forces, they contributed to the maintenance of law and order and held the population in check against the ruthless exploitation of the ruling classes and of the central government officials and local functionaries.

There were naval commands in each province and two in Cholla Province in light of its long coastline. The naval commanders were products of the same triennial examination system as the land officers. The life of the naval crews was hard, harder than those of their British counterparts of the time. The ships were ponderous under sail and used oars for maneuvering and for speed in combat. Korean naval crews had advanced beyond their Japanese pirate (and later Japanese Navy) counterparts as their ships

evolved into more than just floating platforms for land type warriors.

Ship designs and ship fighting techniques--ramming, boarding, counter-boarding, flotilla maneuver in formation, and attacking with fire--were developed to such an extent that the Korean naval vessel changed from a platform or transport for warfighters into a weapons system. They employed cannon which fired iron balls, iron arrows and flaming arrows at enemy ships. They were built with thick hulls to resist penetration by musket balls. They were designed to resist boarding and to ram enemy ships. The culmination of this project was the turtle ship, a design reinstated and upgraded by Admiral Yi Sunshin in preparation against an anticipated Japanese invasion.

"By hard conscientious training, not only of fleet units in minor tactics, but of prospective fleet commanders-in-chief in grand tactics, there is a very good chance of meeting on equal terms a fleet numerically superior, but in which those items have not received such serious attention."

Chester W. Nimitz, *Naval Tactics*⁸⁶

Yi Sunshin was extremely attentive to the training and discipline of his crews. He studied the potential adversary, in this case the Japanese. He apprehended the strengths and weaknesses of their vessels and designed a ship and weapons system employing the latest technologies to counter their strengths; he trained his crews to be better seamen than his

adversaries. He saw to it that his subordinates knew their seamanship and the waters in which they sailed. He made the best of what he had available knowing that he probably would be confronted by a numerically superior foe.

Military Technologies

"To begin with, it was a new experience of a new class of weapon, and it by no means follows that the success of a new expedient will be repeated with anything like equal result."

Corbett, ³⁷ *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy*

The Japanese land forces came to Korea armed with battle axes, spears, bows and arrows, short swords, long swords and firearms--muskets (arquebuses) and pistols. The Japanese long sword was a superior weapon for close combat compared to anything which the Koreans possessed. The Korean swords were shorter, double-edged stabbing weapons. The Japanese long swords were magnificent, strong and sharp cutting blades used with a skill developed through long, careful training.

The Koreans possessed a flail, a kind of mace with the head connected by three links of chain to the handle. This weapon was employed by the Korean cavalry of the south and was considered to be an extremely effective weapon. It was effective, however, only in close combat and was no match for Japanese firing musket balls and arrows in hail storms of weaponry. The Japanese

firearms gave the invaders a decided and terrifying advantage in combat on the land, especially since only Korean officers wore armor consisting of a heavy leather over-garments with some metal attachments.

The Korean calvary of the north were accomplished mounted archers in the fashion of the Mongols and Jurchens, but again were susceptible when the Japanese were able to lay down a concentrated field of fire with their muskets which had a longer range, but probably lower accuracy.

As alluded to above, the Koreans had been driven to seek technological advantage in ship design and weaponry over the Japanese, goaded by the constant pressure of the Japanese pirates. The pirate ships were essentially land fighter delivery craft and the Koreans developed a sea fighting suite of craft to counter them by threatening them in the coastal waters. Nonetheless, there was more coastline than could be effectively scouted or defended and the pirates countered the technological superiority of the Korean craft through randomness and speed of incursion.

The Koreans invested their efforts in the realm of gunpowder-based weapons in developing anti-ship weapons--small cannon and fire-arrow propelling weapons were developed in several varieties, aiming at inflicting damage on vessels rather

than on the development of anti-personnel gunpowder-based weapons. The Japanese, on the contrary, developed anti-personnel weapons, muskets and pistols, while producing few cannon for shipboard use. The cannon was employed in Japan primarily as a siege weapon in investing and reducing castles during the last stages of the Japanese civil wars. During these same civil wars, the Japanese rapidly developed and proliferated muskets and pistols based on the Portuguese technology washed up on the shores of Tanegashima. The Japanese acquired considerable experience with muskets in their civil wars and had developed doctrine and techniques for employing them effectively in combat just as they had for their long swords. Technological advantage doesn't last long if the opponent survives. Within six months of the invasion the Koreans were already producing primitive muskets and looking to try them in combat against the Japanese.

Korean Shipbuilding and Japanese Pirates

Korean shipbuilding and Korean craft were regarded as technologically superior throughout the era of the Japanese pirate predations. The Korean craft were notably more seaworthy, faster (by the end of the 16th century), more maneuverable and better armed and armored for sea engagements.⁸⁸ Korea had developed a navy not only under the impetus of on-going attacks by the Japanese pirates, but also because of aperiodic incursions of Jurchen pirates from Manchuria. The Yi developed three

classes of warship--large, medium and small. The largest carried a complement of 80; the second, 60; and the third, 30. There were also reserve vessels called "non-combatant" vessels. The Korean war vessels were generally broad and slow, but there were constant efforts to improve their designs for greater speed. They were heavy for protection in combat.⁸⁹ Ironically, throughout the first two hundred years of the Yi Dynasty, Korea constantly imported Japanese and Ryukyuan shipbuilders in order to study their techniques, some of which they incorporated into their shipbuilding technology. The Koreans also developed a pedal-powered paddle-wheel boat in 1550.⁹⁰

During the Koryo Dynasty the Koreans had developed a ramming ship to counter Jurchen pirates. They later developed a wood-canopied ramming vessel, which they called the "Turtle Boat," to counter Japanese pirates' close-combat tactics by thwarting would-be boarders. These designs were adapted for use against the Japanese again in the 16th century.⁹¹

Chapter VII. MING DYNASTY MILITARY SITUATION IN THE 16TH CENTURY

The Uprising of Yang Yinglung 1590-1600

Throughout the Ming Dynasty there was an on-going campaign to sinicize portions of southwestern China inhabited by minority tribes. One area, Pochou, peopled by Miao tribesmen and Chinese settlers, had been under the hereditary control of members of the Yang family for centuries since the T'ang Dynasty. Yang Yinglung, a hereditary ruler of this line, was of mixed Chinese and Miao ancestry who ruled through a council of several powerful Miao families that owed fealty to him.⁹²

For some reasons, now obscure, either a series of feuds or, perhaps, Chinese taxation, the stability of the area was upset and the Chinese authorities decided to intervene. Yang resisted the Chinese intervention. The Yang rebellion then dragged through the 1590's with Yang twice given suspended death sentences and levied heavy fines which he never paid. The war in Korea took much of the pressure off Yang for several years. In 1600, after the end of the Korean adventure of the Japanese, however, the Ming Dynasty sent an army of 200,000, including veterans of the Korean campaign and a contingent of Japanese from Korea to settle with Yang. Ultimately, a reported 22,687 rebels under Yang were killed and 1,124 captured. Yang killed himself and his body was sent to Beijing for "desecration."⁹³

The Uprising within the Ordos Mongols March-July 1592

In March 1592 a Chinese military officer, Liu Tungyang, rebelled against the Chinese government over back pay. He appointed P'u Ch'engen, a Mongol with a Chinese surname, his deputy. P'u had inherited the position of regional military commissioner from his father, Pubei, who had recently retired. P'u also had inherited a family household of over 1,000 warriors. This was in the strategically important city of Ninghsia.⁹⁴

At the Ming Court the Mongol aspect of the Ninghsia problem was played up and the fact that the rebellion was by a disaffected senior Chinese official was played down. In all probability, the pay irregularities were covered up and officials in the capital were probably involved. The Court was sold on the need to put down this "Mongol" rebellion before it got out of hand. This occurred at about the same time as the Japanese invasion of Korea began and there was considerable tension in Beijing about the multifaceted military threats. Defenses were alerted and reinforcements brought in from other districts against a possible Mongol incursion. By midsummer, government forces besieged Ninghsia and on 31 July 1592 General Li Jusung arrived with reinforcements from the east. The siege of Ninghsia lasted for another two months until the siege forces built a canal nine feet deep along the city wall for three to four miles

and then flooded it until sections of the wall crumbled. The resistance quickly collapsed. Liu was killed by P'u Ch'engen, who, nevertheless, was executed later by Ming authorities and P'u Chengen's father, Pubei, set fire to himself, committing suicide.⁹⁵

The Growing Threat of the Jurchen Under Nurhachi

In 1412 the Ming recognized the prowess of the Jurchen tribe in Chienchou designating them the Chienchou Commandery as though they were part of the Imperial Army. These Jurchen had come from an area on what is now the northeastern border between the Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea and Russia along the Tumen River and moved gradually westward into what is now called Manchuria.

Nurhachi began to build an empire of the Jurchen tribes through conquest and diplomacy when he was only 24. He maintained good relations with the other principal Jurchen tribal confederations and with the Ming Court. In 1589, Nurhachi was conferred with a title and rank by Ming Emperor Shen Tsung. While China became distracted by the events in Korea and elsewhere, Nurhachi built his economic and military power base. A Chinese report in 1592 indicated that Nurhachi had 40,000 cavalry and 50,000 foot. They were regarded as superior fighters to the Japanese.⁹⁶ Ultimately, Nurhachi and his line

established themselves as the Ch'ing Dynasty Emperors of China calling themselves "Manchu" and would rule as the Emperors of China until the 20th century.

忠武公
李舜臣提督



Admiral Yi Sunshin

Drawing by Y.H. Kim in Hagerman, "Lord of the Turtle Boats"

Chapter VIII. BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF ADMIRAL YI SUNSHIN

"It is always difficult for Englishmen to admit that Nelson ever had an equal in his profession, but if any man is entitled to be so regarded, it should surely be this great naval commander of Asiatic race who never knew defeat and died in the presence of the enemy ..."

Vice-Admiral George A. Ballard
extolling Admiral Yi Sunshin in *The
Influence of the Sea on the
Political History of Japan*⁹⁷

"For it was not his arms, nor his order of battle, which rendered that general superior to the Romans, but his dexterity alone and his admirable skill."

Polybius quoted in de Saxe, *Reveries on
the Art of War*⁹⁸

Yi Sunshin was born on 18 April 1554 in Konch'ondong, Seoul. He came from a relatively undistinguished yangban family of moderate means. Yi decided on a military career at age 21. He became quite proficient at mounted archery and successfully placed in the triennial military examinations of 1576.⁹⁹

Yi's first assignment was as a Provisional Attendant in the Military Training Administration. He then served as the Sub-area Commander of Palp'o. In 1586 he was the Sub-area Commander of Chosan.¹⁰⁰

While he was extremely hard-working, competent and courageous, during his early years of service Yi achieved a reputation as a stickler for procedure in assignments in the far

north confronting Jurchens and in the far south as the commander of a small naval station on the coast. He was not popular among fellow officers and often seemed to arouse their jealousies.¹⁰¹

Yi Sunshin attracted the attention of his seniors when his requests for manpower increases to strengthen defenses were denied by Army Commander Yi Il. Subsequently in the autumn an incursion occurred, causing great damage and a number of casualties. Yi Sunshin captured sixty prisoners in fighting the invaders; nevertheless, Yi Il tried to shift the responsibility for not being fully prepared against such an invasion to Yi Sunshin and had him imprisoned and sentenced to die; however, a petition to the throne resulted in clearing Yi Sunshin and putting the responsibility on Yi Il.¹⁰²

Yi Sunshin was then selected by Cholla Province Military Inspector Yi Kwang in 1589 to serve on his staff. Sunshin rose quickly. Yi was given a naval command on Hansan Island off the coast of Kyongsang Province. This was in the period when the threat of aggression by Japan was already beginning to loom on the horizon. Yi had only a small force and limited budget. He had his men make salt by evaporating sea water and built a store of provisions through these efforts. To build barracks for his men he hired carpenters and workmen paying them a bag of salt a day for their work. His efforts brought him to the attention of

his superiors again and he was rewarded with greater responsibilities.¹⁰³

In 1591, he was appointed as the Cholla Province Naval Commander of the Left, passing a number of more senior candidates.¹⁰⁴

"Changes in tactics have not only taken place after changes in weapons, which necessarily is the case, but the interval between such changes has been unduly long. An improvement in weapons is due to the energy of one or two men, while changes in tactics have to overcome the inertia of a conservative class."

Alfred T. Mahan

The Korean government had for some time been anticipating possible hostilities with the Japanese and now Yi plunged into preparations against such an eventuality. He had fortifications built, repaired or improved; he enforced a strict discipline and drove his ships and crews to train ceaselessly. He worked on improving the armament of his ships with a specific view toward countering or taking advantage of the characteristics of Japanese ships. He dusted off the old turtle ship designs and improved them specifically for battling the Japanese and ordered the manufacture of several. Yi not only developed the designs, but developed a new set of tactics to exploit the advantages of his new design. These he drilled into his fleet.

Yi's war years and death in combat will be discussed below in the chapter on the invasions.

Chapter IX. OVERVIEW OF THE INVASIONS

The Plan and the Man

"The best laid schemes o' mice an' men
Gang aft a-gley."

Robert Burns, "Ode to A Mouse,"
quoted in *The Oxford Dictionary of
Quotations*¹⁰⁵

Hideyoshi ultimately made three different plans for the invasion of Korea. In his earliest, he planned to cross to Korea with the invading army in May of 1592. Perhaps due to uncertainty as to the loyalty of certain powerful *daimyos* such as Tokugawa Ieyasu and Date Masamune, he changed his mind. Some argue that he was worried about his health or the health of his mother. His motives are not clear. Nevertheless, he next decided that he would take field command of his forces around March of 1593, presumably to lead the armies in the conquest of China. His last plan, which was eventually put into action during the course of the invasion, changed the objectives for the invasion of Korea from an occupation to complete subjugation with his armies not to advance beyond Korea's border with China until Hideyoshi himself should come to assume command of the entire force.¹⁰⁶ This, effectively, left the invasion force without a clear cut chain of command in Korea despite the fact that Ukita Hideie was the generalissimo on the scene. Major decisions

appear to have been left to Hideyoshi and the communications lag contributed to later problems.

The War on the Land

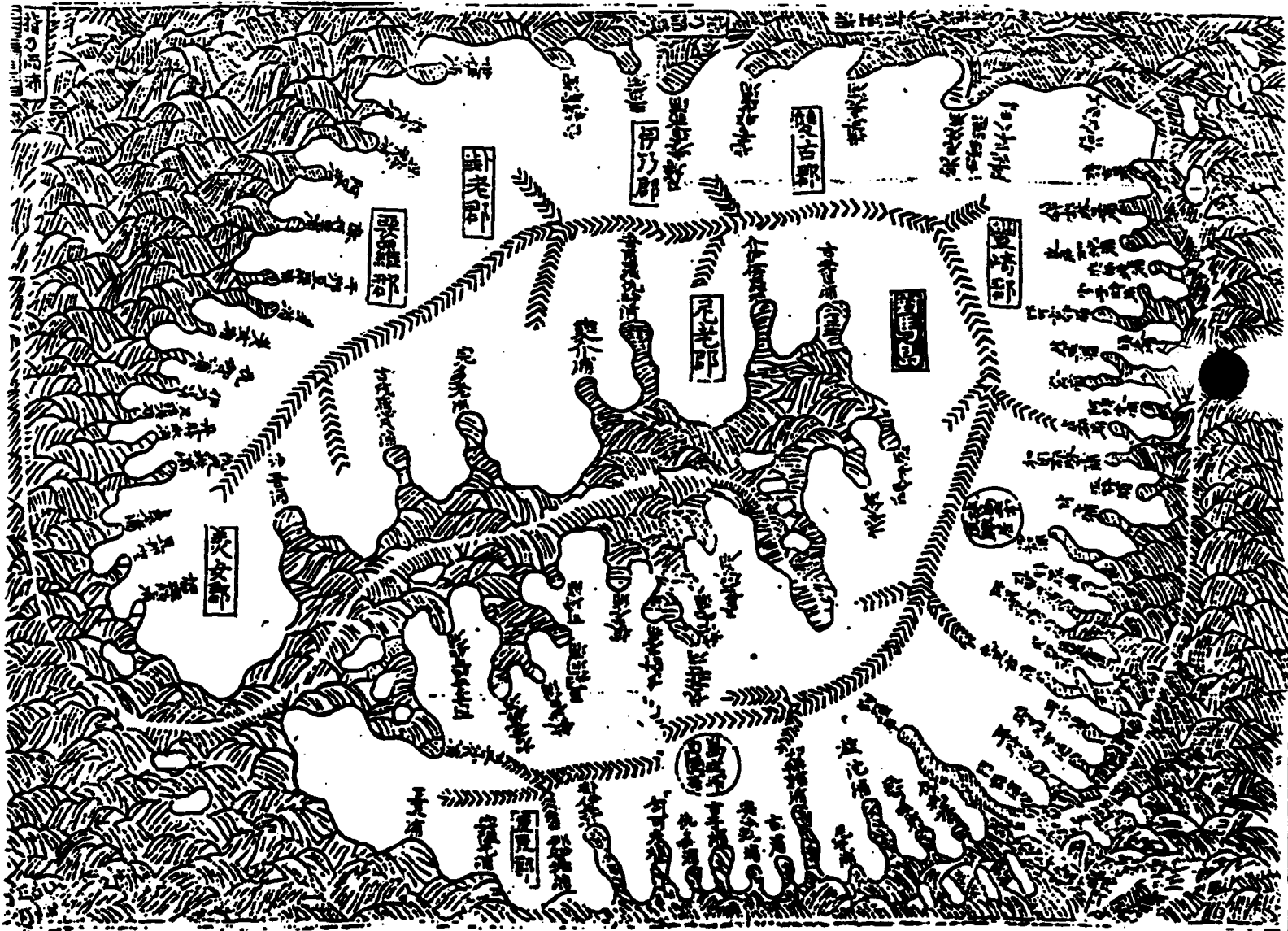
The First Wave

"Cry 'Havoc!' and let slip the dogs of war."
William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, Act III,
quoted in Shafritz, *Words on War*¹⁰⁷

On 7 May 1592 the vast armada assembled by Toyotomi Hideyoshi sailed from Japan for the islands of Tsushima and Iki. There appears to have been a considerable spirit of competition between Konishi Yukinaga, Christian Commander of the First Division, and Kato Kiyomasa, Buddhist Commander of the Second Division and this may have been manifested by a race to be first to land and first into the capital. Whether this was a real factor or one enhanced *ex post facto* by historians we may never be sure; however, we can be certain that on 24 May 1592 Konishi Yukinaga led his Division ashore at Pusanp'o under cover of a dense fog, having commandeered the bulk of the transport available at Tsushima. Konishi brought approximately 18,700 troops under his command and under the command of his subordinates, So Yoshitomo and Matsuura Shigenobu, *inter alia*, on over 350 ships.

Kato was forced to wait a few more days before moving his division onto Korean soil. Some Japanese sources aver that Kato

Map of Tsushima



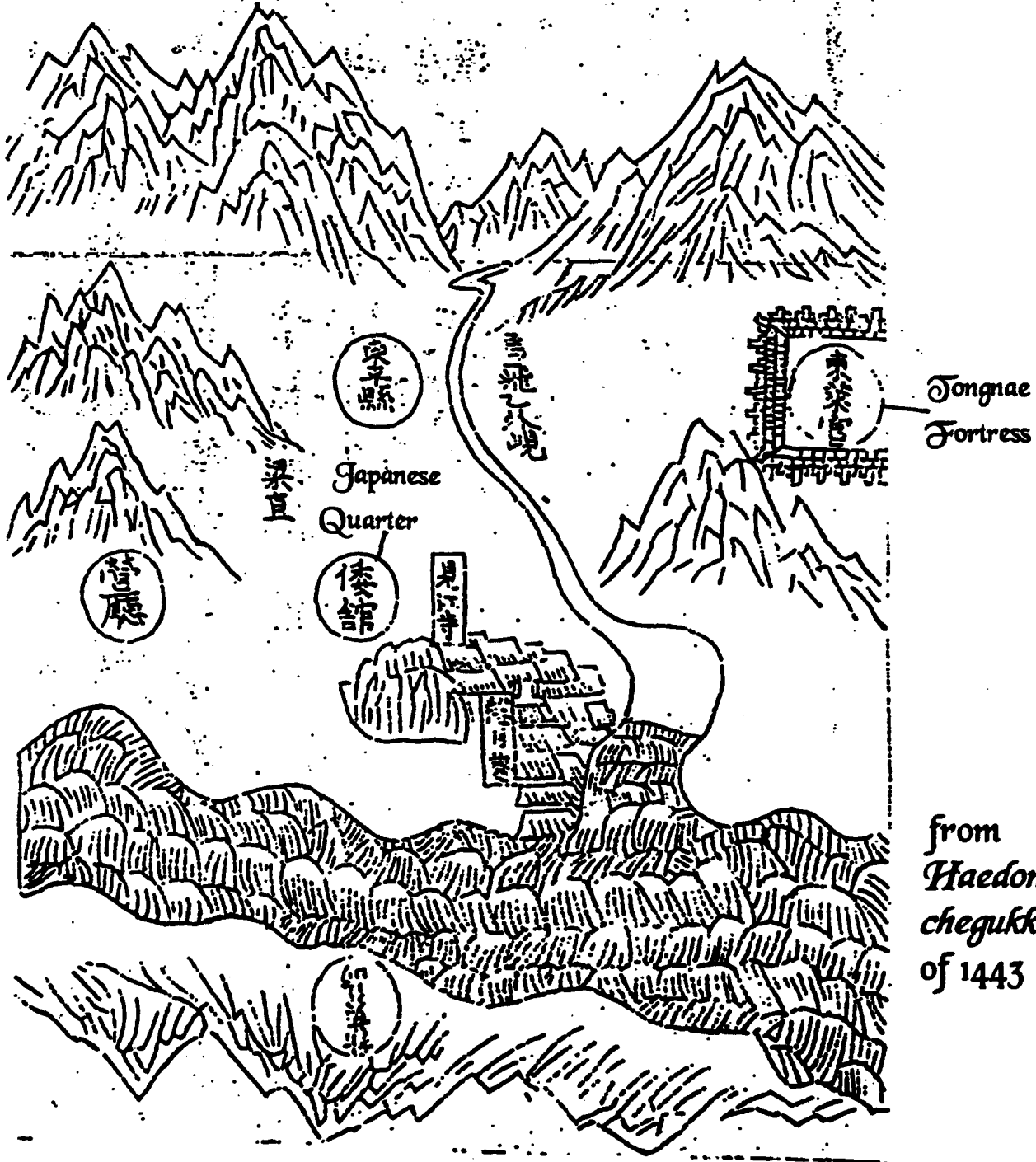
from *Haedong chegukki*, of 1443

landed first, but most modern scholarship accords with the principle accounts, including those of the Portuguese Jesuits, which show Konishi's division arriving first.¹⁰⁸ The discrepancies may be attributable to a certain anti-Christian bias of some of the early writers. This thesis is buoyed up by the fact that it has been relatively easy to find portraits of principle figures in the invasion except for Konishi Yukinaga despite the key role he played from start to finish. Alternatively, any bias and anti-Konishi leanings may equally be due to the fact that he opposed Tokugawa Ieyasu after Hideyoshi's death and was one of the few *daimyos* executed by Ieyasu.

The landing force was immediately noticed by the commander of the Korean military forces at Pusan who happened to be hunting on Deer Island at the entrance to the harbor.¹⁰⁹ He returned to his post and prepared his troops for battle. The Japanese arrived at the garrison and demanded free passage through Korea to Ming China. The Koreans refused and hostilities began.¹¹⁰ The Commander, Chong Pal, conducted a spirited resistance at Pusan, but was quickly overwhelmed by the sheer numbers and fire power of the Japanese troops.

The Japanese then followed around the curve of the bay to the fortifications at Tongnae. General Yi Kak, Commander of the Provincial Military Forces, had been approaching Tongnae from the north to reinforce the fort, but when he learned of the

Map of Tongnae



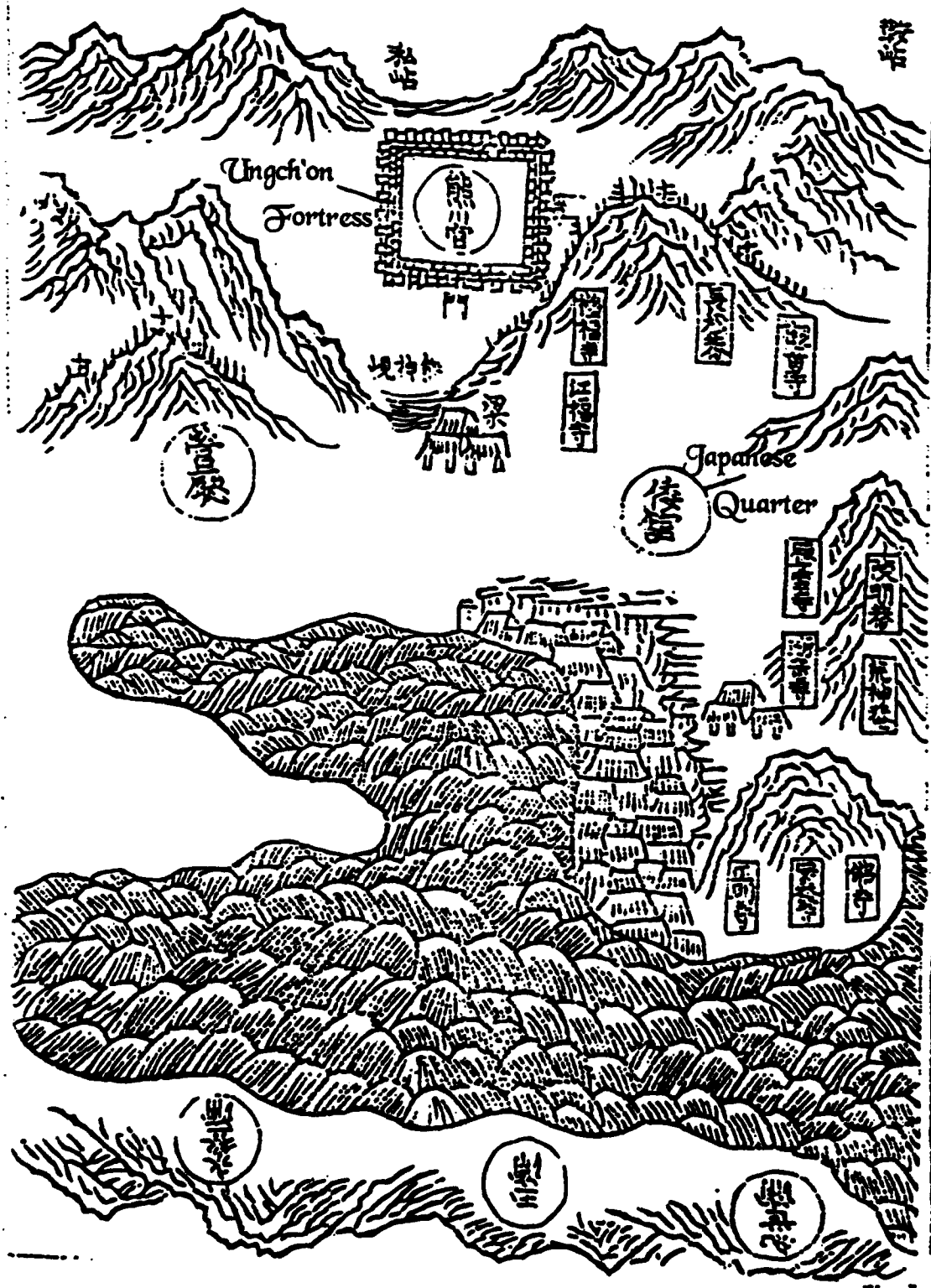
from
*Haedong
chegukki*
of 1443

annihilation of the Pusan Garrison, he immediately withdrew to Sosan. Magistrate Song Sanghyon of Tongnae fought valiantly for nearly eight hours until his troops had exhausted their supply of arrows and their garrison was overrun. Both Chong Pal at Pusan and Song Sanghyon at Tongnae died valiantly together with their troops.¹¹¹

Word of the invasion reached Seoul on the 27th of May when the report of Pak Hong, Kyongsang Province Admiral of the Left, reached the Court. The Court and the populace were thrown into a panic. The Court immediately designated Yi Il to raise a force and protect the Central Route (there were three main routes from Pusan to Seoul through mountain passes and all three were familiar to the Japanese as routes that had been used by various embassies over the years) from the Choryong Pass through Ch'ungju; Song Unggil was designated to defend the Eastern Route from the Chuk Pass to Ch'ungju; and Cho Kyong was designated to protect the Western Route through the Ch'up'ung Pass to Chuksan and Ch'ungju. Late in the day on the 27th, word reached Seoul of the fall of Pusan.

Yi Il was the highest ranking war fighter within the Ministry of War. Above him were only the Minister and Vice-Minister of War who normally stayed with the King as advisors. Yi was of the Senior Third Rank and functioned as the commander-in-chief. Yi's charge was considered the most important of the

Map of Ungch'on (Chep'o)



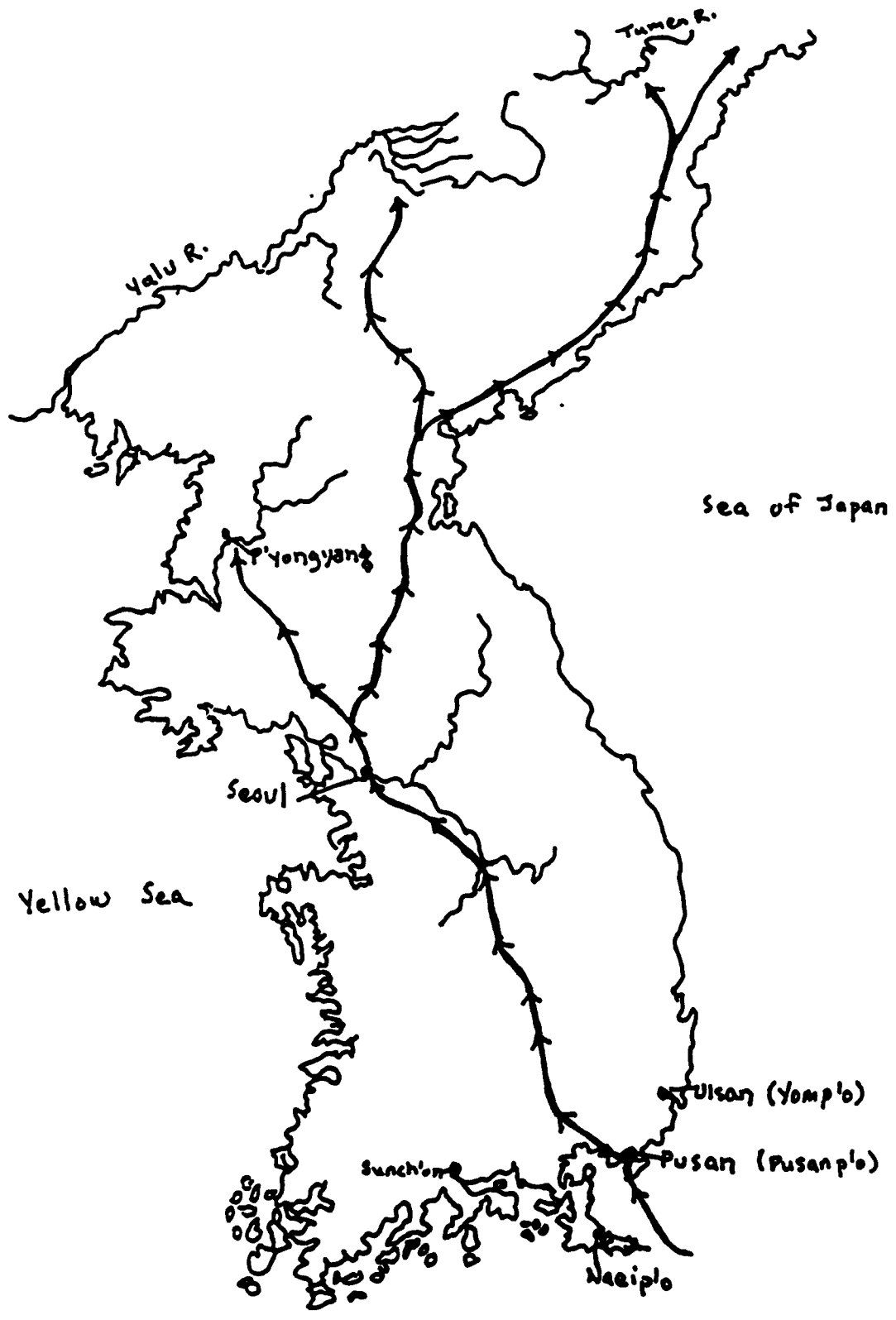
from
*Haedong
chegukki*
of 1443

three routes. He posted General Pyon Kui at the Choryong Stronghold, probably the key strategic point on the main route of Japanese advance.

The Court ordered the generals to set out immediately to protect their respective routes. It was then that Yi Il quickly found out that his army was *hollow*. An examination of the army rolls showed that the vast majority of the forces were "sick" or "in mourning" (Confucian mourning lasted three years) and could only muster 300 men, but even these were not immediately available. So General Yi set out practically alone to meet the advance of nearly 18,000 Japanese troops armed with muskets, bows and long swords. Yi did gather troops, though, as he advanced toward the pass.¹¹² Yu Songryong, the Prime Minister, was named Minister of War and Sin Ip was appointed Vice-Minister, but sent off to raise troops for the defense of the Central Route.

Konishi's division marched on almost unmolested through Yongsan, which was deserted, and passed through the Chakwon Pass on 29 May where he lost 300 men before overrunning the defenders. He passed through Miryang next and forded the Naktong River on 3 June. As Konishi's forces advanced north via the Central Route, General Yi Kak, ever cautious, and Kim Su, the Provincial Governor, in command of his own forces, maneuvered to avoid the Japanese and battle. As for the local authorities throughout the province, some stood their ground and were wiped out, others fled

Main Japanese Invasion Routes 1592



ER

and burned their crops, stores and arms caches. Konishi's troops, as a result, passed through a largely depopulated region, meeting only sporadic resistance.¹¹³

On 4 June Konishi drove General Yi Kak from Sangju and arrived at Mungyong on 5 June. The First Division was joined there by Kato's Second Division.

The Later Waves

On 29 May Kato Kiyomasa had landed his Second Division at Pusan and, following the Eastern Route, passed through Kyongju where he killed an estimated 3,000 Koreans, and headed for Yongju and Shinnyong which he quickly reduced along with several other towns along the way.

Also on the 29th, Kuroda Nagamasa's Third Division landed at Pusan and proceeded to Kimhae to follow the Western Route. On 31 May he reduced Kimhae inflicting severe casualties upon the enemy and wreaking terrible damage upon the city.

"For 10,000 li the waving battle-flags
darken the sky
With a great roar the cries of the soldiers
seem to lift heaven and earth."
Pak Nogye, "Song of Great Peace," 1598,¹¹⁴
quoted in Henthorn, A History of Korea

On 3 June 1592 Yi Il's forces were routed by Konishi at Sangju and Yi Il returned to Seoul. Sin Ip, Vice Minister of War, had been despatched to Ch'ungju and raised a substantial force, 8,000 strong, primarily of cavalry. He was joined there by Kyongsang Provincial Governor Kim Su, who had previously collected a large force at Taegu awaiting a general from Seoul to lead them. When none materialized and the Japanese were noted en route, his force largely evaporated.¹¹⁵

Sin Ip was en route to the Choryong Stronghold when he was informed of the defeat and flight of Yi Il. He then determined to remain at Ch'ungju and to fight the Japanese on level terrain, selecting a natural amphitheater at a site called "Tangumdae," defined by mountains on one side and a curving river on the other. The only approaches to Tangumdae were two narrow passages at either end where the mountains met the river. Sin chose to defend this spot rather than to fight the Japanese in the mountains as his force was cavalry and the enemy's was primarily infantry.¹¹⁶ (This left the key choke point, Choryong Pass, unmanned and undefended!) On the 5th of June Konishi's forces poured unmolested through the pass, presumably considerably relieved at not having had to fight their way in.

Japanese Muskeeters



Illustration from Turnbull, *The Samurai: A Military History*

Through the Mountain Passes and on to Seoul

"Higher than mountains, the bones
pile up in the fields,
Vast cities, great towns
become the burrows of wolves and foxes."
Pak Nogye, "Song of Great Peace," 1598,¹¹⁷
quoted in Henthorn, A History of Korea

On 6 June 1592 Konishi's troops advanced to confront Sin Ip's force at Tangumdae. The Japanese blocked both the narrow entrances and sent musketeers and archers into the mountains to rain down a withering hail of musket balls and arrows upon the Koreans and their cavalry. The Koreans, finally understanding Sin Ip's tactical blunder, tried to escape through both passages, but were driven back upon the river and systematically cut down by the Japanese forces or drowned in the torrent. The vast majority were killed although a few, including Yi Il, escaped across the river.¹¹⁸

Konishi's Division and Kato's Division were planned to join at Ch'ungju and proceed to Seoul; however, there was the continuing friction between the two commanders and no apparent order regarding overall command since Hideyoshi had originally intended that each general be fully responsible for the conduct of the affairs of his own division. The two then decided to go their separate ways after Kato had asked Konishi to permit the Second Division to precede the First on the Central Route, but Konishi had objected and, as the route was assigned to him, Kato had to back down. They both, then, appear to have hastened to

Sixteenth Century Korean Knight



Illustration from Griffis, *Korea: The Hermit Nation*

beat the other to Seoul on separate routes with Konishi following the Central Route via Yanggun and Kato taking shortcuts to the west passing via Chuksan.¹¹⁹

In the interim, Kuroda Nagamasa reached Songju on 4 June 1592 where he joined up with several thousand troops under Mori Yoshinari and Ito Suketaka from Shimazu's Fourth Division which had previously taken Ch'angwon. They proceeded together from Songju through Kumsan and over the Ch'up'ung Pass and through Yongdong and Ch'ungju. They killed several thousand Koreans at Ch'ungju and reached Seoul on 16 June.

At King Sonjo's Court preparations were being made for the defense of the capital. Yi Yangwon, State Councillor of the Right, was made General of the Capital Guard; Yi Chon was appointed Commander of the Left Guard; and Pyon Onsu was named Commander of the Right Guard. Pak Ch'unggan arranged for repairs of the city battlements and appointed former Commander of the Northern Army, Kim Myongwon, as the Metropolitan Marshall to guard against a crossing of the Han River. King Sonjo, however, after consultations with Grand Councillor Yi Sanhae had already decided to flee the capital and was making surreptitious preparations for his flight. The senior advisors pleaded with him not to flee, but he was determined. At their request, however, he named Prince Kwanghae as Heir Apparent; ordered the

army to guard the approaches to the capital; and sent out a call to the provinces to raise troops for the protection of Seoul.

Once the people of Seoul determined that the Court had abandoned the capital, a major riot tore through the city. The people first set fire to the Bureau of Slave Administration, then the Ministry of Justice. They burned the public and private slave registers and pillaged the storehouses. They broke into the treasury and emptied it. They burned Kyongbok Palace, Ch'angdok Palace and Ch'anggyong Palace. Treasures were pilfered or burned. The Library of the Hall of Classics was destroyed. The Veritable Records of the Yi Dynasty Kings were destroyed in the Spring and Autumn Hall. Historic documents of the previous dynasty in other storehouses were destroyed. The Daily Records of the Royal Secretariat went up in flames. These together with residences of several high ranking officials were all put to the torch by the outraged citizens of Seoul. Seoul was in shambles before the Japanese ever set foot in the capital, a sizeable portion of its population having fled.

Kato reached the southern shore of the Han River on 12 June and his scouts could spot no opposing force on the opposite bank. One of his troops swam the river and returned with a boat. In short order his men were across the river and entering the city through the South Gate before noon.¹²⁰ Probably to his chagrin he found that the city was already in the possession of Konishi

who had entered the city the previous evening through the East Gate.

Kuroda and Mori's units followed close on their heels and entered the city to be followed themselves by Kobayakawa and Ukita. Metropolitan Marshall Kim Myongwon and General of the Metropolis Yi Yongwon had fled without fighting a single skirmish and abandoned the capital to the enemy armies.

The Japanese generals rested their troops, wearied as much or more from the forced marches as from the limited combat they had seen, for ten or so days in Seoul while putting equipment in order, replenishing stocks and making battle plans.

The King fled first to Kaesong, the former capital under the Koryo Dynasty, accompanied by key members of his court. Some of his loyal retainers had slipped away, however, and others had been sent off on military missions. The King therefore appointed Ch'oe Hungwon as Grand Councillor, Yun Tusu as Councillor of the Left and Yu Hong as Councillor of the Right. The King sent personal messages to the Eight Provinces, for broad distribution, taking full responsibility for the calamity which had befallen the country and calling for volunteers to join the Uibyong ("Righteous Armies").

One of the problems for Korean forces was the rampant factionalism and the concomitant corruption which it bred. General Sin Kak who had been a deputy of Kim Myongwon (who had abandoned the defense of the Han River without a contest) began collecting troops in Kyonggi Province. His small band encountered a detachment of Japanese out scouring the countryside for forage and booty and administered the first defeat that the Japanese troops had experienced in the war. Sin's force took sixty Japanese heads. Morale quickly rose among Korean regular and irregular forces as did a recognition of how a war of attrition might help to lay the Japanese low. However, after a few days a messenger from the king arrived at Sin's camp with a sword and an order for Sin's execution signed by King Sonjo! Kim Myongwon had shifted the blame for his cowardice to Sin through the machinations of his factional supporters at Court and this was the result. The King had learned of Sin's heroism in the meantime and sent a second messenger after the first and tried to stay the execution, in vain.¹²¹

When the Japanese were ready to resume their marches, it had been decided that Konishi should head for P'yongan Province, Kato for Hamgyong Province, Kuroda for Hwanghae Province, and Mori Yoshinari and Shimazu Yoshihiro for Kangwon Province. Ukita Hideie was to occupy the capital and to pacify Kyonggi, the capital province. Kobayakawa was assigned to maintain the rear area in the south.

It had been planned that Hideyoshi would come to take command of operations at this point under a previous plan, but after receiving reports of the occupation of Seoul, he changed his mind and sent Ishida Mitsunari, Masuda Nagamori and Otani Yoshikage in his stead.

The Roads North from Seoul

King Sonjo left Kaesong when he received reports that Seoul had fallen to the enemy. He reached P'yongyang on the 16th of June. At this time, Yi Hangbok urged the Court to request military assistance from Ming China, but Yun Tusu argued that if Korea's forces could hold at the Imjin River, it would provide sufficient time to raise counter forces from several provinces. He further argued that if Choson were to request military assistance from China, Korea would be reduced to dependency and subjected to Chinese tyranny.

Kim Myongwon who had abandoned the defense of the Han River crossing without a skirmish and had fled to the rear now pitched camp on the banks of the Imjin River and stood in opposition to the advance of the forces of Konishi and Kato which reached the banks of the Imjin on the 24th of June. Kim ordered a counterattack against the Japanese forces on the 27th, but the attack failed and he lost two generals, Sin Kil and Yu Kungryang, in the action. The Japanese forces finally crossed the Imjin on

the 6th of July and went on to occupy Kaesong. When King Sonjo's Court received news of the defeat of Kim Myongwon's forces at the Imjin, on 21 June 1592 they appointed Yi Tokhyong as Ambassador to Petition Assistance and sent him to Ming China to request military aid for the first time.

When the Japanese forces departed Kaesong on 9 July 1592, they advanced as far as Ansong Station in Hwanghae Province. At this point the First and Second Divisions split again with Konishi setting out on the road to P'yongyang (ancient capital of the most Sinicized of the early Korean city states) and Kato heading northeast into the frontier lands of Hamgyong Province.

King Sonjo conferred with his ministers and debated alternative courses of action. Former State Councillor Chong Ch'ol (a renowned poet who is still one of the most highly regarded of Korea's poets) pressed King Sonjo to leave P'yongyang for the northern border area near China; Yi Tokhyong and Sim Ch'ungkyom and others opposed Chong's proposal; Yun Tusu and Yu Songryong, etc., urged him to take a stand and defend P'yongyang, but, while the debate was going on, word arrived that the Japanese forces had already reached the banks of the Taedong River south of P'yongyang. King Sonjo decided to flee north again.

The P'yongyang local functionaries were incensed and determined to raise an insurrection until they realized that the peasants were already fleeing the city and there were almost no troops available for a defense. The King ordered Yun Tusu, Kim Myongwon and Yi Wonik to conduct a defense of P'yongyang and then, on the 19th of July, departed P'yongyang for Yongbyon via Sukch'on and Anju. He then decided that he would head into Hamgyong Province, but Yi Hangbok and Yi Tokhyong argued that this would be an extremely dangerous course to pursue and convinced him to go to Uiju on the Yalu across from China to meet up with the Ming troops. King Sonjo stopped at Pakch'on where he reproached himself greatly for the course of events since the invasion. He then arranged to turn over Supreme Command of the nation at war to the Heir Apparent, Prince Kwanghae.

Yun Tusu and Kim Myongwon at P'yongyang ordered Ko Onbaek to lead a surprise attack against Konishi's forces. Ko's attack was repulsed and his forces were driven back and forced to retreat over the Wangsong Rapids. When the Japanese saw this, they realized that the water was shallow and crossed the rapids following after the fleeing Korean force and soon gained entrance into P'yongyang. In the meantime, Yun Tusu and Kim Myongwon mobilized the remaining populace including the aged and the infirm and threw the city's weapons stores and gunpowder into a lake.

Konishi's forces took P'yongyang on 21 July 1592 while Kato's reached Yonghung on 1 August driving his horses and caissons at a destructive pace into Hamgyong Province from Kaksan through Anbyon. In Yonghung Kato received intelligence that Prince Imhae had gone into Hamgyong Province and that Prince Sunhwa had gone into Kangwon Province and were attempting to raise an army loyal to the King.

Kato left Nabeshima Naoshige in Yonghung and continued northwards. He had Sagara Tayofusa follow in the rear. Korean General Han Kuksong, Commander of the Army of the North, gathered the troops of the Six Garrisons of the north and met part of Kato's Division in the battle of the Haejong Granary. The strong suit of the northern army troops was mounted archery and they waged a fierce battle against the Japanese troops. They were finally worn down, however, by the Japanese muskets and put to flight. Kato then proceeded on this route to Hoeryong.

The two princes had crossed the Tanch'on and Mach'on Passes and spent several months at Hoeryong. When the Japanese attacked Hoeryong on 28 August 1592, Magistrate Kuk Kyongin had the princes and their retainers, as well as the magistrates of Hoeryong and Onsong bound and surrendered immediately. Kato moved them shortly to Kyongsong; left a defense unit to guard them; and then crossed the Tumen River into Jurchen territory occupied by a tribe known as the Orangkhai. He attacked several



Kato Kiyomasa Spearing a Tiger in Korea

Illustration from Turnbull, *The Samurai: A Military History*

Buddhist
General
Kato Kiyomasa
&
Siberian Tiger
He Reputedly
Killed with His
Long Spear in
the Korean
Mountains



Kato was
Known for
His Special
Long
Helmet

Buddhist General Kato Kiyomasa Leading a Charge



Kato Is Distinguished by the Long Helmet of His Own Design

*Portrait Reproduced from Turnbull, *The Samurai: A Military History**

Cannon Belonging to Kato Kiyomasa

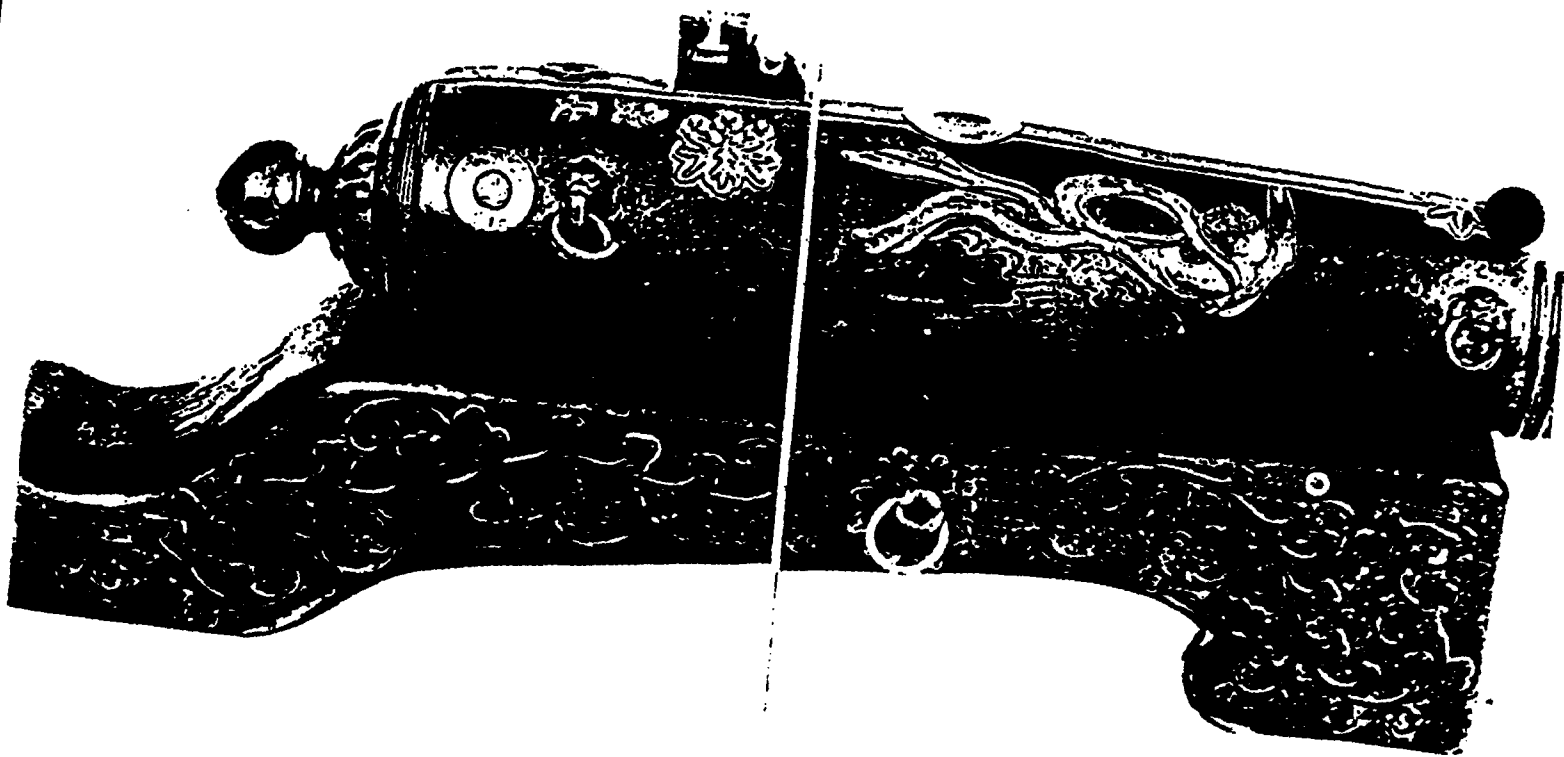


Illustration from Turnbull, The Samurai: A Military History

of their strongholds and then brought his troops back to Hoeryong. It is speculated that he was just testing the mettle of the Jurchen should they have to fight them at a later time.

Kato had set his subordinates to treating Hamgyong Province in the manner that Hideyoshi had treated the

Kato next moved into Kyongwon following the banks of the Tumen River and captured the Commander of the Northern Army, Han Kuksong there. By the time Kato returned to Kyongsong he had a good understanding of the difficulties of defending territory north of Kilju and abandoned his positions to the north and moved his forces back into Kilju and Tanch'on. He then accompanied the two princes and returned to Anbyon. Nabeshima Naoshige had, in a fashion similar to Kato, moved steadily north and stationed portions of his troops at Hamhung, Yonghung, etc., to defend those sites.

With the fall of P'yongyang, the three major cities of Choson, the three principal historic capitals, P'yongyang, Kaesong and Seoul, together with the ancient Silla Dynasty capital of Kyongju, had all fallen to the enemy within 60 days of the outbreak of the war.

When Prince Kwanghae learned of the fall of P'yongyang, he set out for Yongbyon. King Sonjo and his small group of

bodyguards reached Yongman in Uiju on 31 July 1592 having travelled through Kasan, Chongju, Yongju and Yongch'on in a driving rainstorm. (The Japanese were not their only danger on the road as they were menaced by irate Korean peasants at times as well.) They turned the residence of the senior government official there in Uiju into a temporary Royal Villa.

The China Card

Sonjo had decided at the time of the defeat of the Korean forces at the Imjin River to request aid from Ming. Hearing of the fall of P'yongyang, he again sent word, this time by an express envoy to Ming petitioning military reinforcements from China.

Ever since the Ming Court had learned of the Japanese invasion, debate had gone on sporadically as to what response they should give Korea and what specific actions they should take. The predominant view was they should cut off the invading Japanese armies in Korea and prevent the war from moving into Chinese territory. Their position was undercut, however, by the necessity and expense of already having several armies in the field to deal with an internal rebellion and troubles on the northern borders with hostile tribes. Their first series of actions, consequently, was to order that large scale war preparations be made along the coasts of the Liaotung and

Late 16th Century Buddhist Monk Warrior



Portrait of Monk Ryohai reproduced from Sanson, *A History of Japan: 1534-1615*

Shantung Peninsulas. They ordered the Commander of the Embroidered-uniform Guard in Liaotung to move an army to the border of Choson across the Yalu from Uiju. So 1,000 crack troops under the command of Tai Chaopyon departed Liaotung on the 23rd of July and encamped on the Yalu to defend against any Japanese attempt to cross the river into Chinese territory. This force was not intended as a reinforcement of Korean forces. Despite continual requests for reinforcements by the Koreans, debate was still raging within the Ming Court about whether or not to send forces into Korea.

Emperor Shentsung issued the following proclamation:

"1. Any person who should either capture or kill the atrocious Hideyoshi, . . . would be elevated to nobility with the rank of marquis and would receive the corresponding reward.

"2. Any person who should either capture or kill Hidetsugu would be elevated to nobility with the rank of Marquis.

"3. Any person who should kill Yukinaga, Hideie, or other Japanese military leaders of similar rank in Korea would be rewarded with 5,000 taels (approximately 1 1/3 ounces avoirdupois; 5,000 taels = 105 pounds avoirdupois) of silver.

"4. Any person who should propose and successfully carry out a plan for the restoration of Korea would be elevated to nobility with the rank of count, and would receive a reward of ten thousand taels of silver."¹²²

King Sonjo sent a message to the Prefect of Liaotung relating that the Japanese had taken P'yongyang and that he had to cross the Yalu to seek refuge in Liaotung. The Prefect reported this to the Ming Court in Nanching. Ming ordered that if the king sought refuge he should be given an excellent villa,

four ounces of silver daily, and food out of the imperial stores. The court also ordered that Sonjo be provided an escort of 100 men and twenty women to wait upon him.¹²³

The First Chinese Intervention

The Ming Emperor was Shen Tsung at this time. At the beginning of his reign he had appointed effective generals and ministers. His nation had flourished and Ming had a strong hand in controlling border affairs; however, gradually the administration broke down and fell into disorder. Rebellion broke out in Ninghsia in Kansu Province and Generalissimo Li Jusung (a Chinese military officer of Korean descent whose family had resided in Liaotung for six generations) was in the process of deploying forces to put down the rebellion. Against this background, many in the Court deemed that it would not be worthwhile to dispatch forces to Korea at this juncture, but Minister of War Shih Hsing urged that troops be sent and, ultimately, carried the day.

Orders were given to mobilize an additional 5,000 troops from Liaochin in Liaotung to follow after the previously dispatched 1,000 now on the border. Tsu Chenghsun was given command of the force with Kua Mengch'eng as Deputy Commander of the Left and Tai Chaopyon as Deputy Commander of the Right. Shih Ju was designated as the Strike Force Commander. This command

was earmarked as a reinforcement for the Korean troops of Choson in response to their repeated requests for aid.

After Tsu Chenghsun's force had reached Uiju, he received an intelligence report which indicated that Konishi, who was occupying P'yongyang and awaiting further direction from Hideyoshi, had deployed a sizeable portion of his available manpower for building fortifications to neutralize the area to his south.

On the 21st of August, Tsu moved his force south against P'yongyang. He caught the fortress in a lax state of readiness in the midst of a strong wind and rainstorm and attacked. Nevertheless, conditions turned worse still and Konishi counterattacked during a hard fought, bitter struggle. Tai Chaopyon and Shih Ju were killed in the battle and the Chinese forces were in disarray. Tsu managed to pull his forces back together and retreated. The first Chinese military attempt to aid Korea had come to naught.

Konishi Yukinaga, whose division had lost nearly one third of its original strength, decided to send Yanagigawa Shiranobu to the Ming encampment to discuss setting up truce negotiations, but the Chinese refused. Later, when the Chinese had encamped on the Taedong River, Konishi sent the Buddhist monk Genso (a Chinese interpreter) together with Yanagigawa again to discuss truce

negotiations. Finally, China acceded and Korea, as well. The Koreans sent Inspector General Yi Tokhyong and the Chinese, Japanese and Koreans all met in the middle of the Taedong River, but were unable to reach any agreement. Clearly, however, the discussions were primarily between the Ming and the Japanese with the Koreans having very little influence in the discussions. Moreover, it appears significant that Konishi initiated contact and was willing to discuss peace terms now that the Chinese had entered the fray, his forces having been pared down through attrition and dispersed, holding various pieces of "real estate."

The P'yongyang Truce Negotiations

The Ming Court sent Shen Weiching, who spoke Japanese and who was a crony of the Minister of War, Shih Hsing, to conduct any ensuing peace negotiations. Shen reached P'yongyang on 4 October 1592. Shen is much maligned in some sources, but he won Konishi's admiration and amazed the Koreans since he ventured to come into the Japanese camp entirely unescorted and this is echoed in the Jesuit accounts recorded by Father Frois.¹²⁴ He began by smoothing Konishi's ruffled feathers. He discussed the peace conditions of each party with all the other parties. Konishi and Shen then drafted a set of conditions jointly with the following points: 1) the Taedong River should become a boundary across the narrow neck of Korea in the north with Korean authority north of the river and Japanese authority south of the

river (i.e., the Koreans would retain control of one third of their territory and the Japanese, two thirds); 2) the Ming Emperor should allow Japan trade privileges in China; 3) the Ming Emperor should send one of the Imperial Princesses to marry the ruler of Japan; 4) a fifty day truce should be established to permit Shen the time for consultations on the conditions back in the Ming Court and a wooden marker be set up at Pusanwon northwest of P'yongyang--beyond which Japanese forces would not advance north nor the Korean forces, south; 5) if Ming agrees to these conditions, Shen should return to P'yongyang with Ming's imperial envoy and a national hostage; 6) upon ratification by Japan, Japanese troops should withdraw from P'yongyang to Seoul where the final peace negotiations were to be conducted.¹²⁵

(This fifty day lull in the fighting also would serve the unstated purpose of providing time to permit the Ming to assemble additional reinforcements. On the other side of the scale, however, the Jesuit accounts report that Konishi and Kato together now had less than 30,000 troops surviving under their commands with the bulk of these manning the strongholds required to maintain their delicate lines of communication.¹²⁶)

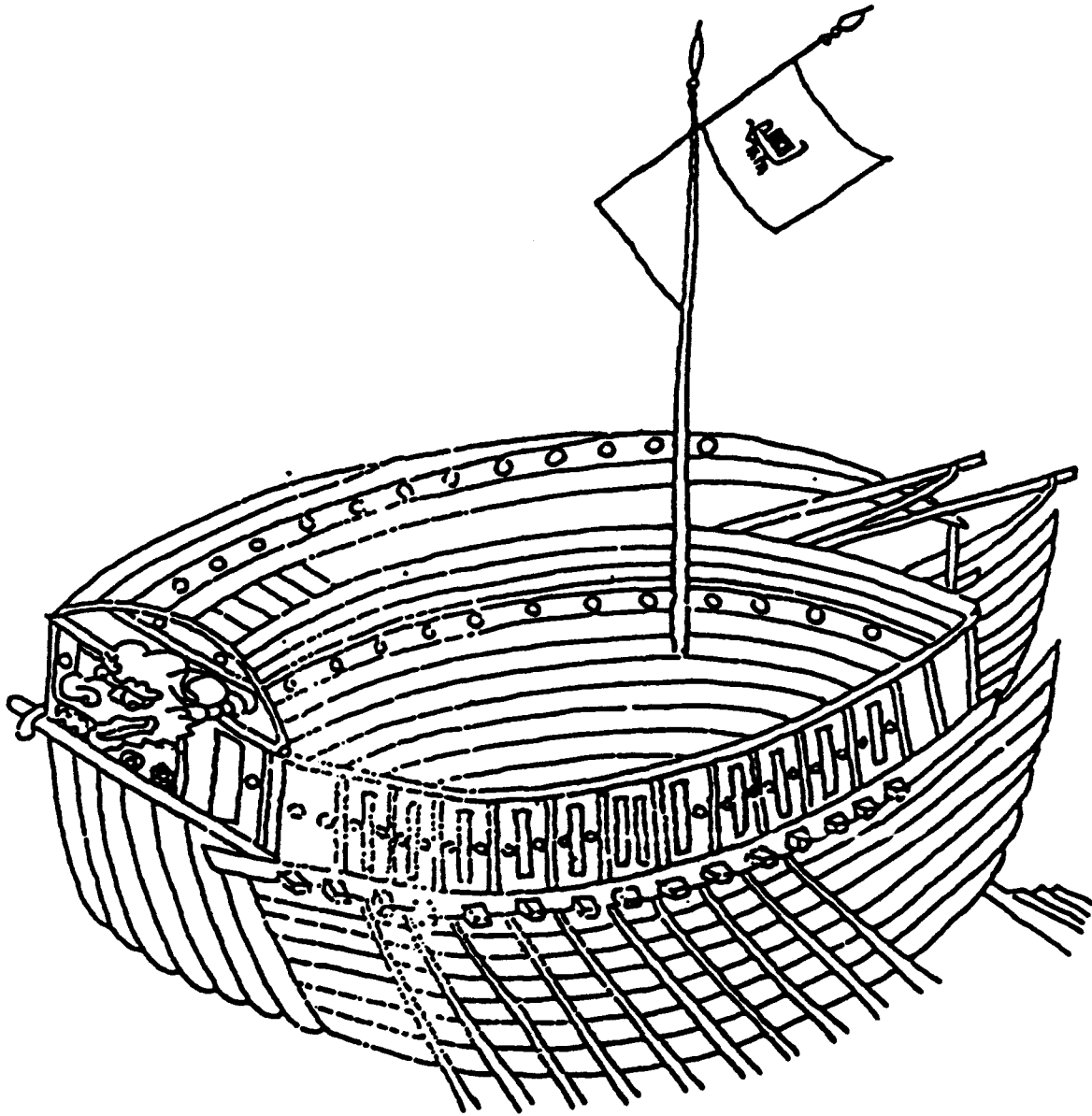
Shen returned almost as promised, having taken a little over 50 days, on 17 December 1592. He delivered the views of the Ming Court to Konishi explaining that, in general terms, the Ming consented to peace negotiations and would send hostages

Admiral
Yi Sunshin



Illustration from Turnbull, The Samurai: A Military History

船龜



Tongjeyong Type Turtle Boat

Illustration from the *Collected Works of Admiral Yi Sunshin (Yi Chongmu-gong chonso)*

immediately. Shen also indicated that Ming intended to send a legation to Japan. He asked for an additional concession from Konishi--that the two Korean Princes be released. Konishi indicated that he couldn't make such a concession as the princes were under the control of another general (Kato) and not himself (underscoring the unilaterality of the negotiations at the current stage.) Konishi agreed to accompany Shen to Nagoya to meet with Hideyoshi sometime in the coming year. Shen then left again with the promise to return shortly with the Ming envoy and the national hostage.¹²⁷

The Second Chinese Intervention

Shen's negotiations, in reality, were based largely on his own seat-of-the-pants decision-making as he attempted to manipulate the Ming, the Japanese and the Koreans, bending them to his conception as to how things should turn out rather than based on his government's policies. (There is some speculation that Konishi, likewise, having grown weary of the war, may have willingly abetted Shen's efforts.) The Ming, in actuality, after the defeat of Tsu Ch'enghsun's troops were raising a large army with the intention of striking a strong blow against the Japanese in Korea. The Ming Court appointed the Vice Minister of the Right of the Ministry of War as the officer in charge of "Military Affairs of the Invasion for Defending the Seas and Protecting Against the Japanese." He was put in charge of

dispatching the troops to Korea and sent an envoy, Hsueh P'an to Choson to inform the Koreans of Ming's planned massive reinforcement effort.

In the interim, envoys from the Korean King continued to appear at the Ming Court requesting immediate aid. It was around this time that General Li Jusung succeeded in putting down the rebellion in Ninghsia and was appointed Commander-in-Chief for the Pacification of the East and sent off on the second Ming intervention in the Korean war.

On 27 January 1593, General Li Jusung led 43,000 Chinese troops into Korea with Vice Commander Yang Yuan as General of the Left, Vice Commander Li Juppo as General of the Center and Vice Commander Chang Shih as General of the Right. They crossed the Yalu in January 1593, General Li resplendent in his crimson robes and being carried in a crimson sedan chair.¹²⁸ Li was personally welcomed by King Sonjo who thanked him for Ming's assistance.

General Li set out almost immediately after his audience with the king. His entire army of 43,000 together with 80,000 sacks of rice and 20,000 pounds of gunpowder moved off in the direction of P'yongyang. The army under General Li was led by his three field generals each with nine subordinate generals. This Chinese army had no muskets, but it did have a large

artillery unit equipped with small field-pieces. It also had a large calvary and each calvary man was dressed in iron-mail on which the best Japanese swords made no impression.¹²⁹ Li's army also possessed a rear guard, with a reserve force of an additional 8,000 men, commanded by a general. Finally, there were two generals commanding an engineering unit. It was reported that on the march this army stretched out along the road for a thousand *li* (approximately 330 miles).¹³⁰ This was not an army come to escort an envoy of peace and hostages.

Li Jusung was opposed to peace negotiations and had Shen Weiching taken prisoner in Liaotung. He ordered that Shen be put to death. His Chief of Staff, Li Yingshih, however, counseled him that Shen might yet prove useful for Li's military purposes and that he be kept under arrest with his whereabouts secret.¹³¹

Righteous Armies--Popular Armed Resistance

A good portion of the expected Korean resistance had been destroyed in Kyongsang and Ch'ungch'ong Provinces in the south by the force of Japanese arms. The "natural" defenders were stripped away and the residue had been called north to help protect the fleeing king. Moreover, many of the district officers had obtained their commissions not through merit, but by bribery or influence. This was highlighted in their performance and in the performance of their units in the early days of the

conflict. The peasantry was, essentially, left to the "mercy" of the Japanese forces and after they left they were at the mercy of the Korean government forces or of the volunteer ("Righteous") armies of peasants which had coalesced around a nucleus of loyalist civil servants and military officers.¹³² Crops and stores were destroyed in the fighting or deliberately by the government or the people to prevent them from falling into the hands of the enemy. Foraging became difficult as farmers were swept up into the military and any crops remaining were unattended. By and large, new crops were not planted. (Under such circumstances it wouldn't require Nostradamus to see that a famine was in the offing.)

While the Japanese armies continued to press northwards through Kyongsang and Ch'ungch'ong Provinces, Cholla Province Military Inspector Yi Kwang, who had been Yi Sunshin's mentor, led a force intending to relieve the siege of Seoul. When he learned that Seoul had already fallen to the Japanese, he withdrew to Chonju. Ch'ungch'ong Province Military Inspector, Yun Kukhyong, and Kyongsang Military Inspector, Kim Su, and their troops fell in with Yi Kwang's forces.

In the south, Ch'ungch'ong and Kyongsang Provinces had borne the brunt of the invasion so far and only Cholla Province had avoided the ravages of occupation by the enemy forces. At this time, a large Korean contingent was heading north with a huge

supply train stretching out, at times, over 40-50 li (one li=1/3 mile approx., so 40-50 li=13-16 miles) and the Court was relying heavily on this. On the 11th of July, while King Sonjo was still in P'yongyang, the Japanese forces passed through Kaesong and the Korean forces that were to come north had pitched camp at Toksan Fortress in Suwon. While scouting the Japanese forces in Yongin, the Koreans saw that the enemy was assembling on Mount Munso in the north of Yongin County and that they were weak. Yi Kwang's forces had intended to launch a battle to the death, with General Paek Kwang'on in the van; however, they were hit with a surprise attack and were routed in a single battle losing most of their important supplies in the encounter.

The government forces of the three southern provinces having been battered, broken and dispersed in this fashion, some of them joined with popular volunteer forces and participated in small-scale resistance actions against the Japanese in various locales. For example, Kwon Yul, following his defeat at Yongin, collected 1,000 or so volunteers from Kwangju and the surrounding villages; trained them; and sometime in August 1592 joined them to the forces of Hwang Chin, the Tongbok County Superintendent. Together at Yich'i in Chinsan they drove back a Japanese force attempting to come into Chonju from Kumsan, thereby keeping Cholla Province safe for the time being and earning himself promotion to a Cholla Province provincial level position.

Kwon Yul returned to Chonju and raised another force for the restoration of Seoul. He gathered 20,000 men from the various village guard forces and 1,000 Buddhist troops led by the Bonze Ch'o Yong from the Taehungsa Temple in Haenam. In October he led his army north to establish a base of operations at Toksan Fortress in Suwon.

Around this time, volunteer forces were springing up all over Cholla Province, which had yet to suffer the ravages of invasion, as well as in Kyongsang and Ch'ungch'ong Provinces, the areas through which the Japanese main forces had stormed. Within a very short period, considerable irregular forces were assembled, such as those of Kwak Chaeu in Uinyong and Cho Hon in Okch'on.

Kwak Chaeu of Yongnam expended his personal fortune to recruit troops for an army; to purchase weapons and supplies; and to obtain a cadre of experienced soldiers to help recruit and train men. He and his group went up and down the Naktong River valley recruiting an army while being harassed by Korean government forces. Finally he put up stiff resistance to the Japanese at Uinyong, Samga, Samch'on and other villages and wrested them away from Japanese control.

There were many other cases such as that of Chong Inhong and Kim Myon of Koryong and a number of others who raised forces in

Samch'on. For example, there were also the Pak brothers in Samga and the Kwon family in Tansong, all of whom raised forces; fought a shadowy war of resistance; and then joined with government troops in August 1592 to cut off Japanese forces in Chinhae and Ch'angwon.

In Ch'angryong, various individuals put together units and affiliated with Kwak Chaeu's growing army. In November Kim Yom's Righteous Army and the government forces of Kimhae Magistrate So Kyewon worked in concert to attack the army of Kobayakawa Takakage which had been gathering at Chirye and drove it back to Kumsan. Others, in the meantime had raised forces at Kumsan and they attacked the Japanese on their retreating flank.

Chong Inhong set up camp in Songju and disrupted Japanese lines of communication between Koryong and Samch'on. Kwak Chaeu pitched camp in Uinyong and prepared to fight the Japanese should they attempt to cross the river from Ham'an, Ch'angryong or Yongsan. In October Kim Hae raised an army in Yean and united with popular forces from Andong, Uisong, Kunwi and Pian. They contained and suppressed Japanese activities in the northern area of Kyongsang Province.

Also in October former Miryang Magistrate, Pak Chin, who had achieved great merit for his actions early on against the invading Japanese forces and was advanced to the post of

Kyongsang Province Commander of the Left Army, gathered together the surviving fragments and rag tag of the devastated government forces; assembled over 10,000 troops; and advanced on Kyongju Fortress. It is recorded that the Koreans employed a newly invented weapon in the battle for Kyongju Fortress called the "Flying Heaven-shaking Thunderbolt," which, from its description, was some sort of mortar-fired shell which did not burst upon landing, but, rather after a minute or two on the ground.¹³³ The weapon was developed by Yi Changson and the secret of its manufacture supposedly died with him.¹³⁴ Some reports also indicate that it gave off a poisonous gas when it exploded. It is recorded as having been made of bell metal and gunpowder. (Korean powder was notably slow burning and it may have been unintentional that it had a "delay-fuse." Moreover, Korean gunpowder was high on sulphur which may account for the reports of poisonous gases.) Several Japanese troops (over 20) apparently came to investigate the first one when it landed and were subsequently riddled with shrapnel when it finally blew up. The Japanese are reported to have abandoned the fortress and fled in fear before this new weapon. Whatever the actual cause of the fall of the city, the Japanese were driven out and all the way back to Sosaengp'o at Ulsan on the east coast.

In November 1592 Japanese General Hashiba in Pusan gathered 30,000 of his troops from Tongnae and Kimhae and put out warships intending to hold his ground. Hashiba's intent was to foil the

advance of the Cholla army into the western parts of territory which he was holding as this was the last key base for resupply of Japanese forces in Korea by sea from Japan. On 16 November Korean irregular leader Yu Suin was defeated at Ch'angwon and the Japanese army advanced toward Chinju through Ham'an; however, General Kim Simin had charge of the defense of the fortress at Chinju in Kyongsang Province and led a force pledged to fight to the death against the Japanese siege. They defended Chinju Fortress in a seven day seesaw battle. The Japanese forces estimated at 30,000 troops included 1,000 musketeers. The Japanese fired musket at the fortress with little effect for nearly a whole day. They next employed fire arrows and burnt every house outside the walls to ashes. They then moved their siege equipment in. The Koreans had thrown down hundreds of boards with protruding nails to foil a night siege. This last apparently laid up a number of Japanese troops when a night attempt was made. The Japanese continued to attempt to breach the wall in the daylight and were met with stones, small bales of hay with explosive charges in them and scalding water as well as arrows and other weapons. The Japanese, ultimately, lost an estimated 300 officers and as many as 15,000 of their 30,000 men according to Korean accounts.¹³⁵ Kim Simin died a month later from wounds sustained in this battle.

In Ch'ungch'ong Province Kwak Chaeu had raised an army which when united with troops under Cho Hon of Okch'on put together a

force of 1700 troops. They joined forces with 1600 men raised by others plus 500 Buddhist troops raised by the Bonze Yongkyu from the Ch'ongyonsa Temple in Kongju. With this patchwork force they blocked Kobayakawa Takakage's army from heading into Cholla Province in September and participated in the Battle of Kumsan. Korean government forces dispersed most of Cho Hon's army at Kumsan. Nevertheless, his last 700 made a valiant stand against the Japanese and died at Kumsan. Cho Hon's father and the Bonze Yongkyu died as part of the 700. They were buried together in the Mound of the 700 which is still extant at Kumsan today. The Japanese forces also suffered heavy casualties in this engagement and withdrew.

There are many more examples of activities by the volunteer, irregular and guerrilla forces, generally called "Righteous Armies," which were active in other provinces which I will not enumerate. The activities of the Righteous Armies--guerrillas--harassed the rear components of the Japanese Army from all directions, threatened their lines of communication, inflicted continuing casualties, exacerbated food shortages, weakened troop morale and prevented the Japanese invaders from going into Cholla Province.

The Brown Water Battles

"Leadership, morale, training, physical and mental conditioning, will power, and endurance are the most important elements in warfare. ... *men matter most.*"
Hughes, *Fleet Tactics*¹³⁶

Yi Dynasty Korea had been reduced, practically overnight, to a country with a ruined army, its ruler in flight to its northern distant border, its great fortresses reduced and occupied, its populace running from Scylla onto Charybdis. Its most effective measures on land being guerrilla force attacks.

The Japanese armies had lumbered north through Korea like an unstoppable juggernaut with its superior firepower and disciplined, trained and well-led forces. The nature, however, of the type of war they waged and the speed of their advance became a logistical nightmare for its commissaries and armorers. Forage gradually became more difficult as there was less available and the guerrilla movement and the remnants of the government forces made it more difficult and dangerous to obtain. There were constant requests back to Hideyoshi for supplies which generally fell on deaf ears. Although he did send large shipments on two occasions, one was taken from the Japanese on land and the other at sea by the Koreans.

When the Japanese fleet sailed into Pusan at the start of the invasion, the Korean fleets were stationed as follows: the fleet of Kyongsang Province Admiral of the Left, Pak Hong, was at

Tongnae; the fleet of Kyongsang Province Admiral of the Right, Won Kyun, was at its base on Koje Island; the fleet of Cholla Province of the Left, Yi Sunshin, was at its base in Yosu; and the fleet of Cholla Province Admiral of the Right, Yi Okki, was at its base on Haenam Island. Admiral Yi Sunshin was in his base headquarters late in the evening of the day of the invasion when he received a message from Won Kyun informing him that the Japanese had invaded, having sailed into Pusanp'o with over three hundred ships.¹³⁷

At this time the Japanese navy led by Admirals Kuki Yoshitaka, the fleet commander; Wakizaka Yasuharu; Kato Yoshiaki; and Todo Takatora had reached the sea areas of Pusan and Ungch'on. Admiral Won Kyun took to flight almost immediately and over the course of ten days or so he went to Haenam Island, Kadok Island and then to Kosong. Won Kyun lost all but three of the 73 ships under his command and most of his men by this time, several accounts indicate that he may have scuttled his ships deliberately in fear of the Japanese.¹³⁸ He was finally prevailed upon by one of his subordinates to request help from Admiral Yi Sunshin. At the time, it was contrary to regulations to mobilize troops from one command to another without orders from above and there were no such orders.

Admiral
Yi Sunshin

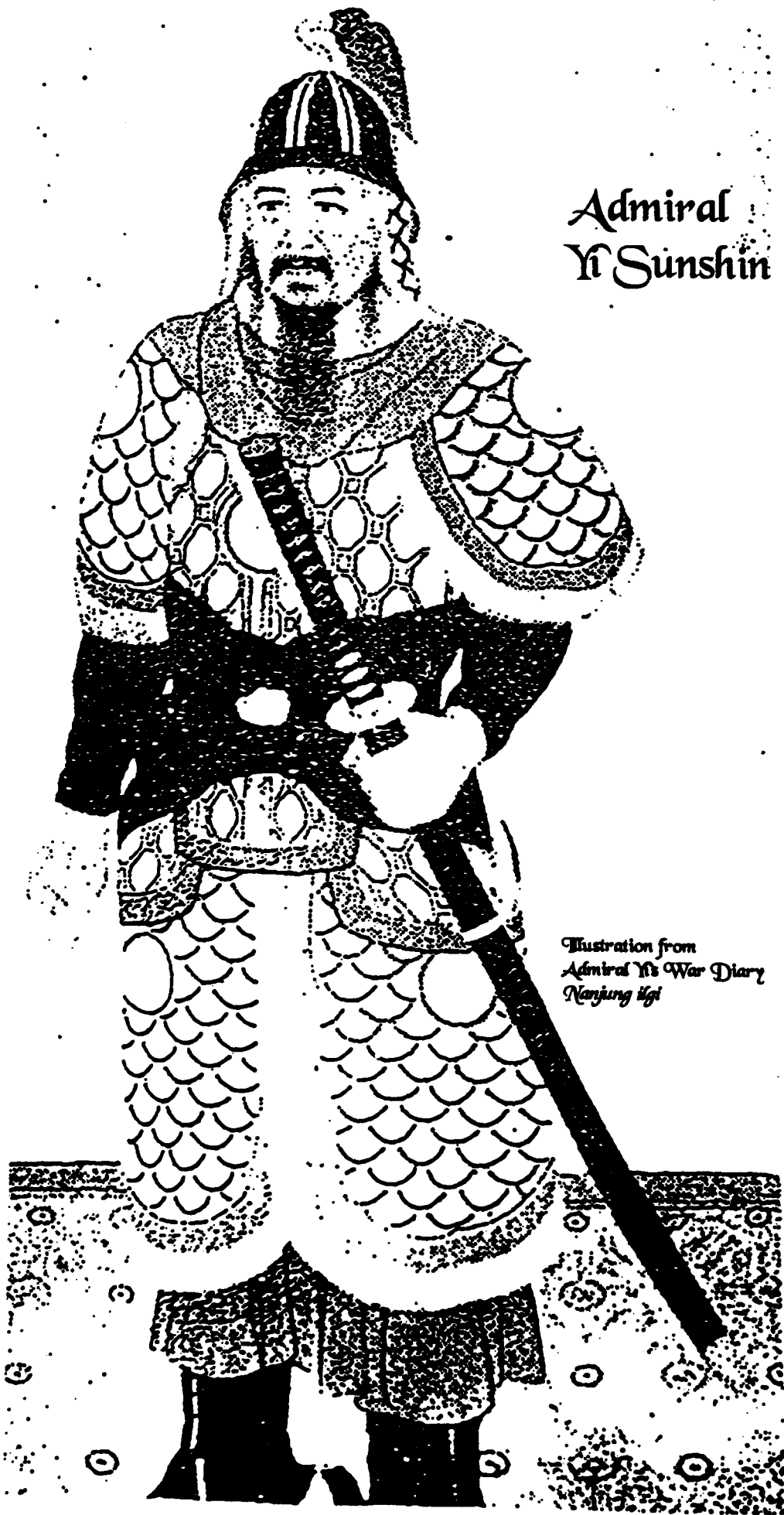


Illustration from
Admiral Yi's War Diary
Nanjung ilgi

Yi Sunshin's First Campaign of 1592

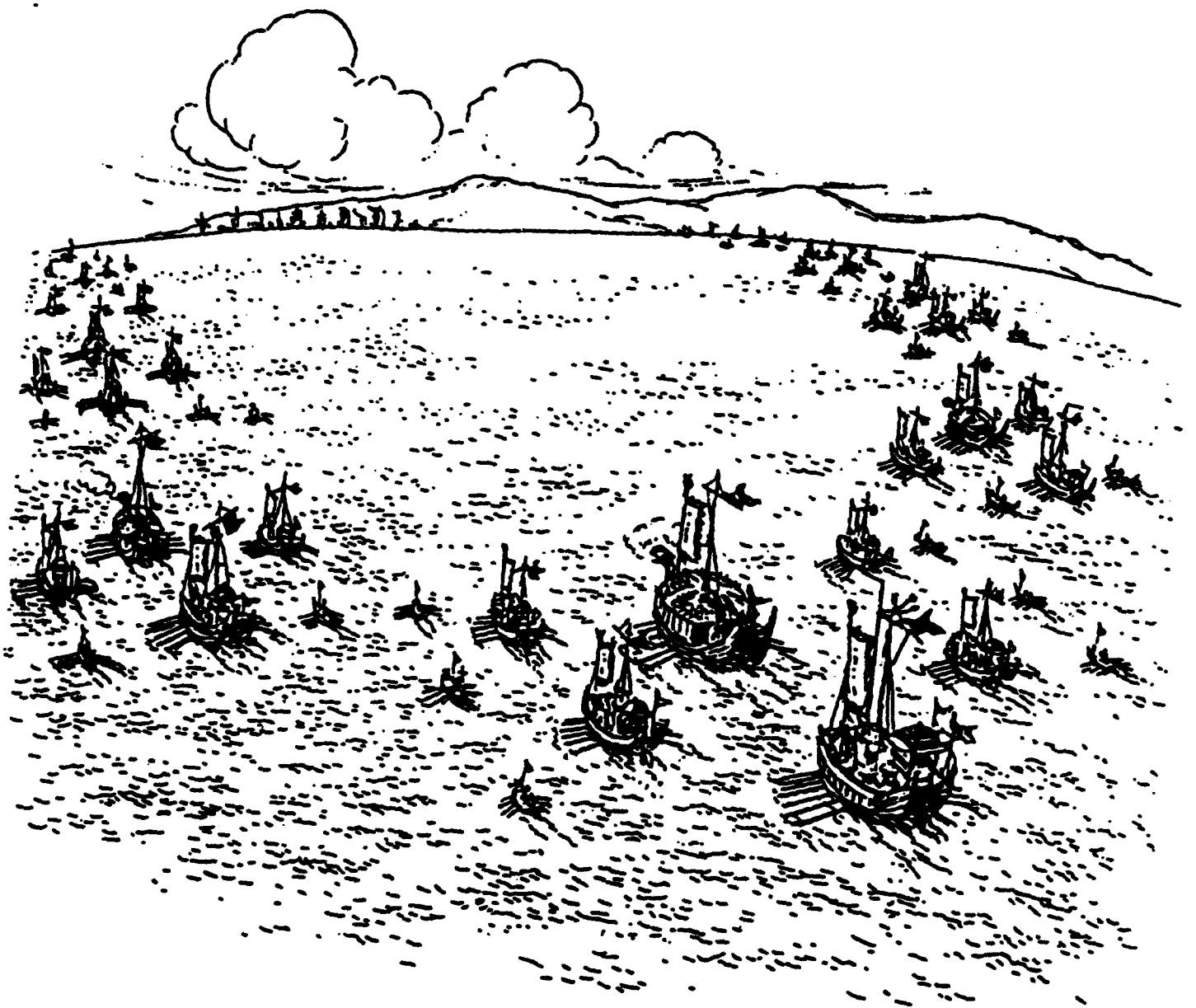
"The tactical maxim of all naval battles is Attack effectively first."

Hughes, *Fleet Tactics*¹³⁹

On 10 June 1592 Yi Sunshin had 24 ships under his command at Yosu. He sent to all the stations under his command and gathered in all the warships to his base at Yosu. His fleet totaled 91 warships (he had already sent one ship to Won Kyun). Yi Sunshin sailed out of Yosu on 13 June 1592 with this combined fleet of 91 ships. (In the land war, the capital, Seoul, was falling at this time.)

The Sea Battle of Okp'o

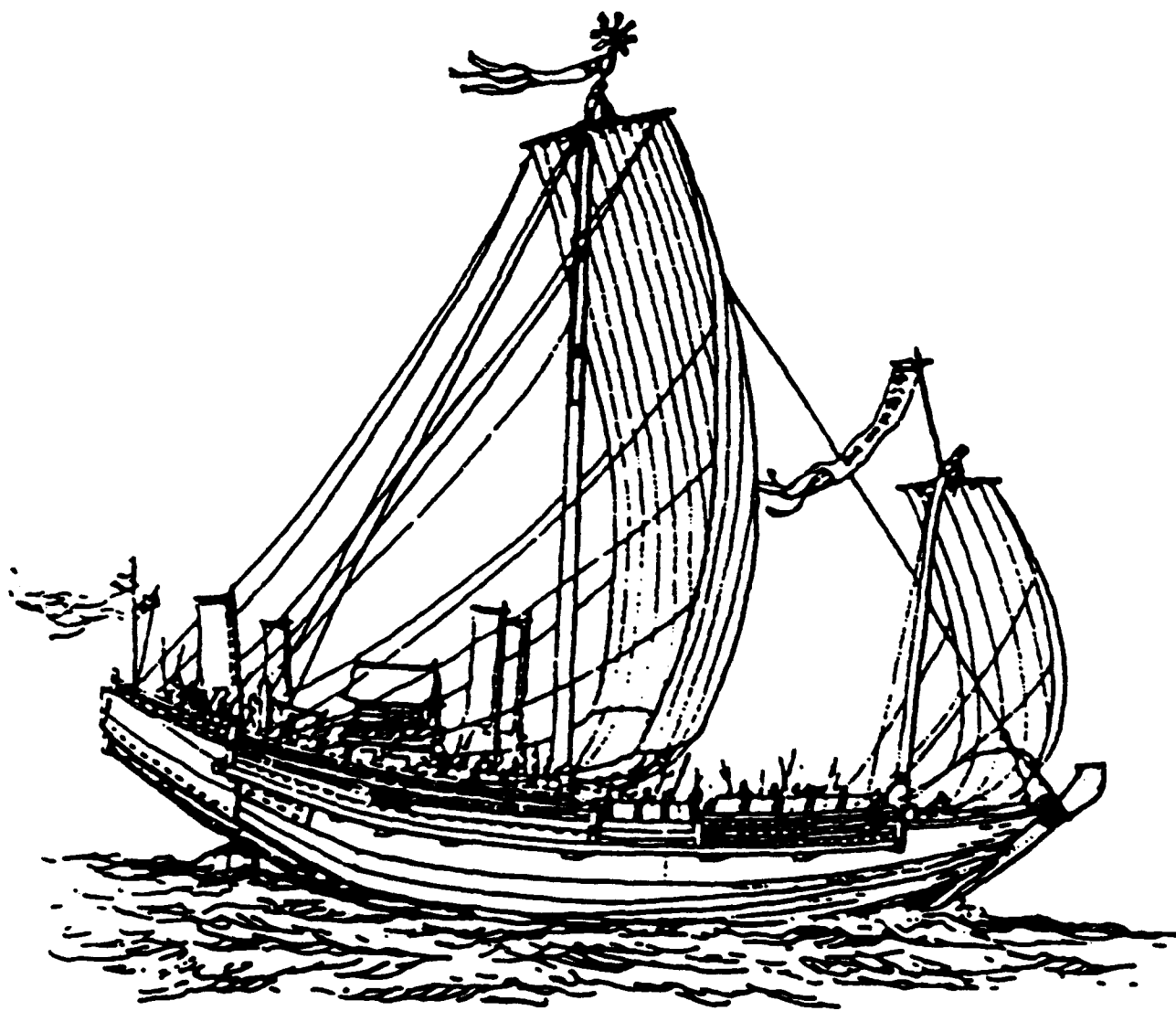
Yi's fleet sailed out of Yosu, passing south of Namhae Island and up into the straits to the west of Koje. It appears that the main force of the Japanese fleet was cruising somewhere to the north of the main sea lanes of communication, not far from the Korean coast with two squadrons posted to the west as scouts. A small scout group was off Noryang about half way between the main fleet and the outlying scouting force which was stationed at Okp'o about 30 miles from the main fleet.¹⁴⁰ While scouting for enemy ships early on the morning of the 16th of June, Yi's force discovered 50 or more enemy ships (the outer scouting force) anchored at Okp'o on the east coast of Koje Island. Admiral Yi's fleet immediately swooped in and attacked them. The Japanese put



*Korean Fleet Arrayed in the 'Crane's Wing' Formation
Commanded by Admiral Yi's Turtle Boat Flagship*

Drawing by Y.H. Kim in Hagerman, "Lord of the Turtle Boats"

Artist's Conception of a Japanese Man-of-War



Japanese Commanders Sat in the Covered Tower on Deck During Combat
and Directed Operations

Drawing by Y.H. Kyn in Hagerman, "Lord of the Turtle Boats"

Model of a Japanese Naval Vessel Used in the Invasion of Korea

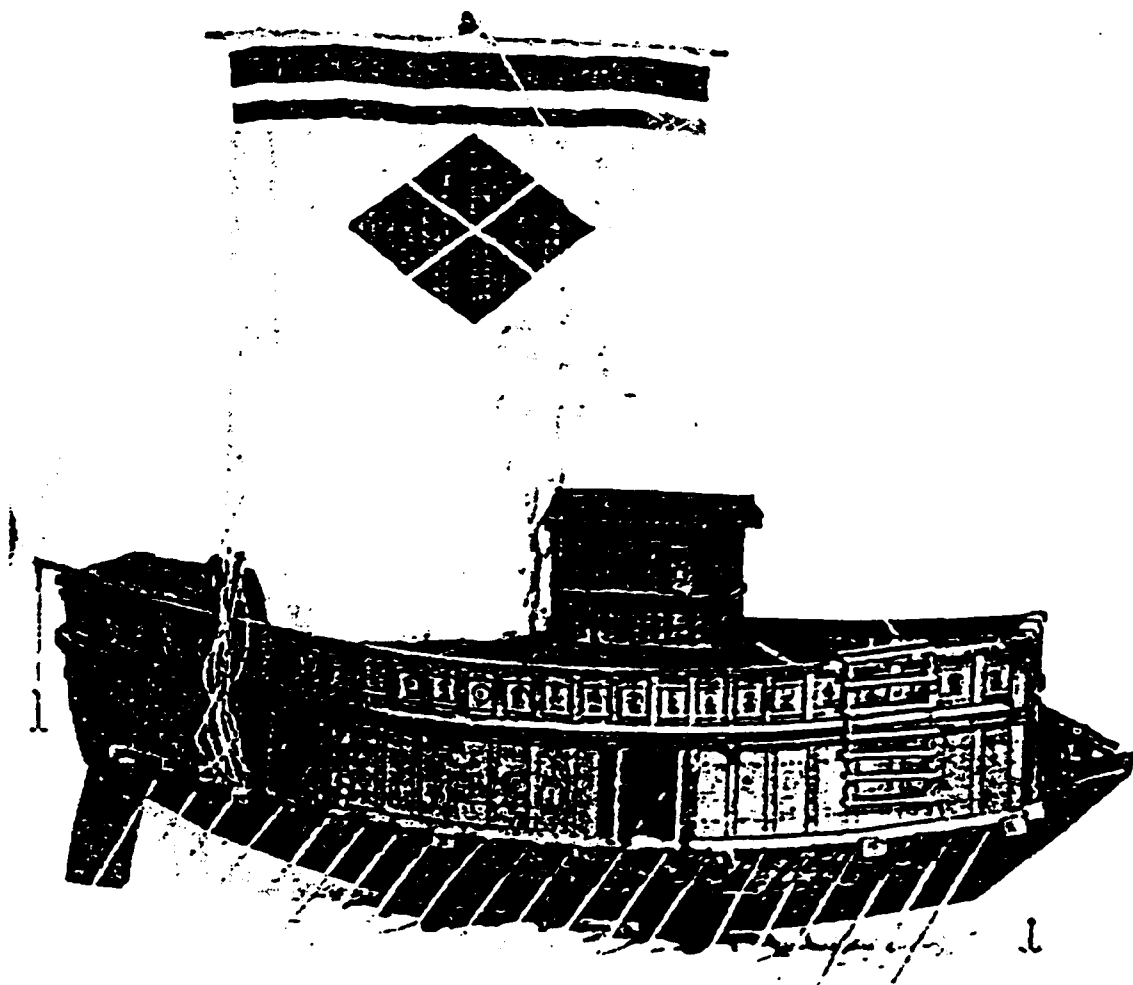
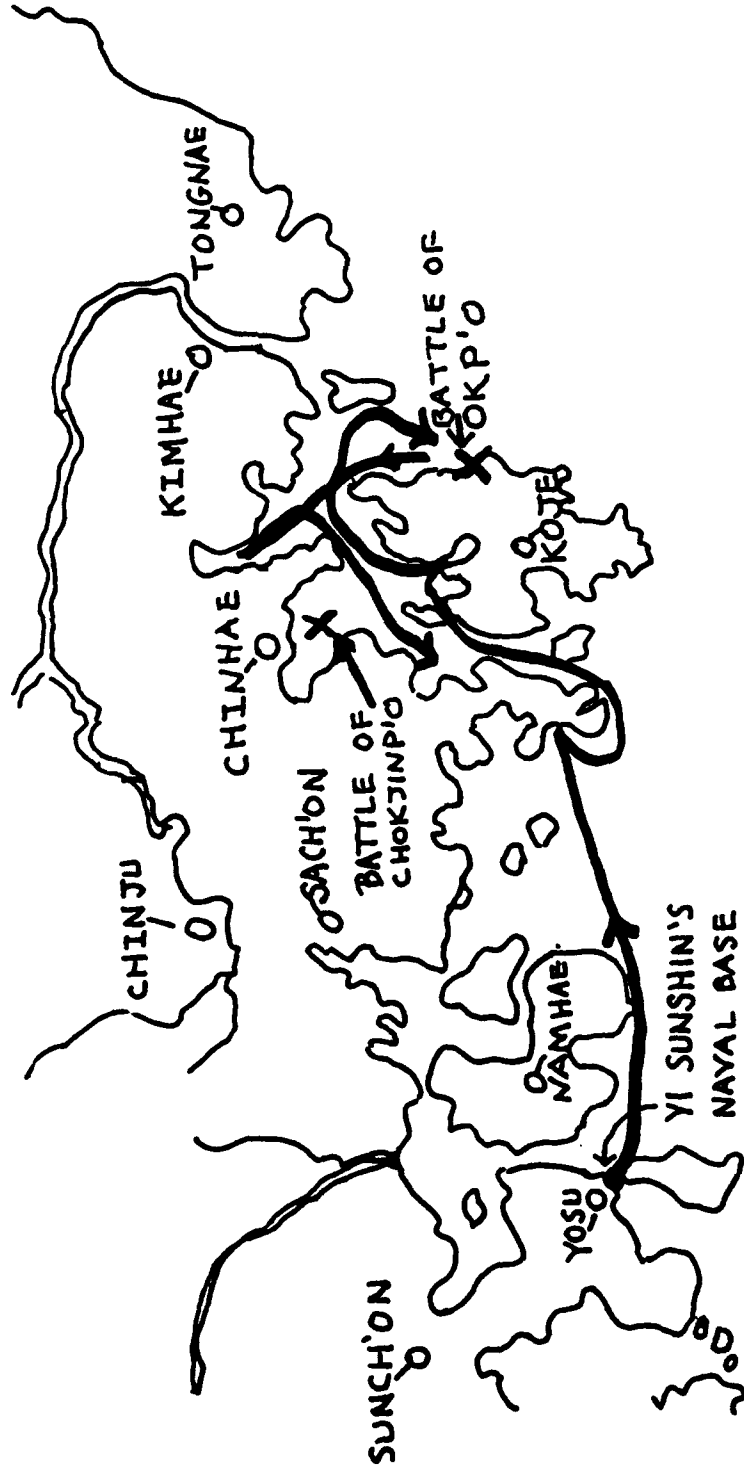


Illustration from *Nihon no rekishi*, Vol. 9, *Tenka toitsu*

Admiral Yi Sunshin's First Campaign of 1592

Yi's Flotilla Departed Base at Yosŭ on 13 June 1592.
Early on 17 June Yi Found over 50 Enemy Ships Anchored at Okp'o.
Yi's Flotilla Destroyed 11 Large Ships, 8 Medium Ships and 7 Others at Okp'o.
The Afternoon of 17 June Yi Inflicted Damage on 5 Large Ships at Uigoch'on.



Early on the Morning of the 17th, Yi's Flotilla Found 13 Enemy Ships
Anchored at Chokjinp'o and Sank 9 Large and 2 Medium Ships.
They Returned to Base on 18 June 1592 for Rest and Replenishment.

up a courageous battle, but the Koreans maneuvered intelligently to prevent boarding and ravaged the Japanese fleet with fire arrows.¹⁴¹ Yi had the advantage of having the wind at his back which aided his sailing and the flight of his fire arrows.¹⁴² The Koreans destroyed 11 large ships, eight medium ships and seven small ships in this the first major naval action of the war.

The Sea Battle of Chokjinp'o

On the afternoon of the 16th, after the Battle at Okp'o, they destroyed five enemy ships passing by Happ'o (modern Masan) near Ungch'on. Early on the morning of the 18th, they learned of 13 enemy ships at Chokjinp'o near Kosong and made a surprise attack on them, destroying nine large ships and two medium ships. Yi then took his fleet back to Yosu to resupply, rest and refit.

This ended Yi Sunshin's first campaign against the Japanese navy and convoys. He had destroyed 37 ships, while suffering only one man wounded, and sent shock waves through the confident and complacent Japanese invasion force and had begun to make a name for himself with the enemy.

Admiral Yi Sunshin's Second Campaign of 1592

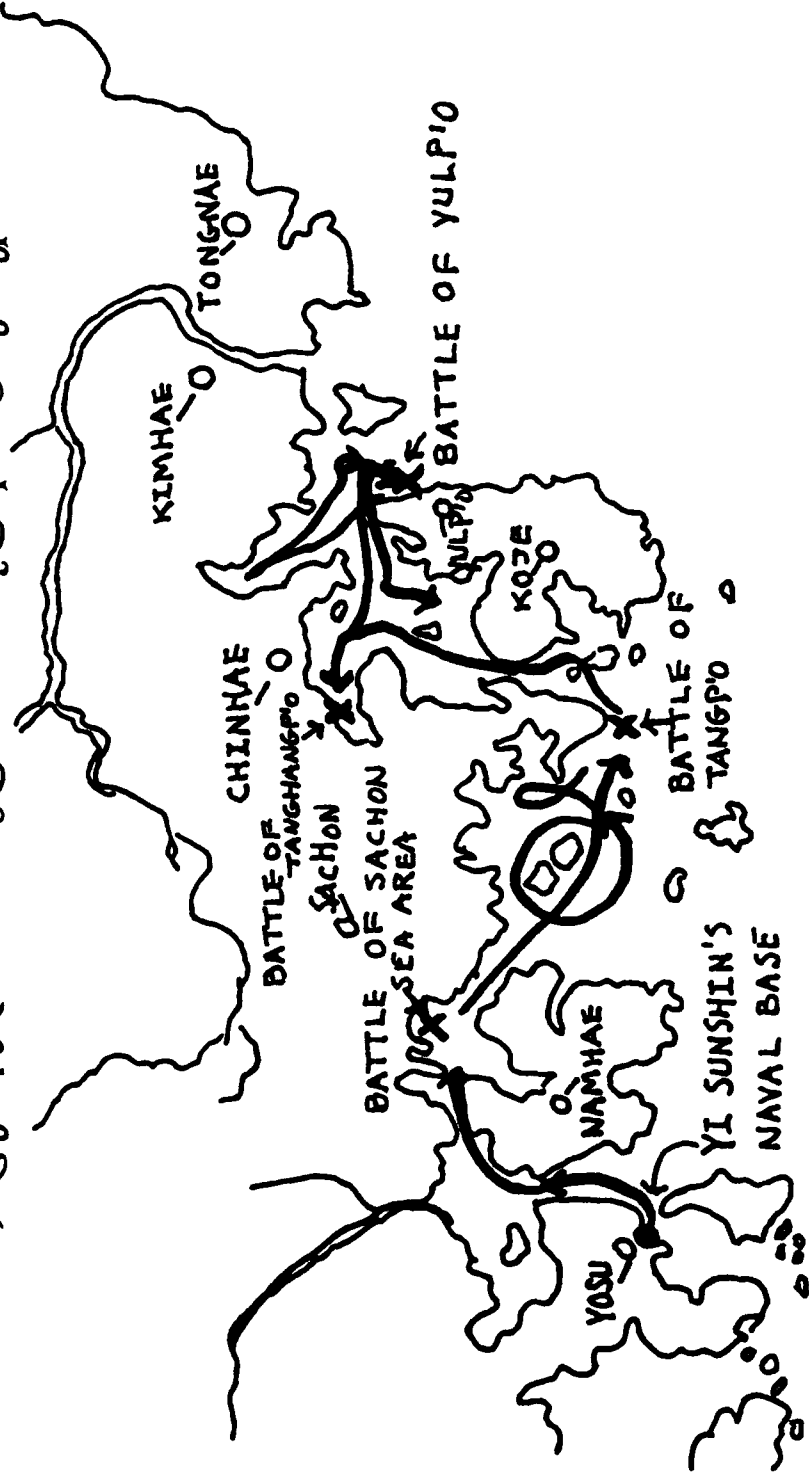
Admiral Yi and his staff had determined to begin their second campaign 11 July 1592 and had agreed to join with Cholla Province Admiral of the Right, Yi Okki, and Kyongsang Province Admiral of the Right, Won Kyun, in the sea off Yosu; however, due to Japanese army amphibious operations as far as Sach'on and Kon'yang, Yi's base at Yosu was threatened and Won Kyun was forced to move to Noryang. Admiral changed his plan and sailed with the 23 ships he had immediately at hand at Yosu on 8 July 1592. This time his flotilla included turtle ships for the first time. Although they had been under construction, weren't completed until after the first campaign.

The Sea Battle of Sach'on

Admiral Yi headed first to Noryang. He was joined at Hadong by Won Kyun and his three ships. When they reached on Sach'on on July 8th (while the Japanese land forces were battling at the Imjin River), they found one enemy ship and destroyed it. They then discovered 12 large enemy ships under Wakizaka Yasuharu at the Sach'on wharf. The Japanese ships were too close in for the Korean ships to battle effectively, so Admiral Yi and his fleet pretended to turn heel and flee. The Japanese gave chase and then the Koreans turned back on them again swiftly with the turtle ships in the van. Wakizaka himself jumped up on the

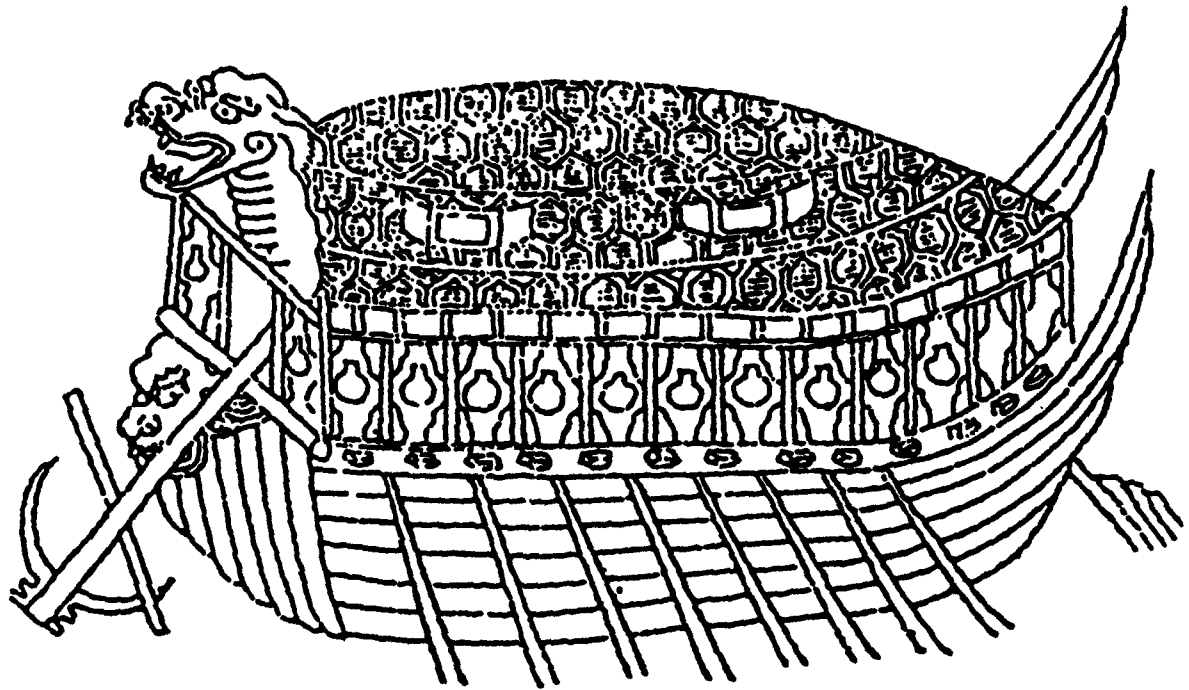
Admiral Yi Sunshin's Second Campaign of 1592

Yi's Fleet Departed Base at Yosu on 6 July 1592. Early on the 7th Yi Sank 12 Large Enemy Ships at Sach'on. On the 9th They Sank 9 Large and 12 Medium Enemy Ships at Tangp'o. Afternoon on 17 June Yi Damaged 5 Large Ships at Ungch'on. On the 12th Yi's Fleet, Led by Turtle Boats, With 25 Additional Ships, Sank 9 Large, 4 Medium and 13 Small Enemy Ships at Tanghangp'o.



On July 14th They Pursued and Ultimately Sank 3 Enemy Ships at Yulp'o They Then Returned to Base on 17 July 1592 for Rest and Replenishment.

全羅左水營艦船



Cholla Chwasuyong Type Turtle Boat
Admiral Yi's Flagship

Illustration from the *Collected Works of Admiral Yi Sunsin (Yi Olgungong almanac)*

gunwales of his ship and attacked the turtle ship with a pronged spear, prying up some planking with it. Admiral Yi had the turtle ships loose a volley of fire arrows on the Japanese fleet.¹⁴³ As the blaze roared up, the turtle boats parted left and right to let Won Kyun's squadron in to attack. Admiral Yi reportedly had been wounded in the shoulder during this battle by a musket ball, but only bared his shoulder at the end of the engagement and ordered it to be cut out.¹⁴⁴ They destroyed all twelve of the enemy ships although Wakizaka survived.

The Sea Battle of Tangp'o

Admiral rested his fleet at Saryang on the ninth. Early on the morning of the tenth Admiral Yi was notified that an enemy fleet was at Tangp'o. He had his fleet sail immediately and they came upon 9 large and 12 medium enemy ships. Admiral Yi's turtle ship led the attack and moved straight in upon an enemy tower-ship, the flag ship of Kurushima Michiyuki, commander of this flotilla, rammed it and sent it to the deep, and his fleet destroyed all the remainder in the Battle of Tangp'o. Kurushima effected a landing on an island and committed *harakiri*¹⁴⁵.

Yi then received intelligence that 20 large enemy ships and many small vessels were off Koje Island. He sailed to attack them immediately; however, when they were five *li* off the Japanese discovered them and took flight.

The Sea Battle of Tanghangp'o

On July 11th he had reports that this fleet was off Ch'u Island, but he couldn't find them. On the 12th Admiral Yi's fleet was joined by the fleet of Cholla Province Admiral of the Right, Yi Okki, bringing their combined strength to 51 warships. The result of scouting deep into the bay at Tanghangp'o on the 13th was that nine large, four medium and 13 small enemy ships were discovered at anchor. Once again the turtle ship took the lead and the fleet attacked and destroyed all 26 enemy ships in the Battle of Tanghangp'o. On the 14th outside the mouth of Tanghangp'o Bay they destroyed one more enemy ship.

The Sea Battle of Yulp'o

Early in the morning on the 15th they stopped at Chung Island off Ungch'on. They burned a Japanese ship attempting to flee from the mouth of Tanghangp'o Bay and, then, in the afternoon they caught five large and two medium enemy ships heading for Pusan, pursued them as far as Yulp'o on Koje Island and destroyed two large ships and one medium ship in the Battle of Yulp'o. Thereafter they scouted Kadok, Ch'onsong, and as far as Mol'undae searching for enemy ships, but found none. Throughout the 16th and 17th they searched Ch'angwon, Masanp'o, Angolp'o, Chep'o, Ungch'on and Ch'onsong. On the 18th they decided that all the enemy ships must have gathered in Pusanp'o

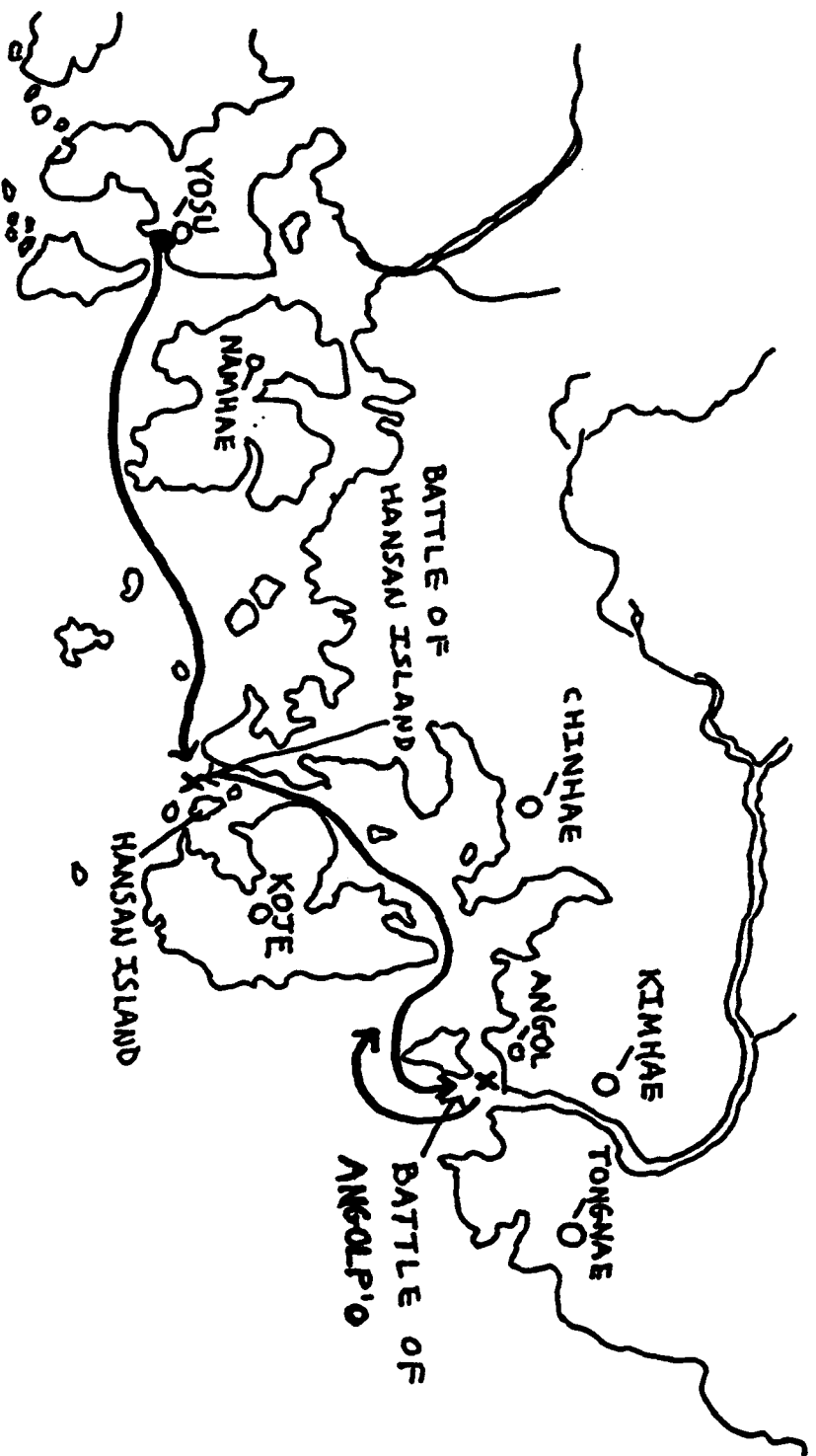
(the Japanese realized that neither personal valor nor daring would counter Yi and pulled its fleet in to the shelter of Pusan where their massive concentration should protect them¹⁴⁶) and went their separate ways to return to base, rest, resupply and refit.

In his second campaign Admiral Yi's fleet destroyed or captured 72 enemy ships while suffering eleven men killed and 26 wounded. He had already severely constricted the enemy's logistical arteries and had demonstrated that Korea had tremendous striking power in the littoral. He thus sent notice to the Japanese that command of Korea's brown water was his.

Admiral Yi Sunshin's Third Campaign of 1592

About a month after his second campaign, Admiral Yi led his fleet out of Yosu again on 12 August 1592. In the interim, Japanese ships had been very active off Kyongsang Province. From 10 to 30 of their ships would appear and later vanish off Kadok, Koje, etc. Their land forces were active around Kumsan. Wakizaka Yasuji had been sent to the Ungch'on area with 70 or so ships to provide a screen for the Japanese maritime operations to the east. Then, at Hideyoshi's order, on 31 July 1592, Kuki Yoshitaka was sent with another 40 or so ships to establish a second fleet for defense against Korean attacks amongst the nooks and crannies of Korea's southern coastline. Similarly, Kato

Yasuda sailed with over 90 ships from his base at Yosui on 12 August 1592. Early on 14 August, he discovered an enemy flotilla of over 70 ships commanded by Wakizaka Yasuji. Yasuda caught them at Hansan Island and sank or captured 7 tower-command ships, 28 large ships, 17 medium ships and 7 small ships.



Yasuda's Third Campaign of 1592

Yoshiaki was sent with a third fleet also at Hideyoshi's express order.

Yi Sunshin sailed with Cholla Province Admiral of the Right, Yi Okki. They had a combined fleet of over 90 ships. They met up with Kyongsang Province Admiral of the Right, Won Kyun, at Noryang off Haenam Island and conducted a combat exercise there. They then went to Ch'angshin Island and anchored.

The Sea Battle of Hansan Island

They reached Tangp'o on the 13th and received intelligence that seventy plus enemy ships were at anchor off Kyonnaeryang on Koje Island. Very early on the morning of the 14th they all rushed up to Kyonnaeryang and discovered a great fleet of 36 large ships, 24 medium ships and 13 small ships. They were spotted, likewise, by two scouting ships which rushed back in to the anchorage. The entrance to the area where the Japanese ships were moored was narrow and the Japanese forces might easily escape to land. So Admiral Yi set to lure them out onto the high sea where the superior maneuverability of the Korea craft would be an advantage and there would be no easy escape from a doomed ship.

Admiral Yi sent six ships into the anchorage to attack and stir up the Japanese fleet. They went for Fleet Admiral Wakizaka

Yasuharu's ship and he rose to the bait. Wakizaka came charging out of the sheltered bay, his fleet straggling after him, all heading into the Korean fleet waiting off Hansan Island arrayed in the "crane wing formation." (The "crane wing formation" described a line abreast formation with wings on the left and right in advance of the main body). As the Japanese approached, the Korean ships let loose a withering volley of cannonade and fire arrows from both "wings" and as the first several Japanese ships burst into flame, the fleet tried to turn all at once and flee. The faster Korean ships, however, turned the wings and began to enclose the floundering Japanese ships from both sides in a closing circle like purse seine.

At one point Wakizaka and Kuki both nearly took the same Korean ship captive when each had thrown grappling hooks on her; however, Wakizaka, ever competitive, ordered his men to cut Kuki's rope. While Wakizaka and Kuki raged at one another, the Korean ship escaped.¹⁴⁷

The Koreans burned, rammed or captured seven tower-command ships, 28 large ships, 17 medium ships and 7 small ships. Innumerable Japanese were killed by the Koreans or drowned. About 14 or so Japanese ships escaped and about 400 of the Japanese troops scrambled onto Hansan Island where they survived eating whatever grew wild on the island. They eventually were able to escape to the mainland on rafts made from wreckage when

Won Kyun who was left to ferret them out heard a rumor that a Japanese flotilla was in the area and he evacuated the area post haste.¹⁴⁸

Wakizaka Yasuharu, the commander of this fleet, and Kuki Yoshitaka fled on fast ships after the battle was lost, Wakizaka all the way to Kimhae. The Koreans followed the fleeing ships quite a distance, firing on them the whole time. The mast of Kuki's ship was shot away.¹⁴⁹ This victory is considered one of the three great Korean victories in this war against the Japanese invaders.

Yi Sunshin's fleet anchored temporarily at Kyonnaeryang. On the 15th, on his way to look for more enemy ships, Admiral Yi sailed for Kadok Island, but he then received intelligence that there were over forty enemy ships in the vicinity of Angolp'o at Ungch'on. It was already dusk and because there was a head wind, he anchored for the night at Onch'on Island off Koje.

The Sea Battle of Angolp'o

The fleet was divided into three flotillas with Admiral Yi Okki's flotilla taking up station on the sea outside Angolp'o, Admiral Yi Sunshin's flotilla leading the van of the attack, and Admiral Won Kyun's flotilla following behind Yi Sunshin's. The Japanese had 21 large ships, including some large transports with

two and three decks with cabins, 15 medium ships and six small transport junks, all under the command of Kuki Yoshitaka, moored at Angolp'o. As the passage there was narrow and shallow, Yi Sunshin tried three times to lure the enemy ships out after him, but, having learned their lesson, they did not rise to the bait. Thereupon, Admiral Yi had several squadron leaders enter alternately, fire salvos of cannon and withdraw. They attacked with cannon continuously. Moreover, Admiral Yi Okki, whose flotilla had been waiting for an opportunity, raced in and set the whole enemy fleet on fire. The Koreans then withdrew about one *li* (one third of a mile) and spent the night. At dawn they swooped in and slaughtered the remaining Japanese troops that had fled to the shore.

The Korean fleet reached Hansan Island on the 18th and assigned Won Kyun the task of searching for enemy troops which had fled to the shore from the Sea Battle of Hansan Island. Yi Sunshin then returned to Yosu on the 19th, having captured or destroyed over 100 enemy ships and taken over 250 Japanese heads. (As in Europe, enemy vessels captured earned money for the officers and crews which took the prize. In the Far East there also was a bounty for each enemy head taken.) The Koreans lost 19 men and suffered over 100 wounded. By virtue of this action the Koreans had established command of the seas along the southern coast between Angolp'o and Hansan Island. This foiled Hideyoshi's plans to move his reserves by sea around the west

coast of Korea to support Konishi at P'yongyang and had already cost the Japanese considerable amounts of materiel and manpower.

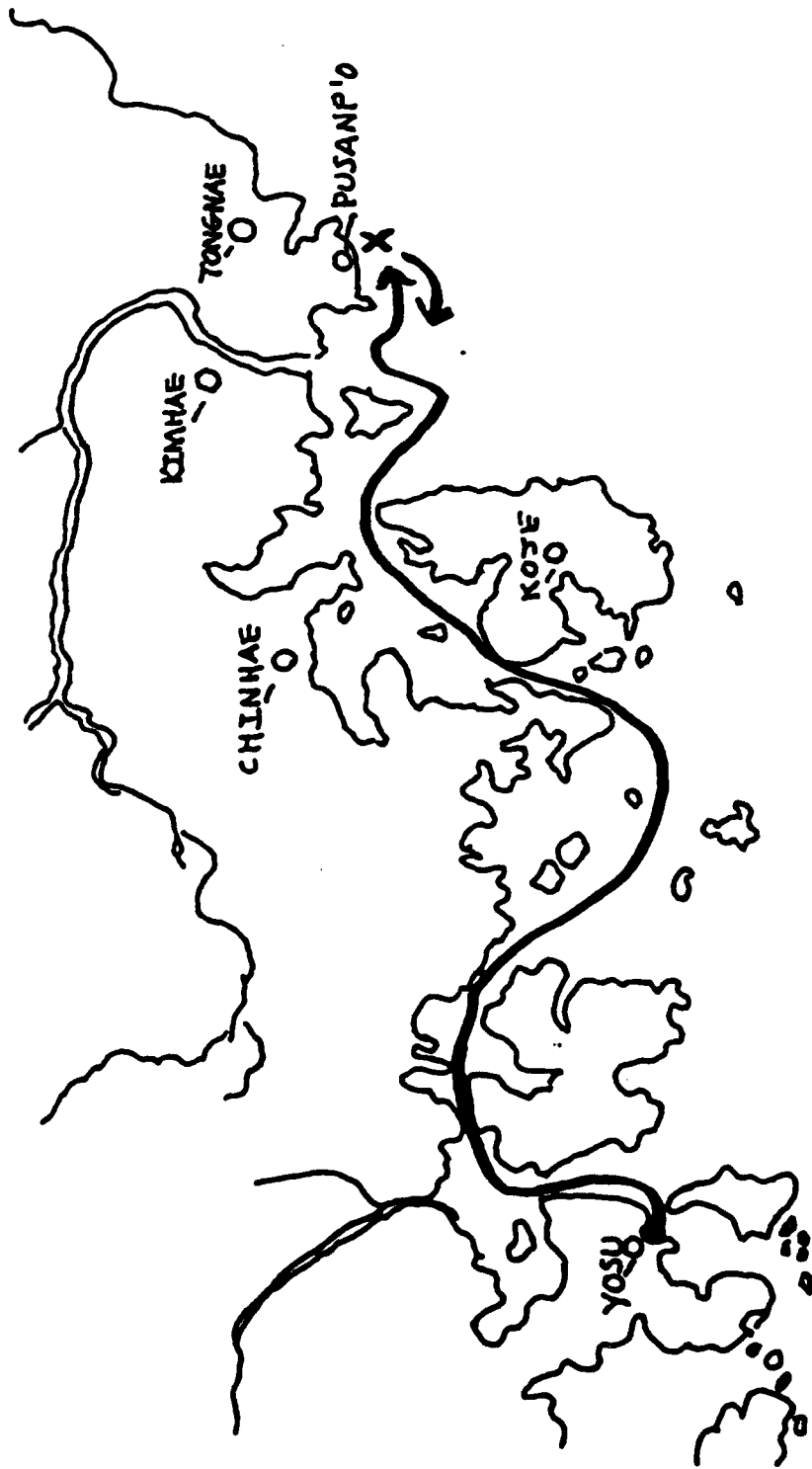
Admiral Yi Sunshin's Fourth Campaign of 1592

About 40 days after his last campaign, Yi Sunshin's fleet sailed on their fourth campaign of the year on 29 September 1592. Admiral Yi knew that by virtue of the great battles which they won at Hansan Island and at Angolp'o they had cut off Japanese operations anywhere west of Kadok Island and that the Japanese navy was confined to the Pusanp'o area. He planned to employ amphibious operations against them there. He had the Cholla Province Left and Right fleets with 74 warships and 18 other ships. He conducted a massive exercise at sea with the entire fleet and worked on a plan he had discussed previously with General Kim Chol, Kyongsang Province Army Commander of the Right for a coordinated land and sea attack on Pusan in conjunction with the General Kim's forces.

Yi spent the night moored at Kwan'ump'o at Namhae on 29 September 1592. On the 30th he joined up with the fleet of Admiral Yi Okki at Saryang and they spent that night at Tangp'o. They scouted the first three days of October. Early in the morning on the fourth, Admiral Yi brought the whole fleet into the sea area in front of the mouth of the Naktong River. Six Japanese ships ran from Changrinp'o toward Yangsan and were

Yi Sunshin's Fourth Campaign of 1592

On 5 October 1592 Yi's combined fleet discovered over 470 enemy ships anchored together. The turtle ships led the fleet and attacked. Ultimately over 100 enemy ships were destroyed in the Sea Battle of Pusanp'o.



pursued until they got into water too shallow for Yi's larger draft ships.

The Sea Battle of Pusanp'o

Admiral Yi decided on an all out attack on Pusanp'o, the base of the enemy navy, for the 5th of October 1592. At dawn on the 5th, the entire fleet departed from the north coast of Kadok Island, discovered five enemy battleships in the sea area in front of Mol'undae; eight, at Tadaep'o; nine at Sop'yongp'o; and two at Cholyong Island, in each case moored, tied together. The Koreans charged in on them; rammed and burned them; and destroyed them all. Then they scouted Pusanp'o and determined that there were over 470 Japanese ships anchored together on the east side of the harbor. The Korean fleet rushed upon them with the turtle ships in the van. The Japanese commanders ordered most of the troops ashore as the Koreans moved in. The turtle ships attacked and set ablaze four ships and then the bulk of the Korean fleet came in behind them attacking enemy ships amidst a hail of musket fire from the Japanese troops on the shore. The Japanese fleet had been anchored in three different parts of the harbor and musket fire came randomly from several directions constantly throughout the battle. At the end of the day and of the battle, over 100 enemy ships had been destroyed. Admiral Yi had intended to put forces ashore and join in the land attack against the Japanese troops, but the Korean land forces never

materialized¹⁵⁰ and, as the Japanese had a strong calvary at hand, he withdrew to Kadok Island at the end of the day for a temporary anchorage. On the next day he returned to his base at Yosu.

Admiral Yi lost six men in the battle including Naval Sub-commander Chong Un who had been the leader of his strike force.

"This was the great Korean admiral's crowning exploit. In the short space of six weeks he had achieved a series of successes unsurpassed in the whole annals of maritime war, destroying the enemy's battle-fleets, cutting his lines of communication, sweeping up his convoys, imperilling the situation of his victorious armies in the field, and bringing his most ambitious schemes to utter ruin." Vice-Admiral George Ballard¹⁵¹

Changing Tides on Land

A Peace of Deception

Konishi Yukinaga and Shen Weiching apparently saw eye-to-eye on the need to end the conflict and trusted each other. There has been considerable history written criticizing both for having taken too much authority into their own hands even to the point of deceiving their superiors in order to make a peace work out. The evidence for this is, however, shaky and may be attributable to the search for scapegoats. Konishi, especially, makes for a good one having been a Christian and the target for relentless undercutting by Kato Kiyomasa, the militant Buddhist and anti-

Christian activist. Nevertheless, it does appear that Konishi implicitly trusted the sincerity of the Chinese negotiator and was waiting, unsuspecting, for Shen's return with the Ming envoy and hostage.

After Konishi took P'yongyang, he took measures to secure it. These included establishing a chain of fortifications all along his line of communications to Seoul. Each of these forts was about a day's march apart.¹⁵² Konishi was well aware that logistics was a key element for effectiveness having penetrated so deeply into hostile territory.

The Japanese troops in P'yongyang were elated over their string of victories. Konishi expected orders any day to march on China and sent word to Pusan to have the fleet sail around the west coast of Korea with the reserves and supplies. Slowly, inexorably, however, the jubilation which Konishi and his victorious blitzkrieg troopers must have felt must have ebbed as the anticipated supplies and reinforcements for the push northward into China failed to materialize. When word finally reached P'yongyang of the reverses on the littoral which the Japanese continued to suffer, morale must have plunged along with the temperature of the cold north Korean winter. (The Japanese troops were largely drawn from Kyushu with its very mild winters.) The harsh realities of the ever increasing scarcity of provisions, coupled with disease (the scourge of war), cold and

homesickness made this campaign so entirely different from any which the veterans of Hideyoshi's army had experienced before.

The Korean resistance and guerrilla efforts were increasing and threatening the southern reaches of Konishi's lines of communication. The sea lanes were already closed completely. Ishida Mitsunari and the staff in Seoul should have issued orders to Kato to withdraw his troops from Hamgyong Province before the Chinese returned with a larger army due to the situation in Kyongsang Province, the gateway to the Japanese for both troops and supplies, but somehow failed to do so.¹⁵³

The Japanese land forces were beginning to suffer setbacks and reverses--Kuroda Nagamasa failed in his attempts to capture a fortress, the forces of Hosokawa Tadaoki under Mori Terumoto met disaster at the siege of Chinju.¹⁵⁴ Japanese forces became more and more confined to their fortresses as though they were prisons. Areas that they thought had been subjugated continued to turn on them as soon as attention was diverted elsewhere. The prospect of an honorably negotiated peace probably began to look very attractive to the cold and hungry Japanese in P'yongyang who had to be worried about the sufficiency of their stores of gunpowder and musket balls.

Japanese Retreat from P'yongyang

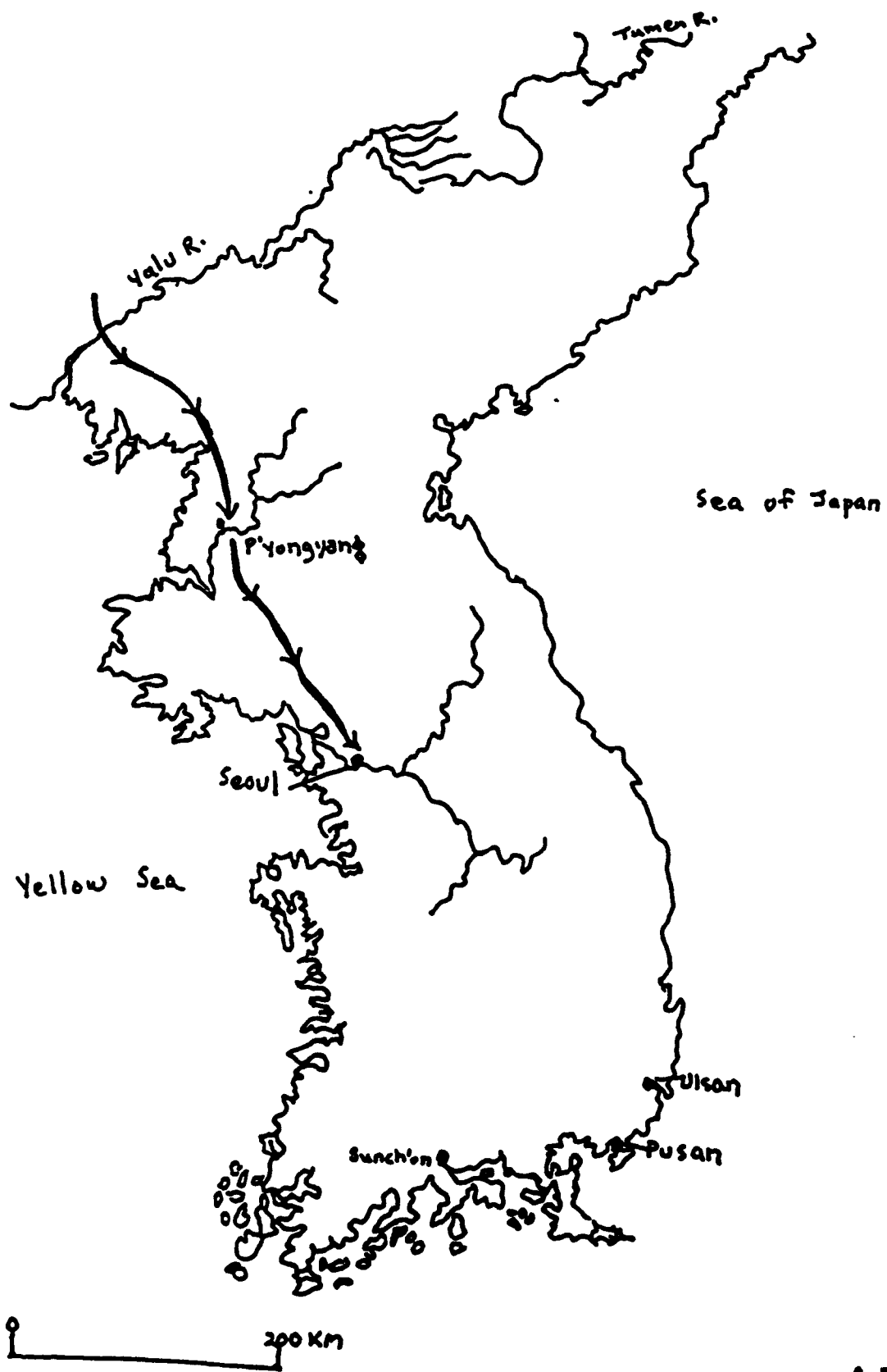
"This was the beginning of a land retreat consequent upon defeat at sea."

Ballard, *The Influence of the Sea on the Political History of Japan*¹⁵⁵

Chinese General Li Jusung on his march toward P'yongyang from the Yalu was met by Korean Prime Minister Yu Songryong at Anju. Here Yu provided General Li with maps and the latest intelligence. General Li marked the routes in red ink on the map for the various division of his army to take and ordered one of his generals to ride on ahead and inform the Japanese to prepare for the arrival of the Imperial envoy and hostages.¹⁵⁶ The Japanese, in unsuspecting compliance, sent a delegation to Sun'an to greet the Chinese delegation only to find an army of considerable proportions coming, in all probability, to unseat them from their cold perches in P'yongyang. The Chinese attacked and killed most of this Japanese delegation, but three survived and got back to warn the garrison.

Konishi was now faced with a bitter decision. He was about to be confronted by a fresh army of Chinese regulars of at least twice his strength of around 20,000. He could fortify and defend or he could flee. Konishi chose to fight. He arranged his musketeers and prepared against the siege machinery. When General Li's forces arrived, they fired artillery and tried to rush the breastworks, walls and gates, but were beaten back again and again under the assault of heavy musket fire, boiling water

Route of Chinese Counterattack 1593



ER

and rocks thrown down from the walls. General Li then offered a reward of 50 ounces of silver to the first of his men to obtain the top of one of the walls and the Chinese troops redoubled their efforts.¹⁵⁷ Fighting seesawed for two days until finally the Chinese launched a furious assault all up and down the lines. The Japanese musketeers took a terrible toll on the attackers, but, eventually, sheer numbers forced the Japanese marksmen to retreat from their breastworks and back behind the walls of the city. The Japanese had lost over 2,285 men, 45,002 weapons and 1,051 Korean prisoners in the defense by this point.¹⁵⁸ That night General Li ordered his men back to camp to feed and rest for the next battle.

In the dark of the bitter cold night, Konishi led the survivors of his garrison out of the Taedong Gate of the walled city. (The Taedong Gate opened onto the Taedong River riverfront.) Konishi's men crossed the river swollen and frozen with ice and headed south along their line of communication.

There are those who hold that Konishi managed somehow to bribe General Li to close his eyes to the Japanese evacuation of P'yongyang and this is not the last instance in which Konishi is alleged to have escaped by bribing the Chinese as we shall see later.

The first two fortresses along the route were under the command of Otomo Yoshimune from Bungo. The weary, famished and freezing soldiers reached first one fort and, at long last, the second, only to find them both abandoned and bereft of provisions! Otomo had fled at the first report of the Chinese advance.¹⁵⁹ Otomo and his family were stripped of their rank and fief for this act and had to live on the charity of Christians in Nagasaki.¹⁶⁰

The fall of P'yongyang put Kato in Hamgyong Province in jeopardy and he had to fight his way south through some stiff resistance to join up with Konishi at Kaesong.¹⁶¹ As reports of these events filtered in to the command center in Seoul, orders were issued to draw back all forces north of the Han River into the walls of the capital, Seoul.

The Battle of Pyokchegwan

"By the Way of the warrior is meant death. It means choosing death whenever there is a choice between life and death. It means nothing more than this. It means to see things through, being resolved."

Yamamoto Tsunenori, *Ha Gakure*, 17th century, quoted in Wintle, *The Dictionary of War Quotations*¹⁶²

Kobayakawa Takakage, the doyen of Hideyoshi's generals in Korea at 61, was in Kaesong when the evacuation order came. At first he refused to budge. Otani Yoshitaka, one of the three Military Commissioners in Seoul (Masuda Nagamori and Ukita Hideie

were the others) who administered rewards and served as a general staff, was sent out to persuade him.¹⁶³ Finally he agreed to withdraw his troops when it was explained that they planned to mass all the Japanese forces for a general action against the Chinese. Kobayakawa agreed, however, only provided they permit him and his troops to have a signal role in the action. As he withdrew, the Chinese attacked the rear of his columns when suddenly he turned his troops about and stung them nastily.¹⁶⁴ Kobayakawa then refused to enter Seoul saying he had retreated far enough and was determined to make a stand. This stubborn old samurai was joined by 3,000 men under Kato and another 3,000 under Tachibana Muneshige and, together with his own 10,000, they set up a defense at Pyokchegwan (the site of the inn where imperial envoys en route to Seoul would stay on their way to the capital) in Koyang, intending a fight to the death against the advancing Chinese forces.

South of Pyokchegwan is a rounded hill named "Yosongryong" and Kobayakawa posted his 10,000 behind it with the two groups of 3,000 each posted on the northern slopes. It was 27 February 1593 and the snow was beginning to melt. The area all around the foot of the hill was beginning to turn into a sticky morass of mud.¹⁶⁵ The Chinese army, swollen with Korean units eager for revenge, attacked at dawn. The Japanese on the slopes fired volley upon volley of musket down upon the Chinese and Koreans struggling toward the hill, men and horses bogging down in the

mud and in the melange of bodies strewn about the foot of the hill. The Chinese slowly pushed forward up the hill and forced the Japanese backwards.

"Apparent confusion is a product of good order; apparent cowardice, of courage; apparent weakness, of strength. Order or disorder depends on organization and direction; courage or cowardice on circumstances; strength or weakness on tactical dispositions. Thus, one who is skilled at making the enemy move does so by creating a situation, according to which the enemy will act. He entices the enemy with something he is certain to want. He keeps the enemy on the move by holding out bait and then attacks him with picked troops."

Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*¹⁶⁵

Finally the Japanese troops ran headlong down the south slope of the hill and the Chinese forces came rushing headlong after them in hot pursuit when they ran into Kobayakawa's fresh 10,000 who cut into the Chinese units which had over run their support and struggled already weary from slogging through the mud. The fresh Japanese troops counterattacked in a vigorous charge and the battle devolved into a hand to hand combat, at which the Japanese excel.¹⁶⁷ This was the first real pitched battle of the war and the Japanese slaughtered both Chinese horsemen and foot soldiers in great profusion.¹⁶⁸ By noon the Chinese were in general retreat. The Korean leaders, Yu Songryong, Kim Myongwon, etc., demanded another attack, but General Li was having none of it. Li Jusung left a small garrison at Kaesong under General Wang Piti to protect his rear and fled all the way back to P'yongyang on the pretext that Kato might try to cut him off.¹⁶⁹

"Do not press an enemy at bay."
Sun Tzu, The Art of War¹⁷⁰

General Li cried all night and lost the spirit to fight.¹⁷¹ He also wrote a letter to the Ming Court requesting that he be relieved of his command for reasons of "health." There are accounts which indicate that he had been thrown from his horse earlier and bloodied badly although not seriously injured.¹⁷²

After the victory at Pyokchegwan, the martial spirit of the Japanese troops rose and Masuda Nagamori led 30,000 troops out against the Korean stronghold at Haengju near Koyang. On 24 March 1593 they surrounded the fortress. The Japanese divided into three forces and attacked continuously throughout the day. There were nine all out battles, but the Japanese were unable to obtain any advantage. Finally, they attacked the castle and kept with fire. Inside the Koreans poured water on the fires, extinguished them, and, unyielding, counterattacked. Ultimately, this turned into another major defeat for the Japanese troops. The Japanese gathered their dead in four areas and burned their corpses. Japanese Generals Ukita Hideie, Ishida Mitsunari and Kikkawa Hiroie all were wounded in this battle.

Korean General Kwon Yul, who had become supreme commander of all government forces and Righteous Armies in Kyonggi, Ch'ungch'ong and Cholla Provinces, moved a portion of his forces to P'aju following the victory at Haengju and secured the

territory south of the Imjin River. When Li Jusung learned of this, he recalled all of his forces to P'yongyang. In July Kwon Yul was named Metropolitan Marshall. He made Cholla Province his base of operations and became the supreme commander of Korea's army and naval forces.

Hardships of the Japanese Army of Occupation

"Famine makes greater havoc in an army than the enemy, and is more terrible than the sword."

Vegetius, *De Re Militari*, c. 378, quoted in
Wintle, *The Dictionary of War Quotations*¹⁷³

Now by virtue of the Korean navy's dominance of the littoral and the Korean army's having secured Cholla Province, the Japanese armies in Seoul were virtually cut off from resupply, were running low on provisions and were being ravaged by plague. The Chinese sent in a group of commandos to set fire to the Japanese stores which they accomplished successfully. The Japanese now over 50,000 strong in the city, nevertheless, were in a position where they were forced to sue for peace. The Japanese sent a message to the Korean Prime Minister Yu Songryong requesting peace negotiations. The message was turned over to Li Jusung whose health had apparently improved after he apprehended that the Japanese didn't intend to fight. Li Jusung was of a mind for ending hostilities and negotiations were reopened when he sent Shen Weiching to Seoul for his second attempt at making peace. Shen arrived in Seoul on 18 May 1593 and met in the middle of the Han River near Yongsan (the current location of the

U.S. 8th Army Headquarters) with Konishi and Kato. In a brief interview Shen told them that there was a Ming army of 400,000 (a boldfaced lie) being raised to come to Korea shortly and that the Japanese would have to give up Seoul and withdraw all their troops to the Pusan area; return the two princes; and then, and only then, would the Emperor of China accept Japan as a vassal state. The terms were agreed to with the provisos that the princes be turned over to the Koreans after the withdrawal to the south had been accomplished and that Ming envoys come to Japan to negotiate the permanent peace settlement with Hideyoshi.¹⁷⁴ Shen and two subordinates of General Li in the guise of envoys marched south with the withdrawing Japanese forces.

A Deception of Peace

As soon as Ukita Hideie and Ishida Mitsunari had conveyed Shen Weiching's peace conditions to Hideyoshi in Japan, he approved and the Japanese began their withdrawal from the capital. Konishi and Kato had agreed to evacuate Seoul on 9 May 1593 (360 days after Konishi landed at Pusan and 341 days after he had taken the capital). The Japanese were good to their word and withdrew on time. General Li took possession of Seoul on the 20th of May. He found the city in shambles and the remaining citizens in a most dreadful state of starvation. The Chinese General ordered great rations of rice gruel be made and passed out to the starving inhabitants.¹⁷⁵

The Koreans, who had opposed the peace settlement, urged Li Jusung to pursue and attack the Japanese columns as they departed, but he would hear nothing of this idea. Later orders came from the Ming Court to pursue and monitor their withdrawal which he did belatedly, only going so far as the Choryong Pass without incident as the Japanese had passed through much earlier.

The Massacre of the Garrison at Chinju

Hideyoshi had, however, not planned to go entirely gently. He still smarted under the humiliation which the troops of Hosokawa Tadaoki under Mori Terumoto had suffered and ordered that his forces now concentrating in the south should stop en route and revenge themselves upon the fortress of Chinju which they had been unable to reduce earlier (with disastrous results). Moreover, this stronghold threatened their intended future position in the south. Shen argued strongly that they not do this, but was ignored as Hideyoshi had ordered it to be performed.

The Japanese surrounded Chinju with over 50,000 troops on 24 July 1593. Over 100 assaults were directed on this stronghold before it fell on the ninth day of action. Kato Kiyomasa is credited with having developed a siege wagon, dubbed the "tortoise shell wagon," covered with hardened ox hides which provided sufficient protection for engineers to pry stones out of

the wall to cause a collapse of a section through which the Japanese were able to storm the ramparts. The Japanese annihilated the defenders of Chinju. It was said that not an ox, horse, chicken or dog survived this brutal assault. An estimated sixty to seventy thousand Koreans before the fortress and within were killed. The Japanese also sustained terrible casualties although no good estimate of the number survives.

On October 28th, King Sonjo finally returned to Seoul. He had previously dispatched envoys to Ming to thank them for the Imperial favor. He took up temporary residence in what is now Toksu Palace. While his officials tried to revive a city collapsed and starving.

In the south, the Japanese were in the process of building a series of eighteen fortifications, each about ten miles apart, along the southeastern and southern coast of Korea from Sosaengp'o near Ulsan through Tongnae near Pusan and down to Changmunp'o on Koje Island with Konishi's headquarters at Ungch'on being their chief facility.¹⁷⁶ Some of the Japanese troops returned home leaving a little over 75,000 to man these eighteen forts. The Japanese troops became farmers as well as foragers. The fortifications were spaced far enough apart to enable them to survive without competing with one another for food while remaining close enough to concentrate larger defense forces if required. General Li Jusung withdrew the bulk of his

Chinese troops from Korea to relieve the burden on the land and escape the rampant plague (probably typhus). He stationed 1,000 men in Seoul as a royal bodyguard and others in small garrisons at several locations north of the Japanese "spheres of influence."

The Lull

The Japanese army of conquest had finally been reduced to a "toe in Korea's door." A considerable part of the force returned home, leaving mostly Konishi's Christians to maintain the foothold. After the transition to being a garrison army ensconced in the eighteen fortresses along the south coast, Konishi sent a message to the superior of the Jesuit Mission in Japan and asked for a chaplain. Toward the end of 1593 Father Gregorio de Cespedes and a Japanese priest (called "Foucan Eion" in the Portuguese records) were sent first to Tsushima. In Tsushima they spent the winter as guests of So Yoshitoshi, one of the Christian *daimyos* who was in the field in Korea. In the spring of 1594 they arrived at Konishi's camp and went from castle to castle and camp to camp ministering to the Christian soldiers and baptizing converts.

The priests were very popular among the troops. They may have also been taking steps to begin converting Koreans when the roof fell in on them. Kato Kiyomasa visited Hideyoshi in Japan

and took the opportunity to denounce the priests as fifth column conspirators seeking to undercut the power of Hideyoshi and the emperor. This came at a time when Hideyoshi was experiencing difficulties with the Jesuits and was trying to ship them off to China to get them out of his hair. The bottom line is that Kato averred that the Jesuits' mission was more temporal than religious and Hideyoshi believed him (not without good grounds either) and took action to recall the priests.

The Nagoya Peace Parley--Tea for Two

Hideyoshi received Shen Weiching and the Ming envoys in Nagoya with great ceremony and lavish display of opulence. He even performed the tea ceremony, one of his obsessions, for them (there are even those who theorize that Hideyoshi invaded Japan in order to carry off Korean potters--which he certainly did--because he valued Korean tea bowls so highly). At the last, prior to their departure, Hideyoshi presented them with his seven conditions: a daughter of the Ming emperor was to be sent to become a consort of the Emperor of Japan; the two countries would pledge mutual friendship; the tally trade between Japan and China was to be resumed; the four northern provinces of Korea were to be returned to the Koreans and the four southern provinces to be annexed by Japan; high-ranking Korean hostages were to be sent to Japan; the two captive Korean princes were to be set free; and

the Korean government was to pledge never again to oppose Japan.¹⁷⁷

(Kato Kiyomasa had to be recalled to Nagoya and reprimanded before he would give his great prize, the Korean princes, back to the Koreans.)

Both the Japanese and Chinese blamed the Koreans for what happened and, as the Koreans were not at the negotiations, no one raised a voice in opposition to this idea. Nonetheless, it was clear that Hideyoshi's demands could never be accepted by Ming and Hideyoshi did not appear to want to listen to anything less. The principal negotiators, Konishi and Shen, had neither sufficient status nor credentials to act for governments which were, at best, intractable. Japan's demands were incompatible with her current status in Korea and China's largely ignored reality as well. Korea, which was cut of the negotiations by the two powers of arrogance, would have to pay the price along with warriors of these two powers.

Konishi returned to his headquarters at Ungch'on while an emissary from Hideyoshi, Naito Yukiyasu, known as Dom Joao Naito by the Portuguese, a Christian *daimyo* who could read Chinese, went to the Ming Court to explain the Korean invasion. He was stopped in Liaotung by Chinese authorities because there was no message of submission to China included in his credentials.¹⁷⁸

Next, there apparently was some collusion between Konishi and Shen to forge a letter from Hideyoshi in which he agreed, somewhat more humbly than he ever would have, to submit to the suzerainty of Ming and to receive investiture from them as King of Japan.¹⁷⁹ With this document Naito eventually got to the Ming Court where the sincerity of the Japanese desires for peace were questioned in light of the massacre of those in the Chinju Fortress. Finally, however, the explanations were accepted and arrangements made for a Chinese Embassy to go to Kyoto to invest Hideyoshi.

The King's New Clothes

Before the Ming Embassy arrived in western Honshu to meet with Hideyoshi on 22 October 1596, the Kansai area where Kyoto, Osaka and Fushimi (Hideyoshi's castle) was located was devastated by a series of some of the worst earthquakes in Japan's history. Only a small portion of Hideyoshi's once palatial castle was fit for the ceremony. Nevertheless, an unparalleled opulence was laid on for the affair. The ambassadors presented a large solid gold symbol of office, specially cast for the occasion, and magnificent robes of fur to Hideyoshi and 40 of his principle retainers. Hideyoshi was reportedly quite pleased and rumored to have scampered about gleefully in his robes. His mood turned completely sour later and he was an engine of ire. It is not entirely certain why. The most likely of the explanations that

have been put forth is that Hideyoshi had the patents of investiture rendered into Japanese and learned that he was not being ushered into the club as an equal to the Ming Emperor, but, rather, as a subordinate who owed fealty to the Emperor. The other principal explanation is that the embassy later asked that all the Japanese forts in Korea be torn down. Hideyoshi, who had given such orders to subdued warlords in the past, may have taken umbrage at this demand.¹⁸⁰ Whatever the case, the peace was at its end, having sputtered nearly four years to come to this.

Konishi nearly lost his head over the whole affair until he successfully argued that the three commissioners had equally supported the peace efforts. Kato, on the other hand, now had a free field to urge Hideyoshi to send an army back to Korea to punish the Koreans and wipe away the smirch from Japan's reputation. Kato carried the day.

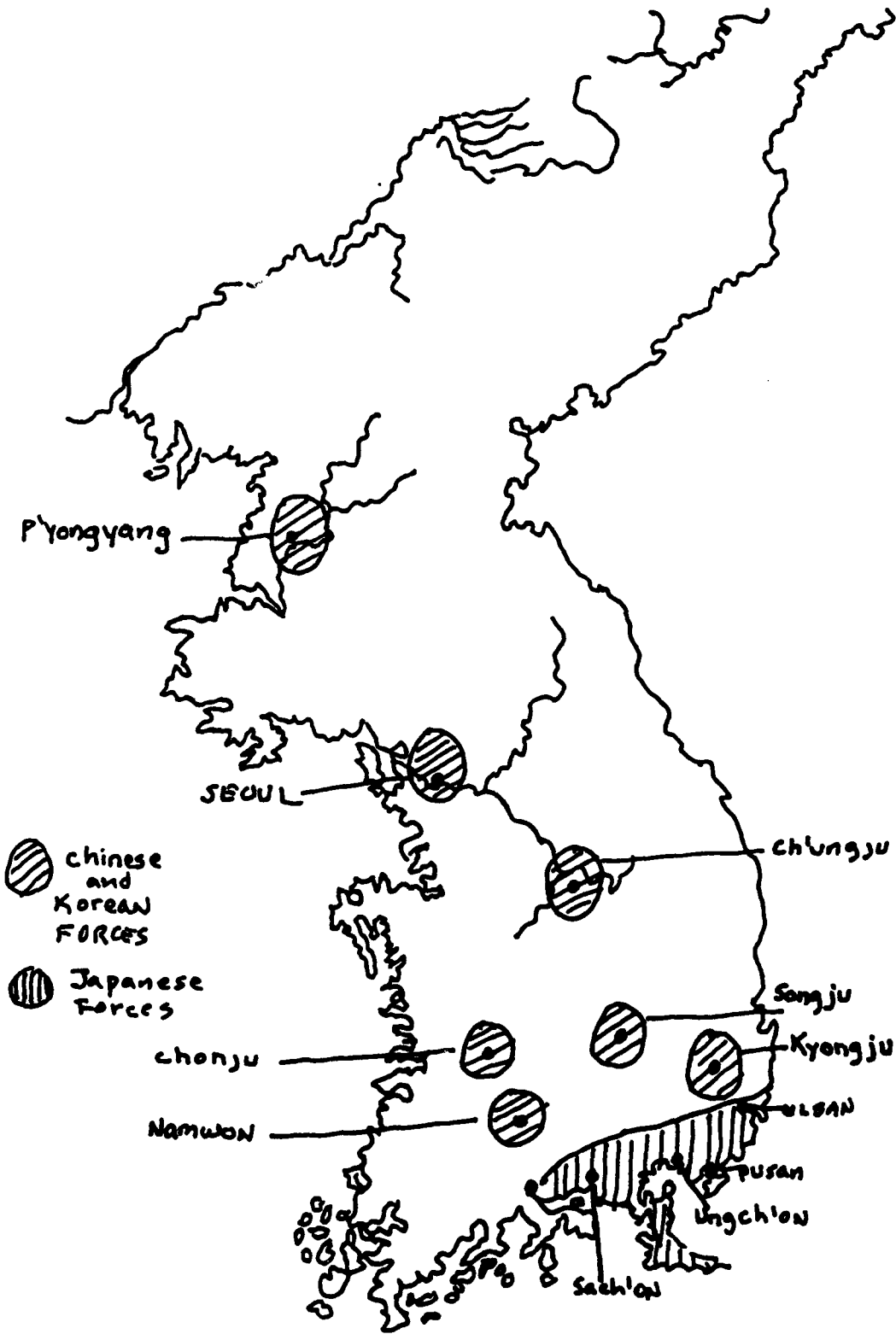
The Second Invasion

"Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more"
William Shakespeare, "King Henry V"

The Topsy-turvies

During the lull the Japanese had not been entirely idle. A great bustle of activity occurred in the area of naval architecture and arms. Japanese men-of-war were redesigned to meet the challenge of Korean technological advantage. The

Disposition of Forces in 1597

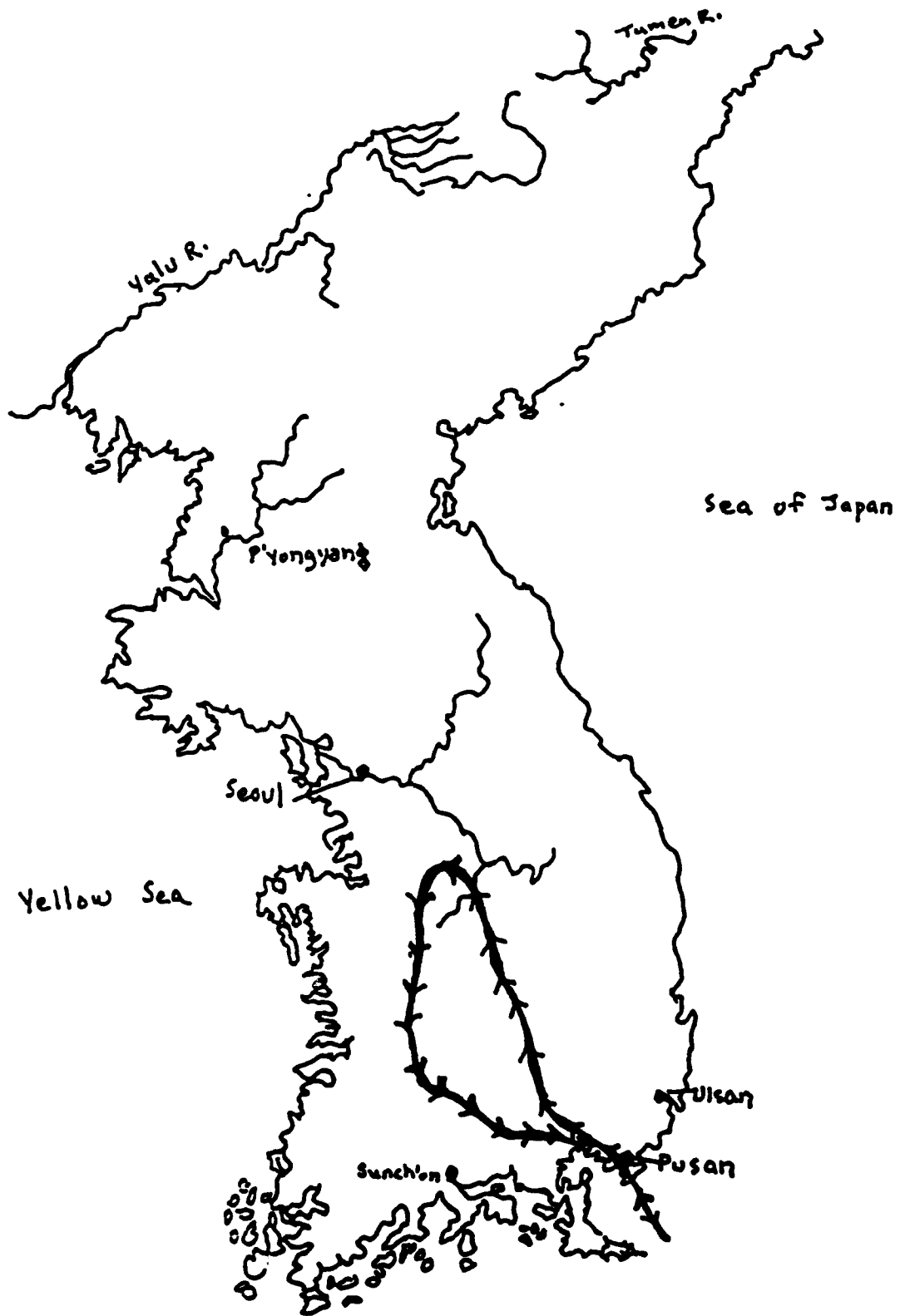


Japanese built several tens of armored ships inspired by the turtle ships of Yi Sunshin. They also worked feverishly to develop small and large cannon for use on board ship to increase the range at which they could attack the enemy and counter the Korean advantage there. They also developed fire arrow launchers. Now they were able to meet the Korean naval challenge of naval gunnery with naval gunnery while resisting musketry and fire arrows better.

Nor were the Koreans entirely idle either. During the war they had begun to develop muskets indigenously and these developments continued during the lull. Admiral Yi moved his headquarters from Yosu further east to Hansan from which he could prevent the passage of any large Japanese transports or men-of-war due to the nature of the various sea lanes through the islands. Unfortunately for Korea, however, as the war had geared down, the factional in-fighting of the Royal Court came back into evidence. The most notable accomplishment of this factionalism is worth special note.

In 1597 the Japanese developed an ingenious plan to get rid of one of the major thorns in their side, Admiral Yi Sunshin. Through a spy they let it be known that Kato Kiyomasa would be returning to Korea by ship around a given date through a given sea route. The spy intimated that Konishi was making this information available because he was working for peace and Kato

Japanese Invasion Route 1597



was in the war faction among the Japanese. The Koreans took the bait and ordered Admiral Yi to intercept and destroy Kato's ship (sort of a get-Yamamoto scenario of an earlier day). Admiral Yi smelled a rat and refused to try to intercept the ship. The opposing toadys at the Yi Court convinced King Sonjo that Yi was a traitor and inveighed upon the king to have him brought to Seoul in chains. Yi Sunshin was tortured, beaten and stripped of his rank. He was at first to be executed, but was pardoned because of his previous service. He was ordered into military service as a common soldier in the army of Kwon Yul. The successful faction completed its coup when it had its man named to replace Yi as the Admiral of the Fleets. This was none other than Won Kyun who had showed his lack of mettle in the previous war. Won Kyun is shown in the Korean accounts to be a drunkard and a womanizer who gave little attention to the condition of the fleet. While the records probably err on showing his weaknesses and deemphasizing any positive elements, it does appear that he was extremely unpopular with the men under his command and his previous record speaks for itself on his operational and tactical competence.

In October 1596 Hideyoshi gave the order to begin preparations to return to Japan. New levies of troops were raised from Kyushu and Shikoku which would eventually raise the force level in Korea to over 141,000. The forces were to be under the command of Kato, So, Matsuura, Arima, Kuroda, Mori

(Hidemoto), Shimazu, Nabeshima, Chosokabe, Ikeda, Hachisuka, Ukita, Kobayakawa, Tachibana and Asano. Konishi Yukinaga was named Grand Admiral of the Japanese Fleet in honor of his fighting spirit and considerable maritime experience in managing one of his earlier fiefs. Under Konishi was Todo, Wakizaka and Kato (Yoshiaki). The naval forces were of about the same strength as in the previous invasion. The troops began to move to Korea in February 1597, but remained in garrison rather than moving immediately to the attack.

Hideyoshi's war aims in this invasion of Korea were much more reasonable and attainable with the force with which he was willing to invest the enterprise. He intended to annex the southern half of the Korean Peninsula.¹⁸¹

China's Timely Intervention

In the meantime, Ming dispatched a new force to Korea in March of 1597. By July the advance guard of the Ming force under Yang Yuan had taken up position in Namwon in Cholla Province near the border with Kyongsang Province.¹⁸² They also set Chinese forces in garrison in Songju, Chonju and Ch'ungju and had the Koreans garrison Kyongju and the Choryong Pass Stronghold and reinforce some of the Chinese garrisons. The Koreans sent 23,000 troops to Choryong to repair the fortifications and defend the

pass.¹⁸³ The Ming commander made P'yongyang his headquarters and kept a large force with him there.

The Korean Army under Yi Wonik and Kwon Yul dispatched Yi Tokhyong and Kim Chol, etc., to recruit troops throughout the eight provinces.

Victory at Sea

The Chinese conceived to forestall the Japanese by concerted land and sea attack. They requested that the Korean navy attack the Japanese fleets as they had done during the last round of hostilities. Won Kyun found excuses not to sally forth against Konishi however. Finally the Korean Commander-in-Chief, Kwon Yul, summoned Won Kyun to his headquarters, had him flogged and ordered him to the attack. Won Kyun had no choice. Together with the Fleet Admirals' personal fleet of over 90 ships, he mobilized the combined fleets of Ch'ungch'ong, Kyongsang and Cholla Provinces, over 200 ships. He then led this armada of nearly 300 warships out to attack the Japanese fleet.

The Sea Battle of Ch'ilch'on Island

When the fleet reached Tadaep'o, they discovered eight enemy ships which had already landed their troops and were empty. They destroyed these ships. Next they sailed to off Cholyong Island

and ran into a Japanese convoy of over 1,000 ships coming in from Tsushima. Won Kyun tried to attack these, but his ships were scattered in the strong wind and heavy seas, some came under attack by the Japanese and the others, eventually, had to regroup at Kadok Island. The Japanese fleet, unexpectedly (where were the scouts?) sailed in on them and much of his forces deserted him. Won Kyun beached his ship on Ch'ilch'on Island. When reports reached Kwon Yul he ordered him to go out and fight. Won then reportedly got drunk and sailed out with the remainder of his men only to be deserted by them again. The Japanese caught up with him and carried his head away in triumph.¹⁸⁴ His second in command returned to Hansan Island burned the Korean facilities and supplies and fled. In one blow the Japanese had wiped out nearly the entire Korean fleet and removed them from the brown water choke point which would have prevented them from supporting military operations to the southwest. Furthermore, they immediately engaged in amphibious landings in support of their push westward on land and killed eight Korean generals in the ensuing action. The war turned upside down.

More of the Same

In six months of fighting the Japanese invasion force managed to achieve about the same penetration it did in two weeks when it invaded the first time. Despite Hideyoshi's pared down war aims and upgraded naval capabilities, despite his having

secured his sea lines of communication this time, he invested manpower in proportion to his new aims, but based on the old conditions. His enemy now comprised battle-hardened veterans, not corrupt reprobates and the Chinese were there from the beginning. Also, the Japanese focussed considerable attention on getting into Cholla Province which they had failed to do in the earlier war.

In July, however, Ukita Hideie did invest Namwon, defeating the Chinese garrison there, with the help of amphibious forces brought by Konishi right up the river which flows through Namwon,¹⁸⁵ and threatening all of Cholla Province.¹⁸⁶ The whole garrison was put to the sword and, in compliance with an order from Hideyoshi to furnish him with visible proof of progress, they cut off the heads of the officers and the noses and ears of the troops, pickled them in lime and salt and sent them off to Kyoto where they were later buried in a mound now called "Mimizuka" or "Mound of Ears."

Around the same time another large force under Mori Hidemoto moved into Ch'ungch'ong Province threatening the main body of the Ming forces. Kato Kiyomasa led a force to within 50 miles of Seoul. King Sonjo was ready to bolt again, but the Court officials persuaded him not to run, although he had all provisions made for a quick withdrawal if need be. He did dispatch the queen and the heir-apparent to Suan in Hamgyong

Mimizuka
Mound of Ears, Kyoto



Monument from the Invasion. The Mound Contained the Ears Taken As
Trophies of Koreans Killed in Battle

Illustration from Turnbull, *The Samurai: A Military History*

Province for safe-keeping. The Japanese, however, got no farther owing to strong Chinese opposition.¹⁸⁷ The Japanese had been able up until this time to support their land forces from the sea, but events turned again in the brown waters off Korea's southern coast.

The Return of the Nelson-Drake-Don John of Korea

Konishi had been unusually restive since his great sea victory over the previously invincible Korean navy and had not followed up to finish it off. Either he was tasked heavily, primarily with supporting amphibious operations and protecting the large Japanese convoys, or, perhaps, he failed fully to apprehend the importance of the initiative in naval action, or, yet again, perhaps there is something in the Japanese make up that brings them to a pause--a conservative phase--after a smashing victory such as Konishi's or Yamamoto's at Pearl Harbor? Then again, Konishi's fleet and forces did participate in a joint land and sea effort to relieve the siege of Ulsan by a large Chinese force.¹⁸⁸

At any rate, Konishi was to bring a force around the west coast by sea to aid the stalled advance in the north. As fate would have it, this led to the only direct confrontation of the two key figures of the war, Konishi and Yi Sunshin. After the debacle of the defeat of the Korean fleet, the Royal Court was

not too proud to call upon the defrocked hero, Yi Sunshin, in its hour of need. Yi answered the call and was reinstated as Cholla Province Admiral of the Left and Grand Admiral of the Fleet--a fleet now of only about twelve ships. The Chinese also came into play in the renewed struggle for the domination of the littoral with the addition of their Kwantung Fleet to the equation. There were no surviving turtle ships in the Korean inventory, but the Chinese brought with them twenty new ships for the Korean fleet which had been made in China for Korea.

The Chinese Fleet was under the command of artillery expert and now Admiral, Ch'en Lin. Within the allied Chinese and Korean combined force there were approximately 19,000 Chinese troops and over 7,000 Koreans--there were as many as 92,000 (including many Miao and Lolo tribesmen) Chinese compared to only a little over 21,000 Koreans in the total government forces of the two allies. The allied government forces in this war were primarily Chinese.

As in all of Korea's dealings with China, the Chinese Admiral, Ch'en Lin, was the titular commander and Yi was his subordinate just as Korea was subordinate to China. However, Ch'en was more pragmatic than vain and Yi was more patriotic than self-aggrandizing. They reached an accommodation in which Yi did the planning and led the forces and Ch'en got the credit. Yi sometimes eschewed prize money for taking enemy ships and bounty

for heads, turning these over to the Chinese, in order to keep the Chinese happily fighting his battles.

"Superior scouting, whose role has been underestimated in theory, practice, and history, opens the doors for attack. Command fuses scouting data, applies force, and frustrates the enemy's efforts to do the same."
Hughes, *Fleet Tactics*¹⁸⁹

Almost as soon as Yi was back in command, on 25 October 1597, he sailed to Chin Island. Immediately he sent out scouts as was his custom. He learned shortly that the Japanese were approaching. Admiral Yi's ships were hidden, on this dark night, under the shadow of the mountain on Chin Island and were practically invisible. The Japanese sailed into range single file. The Koreans all fired their cannon on signal and made as much noise as possible. The Japanese were thrown into a panic and scattered.¹⁹⁰ Several were picked off.

The Sea Battle of Myongnyang

The next day Admiral Yi's small force sailed into a Japanese fleet of several hundred ships (on their way to support the actions against the Ming in Kyonggi Province and intending to storm Seoul) and fearlessly destroyed 30 enemy ships without a single loss by the time the Japanese decided upon discretion and fled. This ended Japanese plans, once again, for sailing around the west coast of Korea.

Yi started building barracks and making salt again. Sailors who had abandoned Won Kyun returned in droves.¹⁹¹ Shortly after this, Chinese Admiral Ch'en Lin arrived and Yi quickly won him and his men over through his hospitality, generosity and military competence. It wasn't long before Ch'en wrote to the Korean King, who had cautioned Ch'en that Admiral Yi might be unreliable, that Admiral Yi was one of the most impressive and remarkable soldiers in the world.¹⁹² Ch'en and Yi made a regular habit of commerce-raiding and taking Japanese warships that came within their range. Thereafter control of the seas was restored to the allies.

By the spring of 1598, with Chinese reinforcements pouring into Korea, Konishi advised Hideyoshi to move all forces from the outlying fortresses of the sea coast and to concentrate at Pusan, but Hideyoshi rejected the idea. For the next several months the war then took on a static quality presaging, perhaps, a taste of World War I trench warfare.

The Battle of Sach'on--A Room Full of Noses

The last great pitched battle on land of this war occurred at Sach'on on the southern coast. On 30 October 1598, the Chinese tried to storm the camp of Shimazu Yoshihiro, Commander of the Fourth Division in the first invasion. At the end of his successful defense, Shimazu had the ears and noses sliced off

38,700 Chinese heads, pickled and sent to Kyoto to add to Hideyoshi's "Mound of Ears." The Chinese, having experienced defeats and tremendous losses of men and materiel at Namwon, Ulsan, Sach'on and elsewhere in combat with the Japanese were in a mood to look for terms of peace. The Japanese, though victorious, had suffered huge losses and, once again, were suffering the ravages of hunger and disease. (Hideyoshi had held that an invading army should be able to support itself, in great measure, off the land in which it was fighting and this had not made things easier in the theater of the war.)

The End of an Era

A short while after the great bloodbath of Sach'on on 30 October, the news of Toyotomi Hideyoshi's death on 18 September 1598 was received in the Japanese camps. Ultimately, after one last great power struggle among the warlords following Hideyoshi's departure from the scene, Tokugawa Ieyasu emerged as the single military leader of Japan. He established a shogunate which was to rule Japan in relative peace for nearly 300 years. His great dynasty of peace, however, was built upon the institutional foundations erected by Toyotomi Hideyoshi.

Hideyoshi was reported to have ordered the recall of the troops from Korea on his deathbed. It is certain that the five commissioners appointed by him to look after his affairs did send

a recall order. The troops were generally happy to be going home, but there still remained the tricky and perilous withdrawal without a truce ahead of them.

The Japanese went to great lengths to keep the word of Hideyoshi's death from the Chinese and Koreans as they made preparations to leave Korea. Korean spies in Japan, nevertheless, did get the information back to Korea. In mid-October Chinese General Liu T'ing received intelligence that Konishi was about to withdraw from Sunch'on where he was lately ensconced. Liu developed a plan to attack Konishi at Sunch'on starting around 20 October 1598 on land and for Admiral Ch'en Lin and Admiral Yi Sunshin to blockade him on the sea.

The Chinese and Koreans fought with Japanese who were fighting desperately to get home. Konishi even turned to bribery as a way out. It had been alleged that he had bribed Chinese General Li Jusung to let him and his troops escape from P'yongyang in 1593 and again in this case the Koreans aver that Chinese General Liu T'ing withdrew his forces on 5 November 1598 because of a considerable bribe from Konishi. Ch'en said, however, that he had had to withdraw because of Shimazu's great victory at Sach'on which threatened to catch him between the besieged city and a dangerous opponent should Shimazu come to

lift the siege. There is no little merit in General Liu's argument.

Kato sailed from his base at Sosaengp'o near Ulsan on 15 December as part of the Japanese withdrawal plan while Shimazu sailed from Sach'on on the same day. Shimazu's ships sailed west to join the effort to break Konishi out of the allied blockade. The Korean records allege that Konishi had also, sometime before this, sent a bribe to Ming Admiral Ch'en Lin to let him out through the blockade and that Ch'en had acceded. Ch'en made no arrangement with Yi Sunshin who quickly drove the Japanese back. Konishi then sent a bribe of silver, swords and other weapons to Admiral Yi which the admiral returned with the message that he had quite enough weapons already.

Admiral Yi was very unhappy with Ch'en Lin over this matter and went to see him about it. Admiral Ch'en is rumored to have drawn his sword in anger against Admiral Yi, but in the end he was convinced to continue to enforce the blockade against Konishi jointly. (It is not clear that these bribery incidents took place, but what is clear is that at the last the Chinese Fleet stood "shoulder to shoulder" with the Korean Fleet in the blockade.)

The Sea Battle of Noryang

Konishi had his back to the wall and sent to Shimazu in Sach'on and So Shiranobu on Namhae Island for assistance. Shimazu and So agreed to rendezvous with Konishi and help him fight his way through the blockade. Shimazu led a fleet of an estimated 500 ships in on the evening tide to Noryang on 15 December 1598. Sometime during the third watch (23:00-01:00) Admiral Yi called in the Ming naval forces and together they attacked the enemy fleets at Noryang from both sides during the fourth watch (01:00-03:00) early in the morning of 16 December 1598. The battle spread wildly among the host of ships. The Koreans claim that over half the enemy ships were sunk while the Japanese admit to having taken heavy losses, but say that well over half survived. A number of Japanese were forced to seek shelter in Kwan'ump'o on Namhae Island. While some were rescued later by their compatriots, many were hunted down and killed by the Chinese. In the fierce battle Ming Admiral Teng Tzulung was killed. Admiral Yi also was mortally wounded by a musket ball, but cautioned his crew to keep his death secret until the battle ended. Admiral Yi's older brother, Yi Wan, assumed command. Finally the Japanese broke and ran and the victorious Chinese and Korean navies were collecting heads for bounties when Admiral Ch'en Lin noticed seamen fighting over some Japanese heads on Admiral Yi's flagship. He immediately exclaimed that the admiral must be dead for discipline to have broken down like this. This last battle, land or sea, of the war had lasted eight hours and had taken Yi Sunshin in his hour of success. Konishi, on the

other hand, escaped and sailed back to Japan (departing 24 December 1598) only to be executed a few years later by Tokugawa Ieyasu.

This naval battle had been fought at very close quarters, unusual for Admiral Yi's tactical approach. This tactic did equalize the effect of the bow with the musket since the bow was more accurate and could be reloaded more quickly. Both sides used grenades and incendiary devices, but the Chinese and Korean ships had the advantage in cannon.

A Dragon's Head with a Snake's Tail

Thus ended the war which has been described in both Korea and Japan by the four Chinese characters meaning "dragon head snake tail." This translates roughly to "start with a bang and end with a whimper" or perhaps, more appropriately to this war, "in like a lion and out like a lamb."

"Ambition's debt is paid."

William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, Act III,
quoted in *The Oxford Dictionary of*
*Quotations*¹⁹³

Chapter X. OBSERVATIONS AND ANALYSES

"Sweet Analytics, 'tis thou hast ravished me."
Christopher Marlowe, *The Tragicall
History of D. Faustus*, quoted in *The
Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*¹⁹⁴

"Grey is the colour of truth."
Andre Gide, quoted in Booth, *Strategy and
Ethnocentrism*¹⁹⁵

Of Dragons and Sea Serpents

"The whole world before our eyes can be divided into two parts, the land and the sea, each of which is valuable and useful to man. Of the whole of one of these parts you are in control--not only of the area at present in your power, but elsewhere too, if you want to go further."

Thucydides, *History of the
Peloponnesian War*¹⁹⁶

Like Athens and Sparta at the beginning of the Peloponnesian War or Carthage and Rome at the beginning of the Second Punic War, Korea and Japan were unequally strong in naval and army strengths. Like Athens and Sparta, over a period of extended warfare, Korea and Japan each improved in the other's long suit in response to the challenges of their opponents. Likewise, all four failed to integrate these two types of strengths and employ them synergistically. Each of these wars also altered the course of world history significantly, each in its own way.

"While it is proper to think of the destruction of the enemy's fleet as the fleet's foremost objective, beyond that immediate objective is always some higher goal. *The seat of purpose is on the land.*"¹⁹⁷
Hughes, *Fleet Tactics*

While the objective of naval action has its "seat of purpose on the land," in war in which naval combat and logistical operations are required as an integral part of the operational scenario, the littoral also begins to take on a critical hue. This was true in 1592, it was true in the 5th century B.C., and it is true now. Following on the Mahanian age of *big*, of mass, and of dreadnoughts in search of "command of the sea," we must realize that the seas remain uncommanded even for the world's only "surviving superpower." It is not that our power is declining, but rather that it was misunderstood and that the world has changed. Power on the land continues to need to be projected--projected from the skies and *from the seas*.

This means that the dragons of the earth and the dragons of the skies must still coexist and cooperate with the serpents of the seas. The serpents can no longer afford to ignore the littoral and frolic in the blue water only. The brown water is where the action will be increasingly because we have to turn our attention from the world of superpower "war games" to the realities of third world brush fires. Crisis intervention, humanitarian assistance, peace-making or peace-keeping are going to force us to focus on the unglamorous brown waters and its ugly denizens--diesel submarines with Exocet missiles, fast attack craft with Cruise Missiles, and mines, mines, cheap old mines. The neglect of the brown water battle area could frustrate our

interests, aims and objectives significantly just as it did those of the Japanese land juggernaut in 1592.

Offense vs Defense

"Even when the only point of the war is to maintain the *status quo*, the fact remains that merely parrying a blow goes against the essential nature of war, which certainly does not consist merely in enduring. Once the defender has gained an important advantage, defense as such has done its work. While he is enjoying this advantage, he must strike back, or he will court destruction."

Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*¹⁹⁸

The Koreans seemed to have intuitively understood the wisdom of Clausewitz' view on the need to transition from defense to offense. Even with their army mostly destroyed and in disarray, when the population rose up to form "Righteous Armies," they went right to the offensive. Not the big, massive offensive of concentration and mass, but the Maoist offensive of harassment, interdiction and attrition.

"There can be no question of the advantage to be derived from the offensive operation in battle. It carries with it not only the initiative but increased morale. It makes the enemy conform to your plan and reduces the chances for being surprised. While a well conducted defensive action may save a force from defeat, it is only an active offensive that will win a battle."

Chester W. Nimitz, *Naval Tactics*¹⁹⁹

The Japanese, on the contrary, by the sheer size of their successes, lost their strategic initiative and were forced to lower their strength constantly as they gathered territory under them. Unwittingly, they forced themselves into the defensive

mode and only recovered initiative from time to time when counterattacking until the second invasion of Korea put them back on the offense. This second phase of initiative only lasted until they again ran themselves back into the same predicament.

Integration of Forces

"Infantry, calvary, and artillery, are nothing without each other. They should always be so disposed in cantonments, as to assist each other in case of surprise."

Napoleon Bonaparte, *Military Maxims*, 1831,
quoted in Wintle, *The Dictionary of War
Quotations*²⁰⁰

Napoleon's maxim is all well and good, but Napoleon might have done better in Egypt if he had extended this thought to the integration of ground and sea power. The Japanese and Koreans both failed to do this in this war, although both had had plans to try to do so. The Japanese plans were frustrated by the control which the Korean and later the combined Chinese and Korean navies were able to exert over the western portion of the seas along Korea's southern coast and by their ability to deny the Japanese access to the west coast of the peninsula. The Koreans, on the other hand, were frustrated largely by the inability of their government forces to show up at all or at least on cue. The concept was there, but the execution was lacking. The Japanese did employ some amphibious operations successfully, notably during the siege of Namwon, by sailing up the river nearly to Namwon.

Communication

"In the war, the Japanese brigands must depend upon lines of communication linking the principal cities as routes for the transport of war materials. The most important considerations for her are that her rear be stable and peaceful and that her lines of communication be intact. It is not to her advantage to wage war over a vast area with disrupted lines of communication. She cannot disperse her strength and fight in a number of places, and her greatest fears are thus eruptions in her rear and disruptions of her lines of communication. If she can maintain communications, she will be able to concentrate powerful forces speedily at strategic points to engage ... organized units in decisive battle."

Mao, *Mao Tse-tung on Guerrilla Warfare*²⁰¹

Mao 's words could as easily have been written about how much the Japanese needed to depend on their lines of communication for logistical health in their invasion of Korea in 1592 as they did in the 20th century in China.

Modern generals worry about logistics, logistics and logistics we are told. Hideyoshi neglected his sea lines of communication and tried to run his war on the logistical cheap. These were two major strategic errors of major significance in the frustration of his plans and aims.

"The line that connects an army with its base of supplies is the heel of Achilles--its most vital and vulnerable point."

John S. Mosby, *War Reminiscences* (1887),
quoted in Shafritz, *Words on War*²⁰²

Konishi understood about lines of communication. He even seemed to understand about "interior lines of communication." He understood that these lines were also his escape route as well as his lifeline while in the defensive mode in hostile country. He must have felt like a great actor whose performance is marred by the spotty performance of one of the bit players. He did his job and did his best to maintain and secure the lines of communication between P'yongyang and Seoul. He expected also that lines of communication by sea would be established and the failure of his side to do this left him hanging out in the cold.

While Hideyoshi's war was not lost for the want of a nail, it was lost for the want of a real navy. It was not lost just for the moment until a navy could be built, it was lost for good. The loss of communications led to the loss of opportunity. Admiral Yi was not the hero of Korea so much as he was the savior of Ming China, at least from the Japanese.

Command and Control--Unity of Command

"If a monarch does not command his troops in person, as has become customary in recent wars, if he is no longer easily available, a new and very serious handicap arises from the loss of time involved in the transmission of messages. Even the widest powers conferred on a commander will not suffice to meet every contingency that may arise in a sphere of action."

Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*²⁰⁵

When Hideyoshi decided against leading the invasion and to stay in Japan, he contributed mightily to its ultimate failure. One of the reasons given that Hideyoshi recalled the troops from Korea when he was dying was that he believed that no other general in Japan had the vision to accomplish the objective. He was probably correct in this assumption. Moreover, he deprived the invasion of his vision of his *coup d'oeil* by his absence. Two things which distinguished Hideyoshi's generalship were his ability to act quickly and rationally and his great ingenuity in solving even the thorniest problems of command. He robbed the invasion of both by staying in Japan. By virtue of his remaining in Japan he became a referee on some occasions and a doubting Thomas on others. He was not integrated into the team. Moreover, he made it difficult, even life-threatening, to give him bad news, (and the fault for some of that bad news was, in some cases, his) and so he got managed news and his decision-making was weakened.

"Nothing is so important in war as an undivided command; for this reason, when war is carried on against a single power, there should only be one army, acting upon one base, and conducted by one chief."

Napoleon Bonaparte, *Military Maxims*, 1831,
quoted in Wintle, *The Dictionary of War
Quotations*²⁰⁴

The question of Hideyoshi's leadership aside, there clearly was no single commander in charge of the overall conduct of the war in the field. This was either because Ukita, the titular generalissimo, was incapable of subordinating Kato and Konishi to

his will or because he never really had the authority to do so in the first place and was unable to take it. The result was wasted effort and poor coordination, contributing to the ultimate failure of the invasion to achieve its objectives.

Op Tempo (vs Material) and Strategic Initiative

"The God of War hates the man who hesitates."

Euripides, *Heraclidae*, c. 425 BC, quoted
in Wintle, *The Dictionary of War
Quotations*²⁰⁵

The Japanese operational tempo was slowed greatly by several factors. These included the impact of the interference with their sea lines of communication by the Korean navy, the harassment of their land communications by the emerging Korean guerrilla organizations and the long lead time for special approval from Japan for certain operations. These were exacerbated by their declining personnel resources due to battle casualties and to the need to garrison strongholds to protect material gains and to try to secure lines of communication.

"Once one has decided to invade a country, one must not be afraid to deliver battle, and should seek out the enemy everywhere to fight him."

Napoleon I, quoted in Shafritz, *Words on
War*²⁰⁶

The Japanese delivered battle, doing it heroically and successfully most of the time; however, it is not clear that they had a strategy, a theory of victory, which they could pursue to accomplish their aims. When the techniques that had brought

victories and success in their civil wars failed to bring success in Korea, they ran out of energy as well as supplies. They were overstretched and under-strategized. They fell into a lull, leaking tempo as they fell. The Japanese lost the advantage of time and time moved into the Korean's corner. They lost their strategic initiative and never regained it to the same degree. The pendulum turned out to be a two-edged sword and it began to cut the other way.

"War, once declared, must be waged offensively, aggressively. The enemy must not be fended off, but smitten down. You may then spare him every extraction, relinquish every gain; but till down he must be struck incessantly and remorselessly."

Alfred Thayer Mahan, *The Interest of America in Sea Power*, (1897), quoted in Shafritz, *Words on War*²⁰⁷

The pitfall that every chess player and practitioner of strategy must face is avoiding the temptation to collect material, avoiding the temptation to pile up tactical successes without paying attention to the strategic play of the challenge. One can lose tempi, one can lose board position and one can be checkmated in the midst of an orgy of material gathering. Kato was seduced into this kind of warfare in the north while his potential for victory was cut away from underneath him in the south by the guerrillas and the Korean navy. While the enemy must be struck until victory is achieved, striking must not be allowed to take the place of action aimed at achieving the war objectives.

"The main and unchanging principles of war are: . . .
THIRD: To avoid loss of time.
FOURTH: To follow up every advantage gained with utmost
energy."

Chester W. Nimitz, *Naval Tactics*²⁰⁸

Technology

There is an ancient Chinese rhetorical example, in the form of a story, that tells about a person who goes to the market and sees there someone hawking lances which he touts to be of such excellent design and manufacture that there is no shield it cannot pierce; later he sees another marketeer selling shields with the assurance that his shields are of such a superior quality that no spear can pierce them. The beltway bandits are still selling these panaceas. The promise of technological advantage can be very seductive and great expenditures are made on it without much consideration to the rest of the technology advantage equation.

This war is very interesting from the point of view of competing military technologies and for its having been fought at an early stage of the introduction of firearms. It offers us an opportunity to hypothesize about technological advantage and to examine it in an extended war.

"If he attains the virtue of the long sword, one man can beat ten men. Just as one man can beat ten, so a hundred men can beat a thousand, and a thousand can beat ten thousand. In my strategy, one man is the same

as ten thousand, so this strategy is the complete warrior's craft."

Miyamoto Musashi, *A Book of Five Rings*,
c. 1643, quoted in Wintle, *The Dictionary of War Quotations*²⁰⁹

We'll start our examination of technologies, however, with the sword. The Japanese long sword was a great leap forward in the technological evolution of swords for warfare. Not only were the blades of superior material and workmanship compared to the Chinese or Korean blades, but they also were much longer. This technological edge was extended by the full development of technique for the employment of the weapon and by the rigorous training of those who were to employ the weapon. It raised the long sword, in a sense, almost to the level of a stand-off weapon since it gave the accomplished practitioner such an edge in reach. Moreover, through practice and experimentation, extensive doctrine and training in the tactical employment of this weapon in individual combat had been achieved--how to decapitate an enemy with one blow or how to slice through his trunk downward diagonally from one shoulder toward the other hip, etc. The Japanese swordsman wielding a long sword had the advantage over either his Chinese or Korean counterparts who used their weapons largely for stabbing or gross slashing.

"One of the virtues of the bow is that you can see the arrows in flight and correct your aim accordingly, whereas gunshot cannot be seen. You must appreciate the importance of this."

Miyamoto Musashi, *A Book of Five Rings*,
c. 1643, quoted in Wintle, *The Dictionary of War Quotations*²¹⁰

The Koreans and the Japanese were both quite accomplished in the production of long bows and in their employment. Both trained well in the application of this weapon in combat (Admiral Yi's diary, for example, mentions nearly daily practice). The Japanese developed very large bows for the firing of both arrows and bolts, which required the use of machinery to draw the bows. These were for use in naval combat by the time of the second invasion. They were designed to combat some of the Korean fire power at sea. The Asian compound bows of bamboo and horn were superior bows in many respects. Both in land and sea combat fire arrows were important weapons although they were not always fired with bows, but rather, were often fired from guns.

"Firearms, and not cold steel, now win battles."
Jacques-Francois Puysegur, 1656-1743,
Principles and Rules of the Art of War,
quoted in Wintle, *The Dictionary of War
Quotations*²¹¹

Gunpowder was developed in China, but some of its most deadly applications were developed in Europe and then introduced first to China and then East Asia. Korea sought for a long while to obtain the formula for gunpowder from China. Around 1375 Ch'oe Muson learned how to extract saltpeter from soil during a visit to Yuan China. Later, the Chinese court shared the secret of making gunpowder with Korea only because both were being threatened by repeated raids of Japanese pirates (and it appears that the Chinese figured the more pirates the Koreans killed, the

fewer might come to China). By October 1377 the Korean government had established an agency for the manufacture and handling of explosives.²¹²

The early Korean firearms all launched fire arrows and were employed primarily on warships. Later iron balls were also used although iron was expensive to produce and didn't have a long range when fired from the crude cannons of the day. The Koreans next developed better cannon based on cannons recovered from a wrecked Ming ship and then they developed stone cannon balls to fire with their improved explosive gunpowder.

The earliest muskets introduced into Korea were gifts of the *daimyo* of Tsushima to the King of Korea. Their value was not well appreciated until after the Japanese invaded Korea. Then all the muskets were gathered together and studied by Chong Sajun, a craftsman surnamed An and two slaves all under the command of Admiral Yi Sunshin. They made muskets based on the Japanese model with a Korean-designed firing mechanism. In March 1593, Korean troops were already beginning to be trained in musketry.²¹³

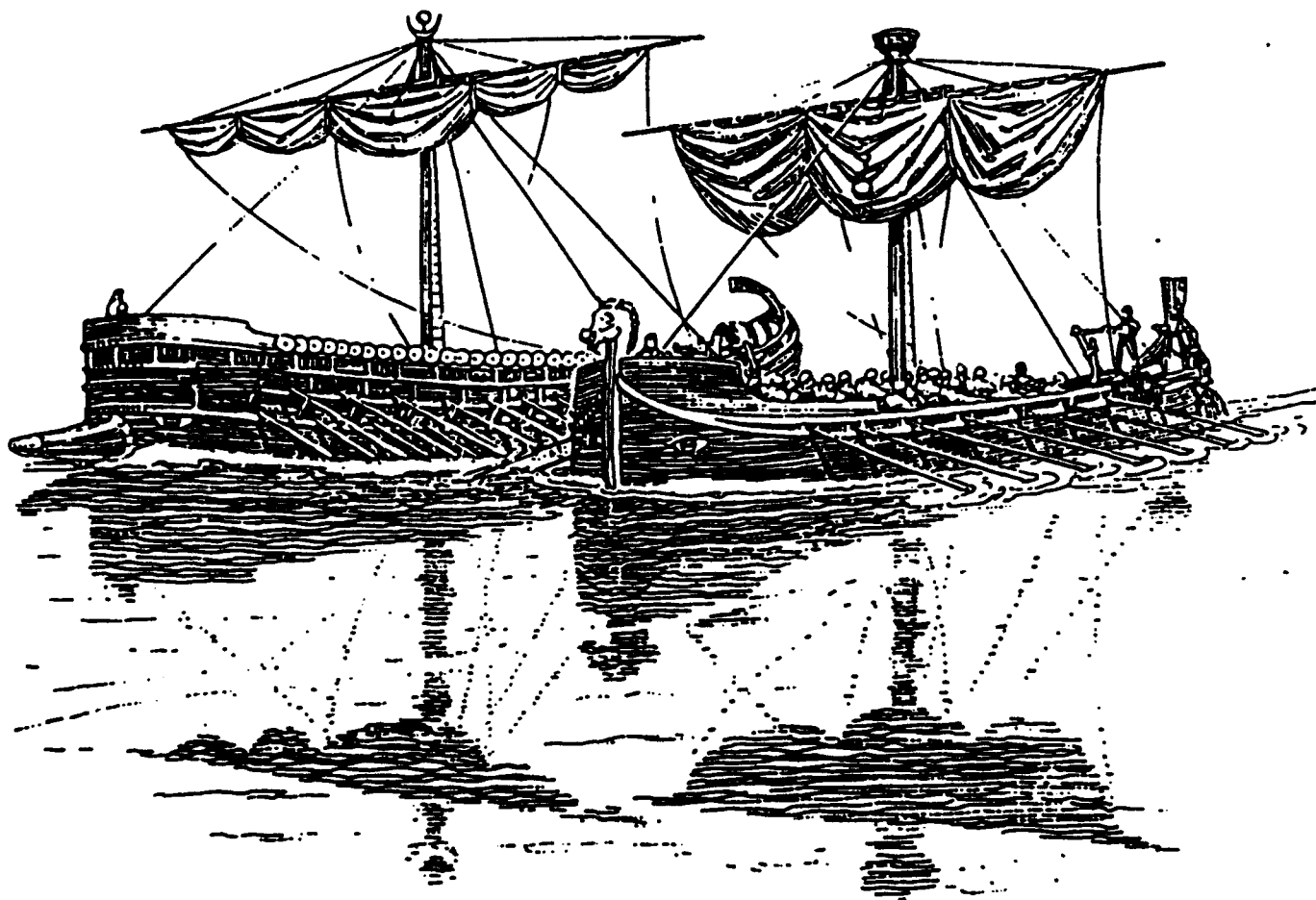
I discussed above how muskets were first introduced to Japan when a Chinese junk carrying Portuguese with muskets wrecked on Tanegashima off Kyushu. The musket, as a one-man-portable anti-personnel weapon, was immediately attractive to the Japanese

military involved in a seemingly unending series of civil wars. The Japanese developed muskets and pistols, rapidly incorporating them into their tactical scenarios. They quickly came to realize how much more effective these weapons were than swords, pikes, spears, maces and axes and how readily peasants could be trained to employ them without years of training and inculcation with theory and doctrine of their employment. The Japanese were in a period of transition and the gun was becoming a key addition to their warfighting:

"When troops come [to Korea] from the province of Kai, have them bring as many guns as possible, for no other equipment is needed. Give strict orders that all men, even the samurai, carry guns."

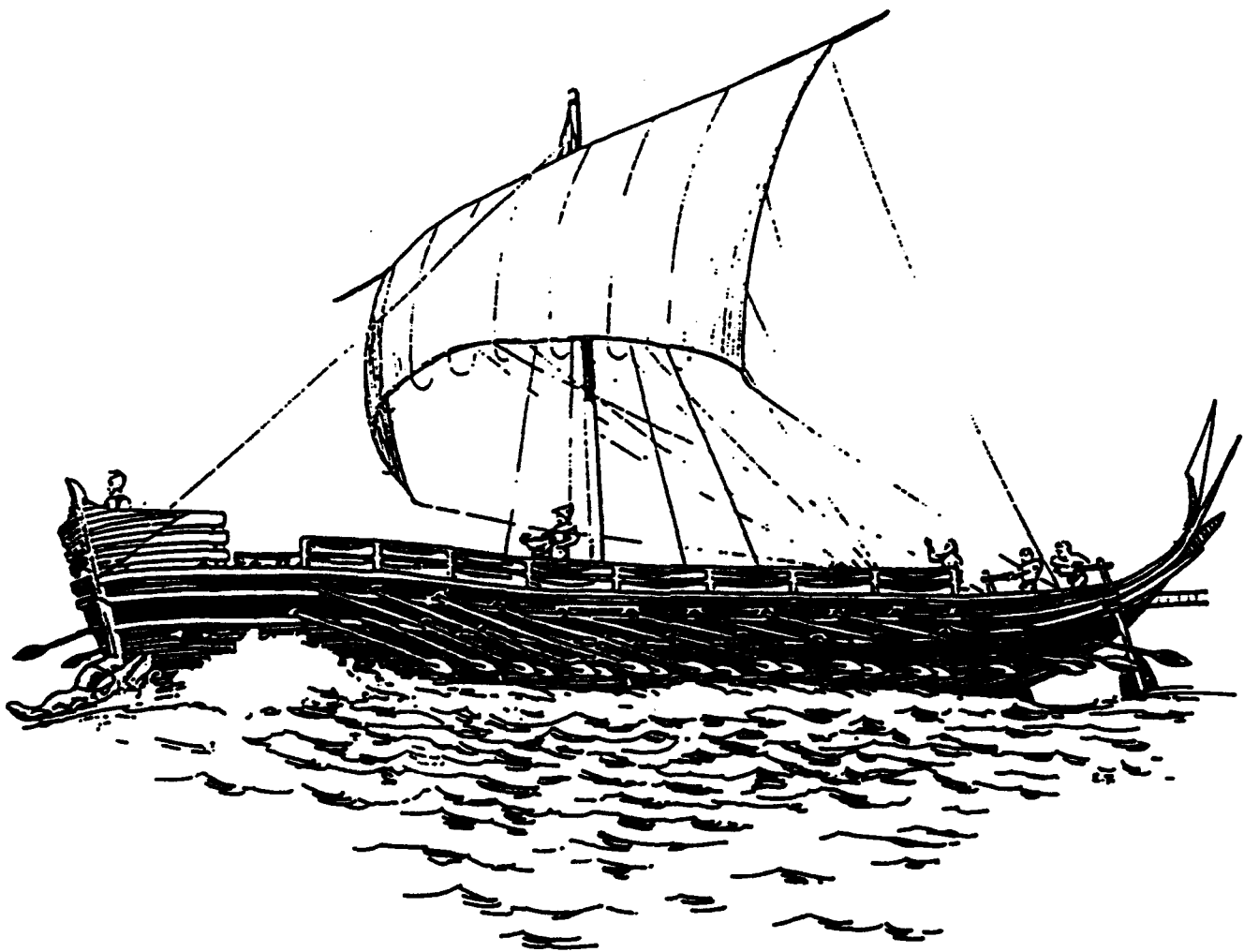
Asano Yukinaga, 1598 letter to his father,
Asano Nagamasa, veteran of the 1592
invasion²¹⁴

The Koreans had been driven, over a long period, to develop their naval capabilities since their primary external threat was from pirates--Japanese, Jurchen and Chinese. The Koreans, during the Yi Dynasty, developed ships capable of successfully battling pirate ships. The ships were designed to resist boarding, protect the crews and to provide increasing speed and maneuverability. In 1413 the Koreans developed their first turtle ship. It was designed to counter the close-combat tactics of Japanese pirates. It was a ramming ship and included a wooden canopy to protect the crew.²¹⁵



Phoenician Man-of-War &
Merchantman
c. 750 B.C.

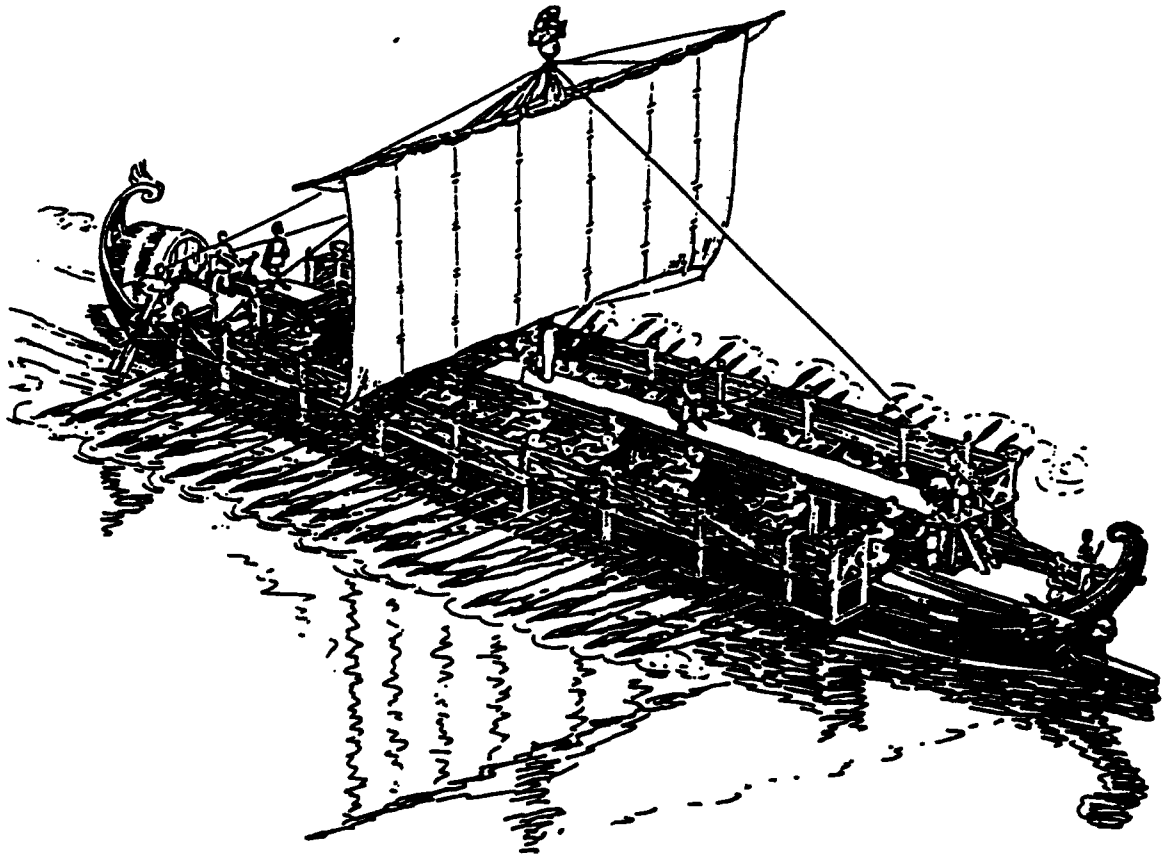
Illustration from Junia, Oars, Sails and Steam; A Picture Book of Ships



Greek War Galley

c. 250 B.C.

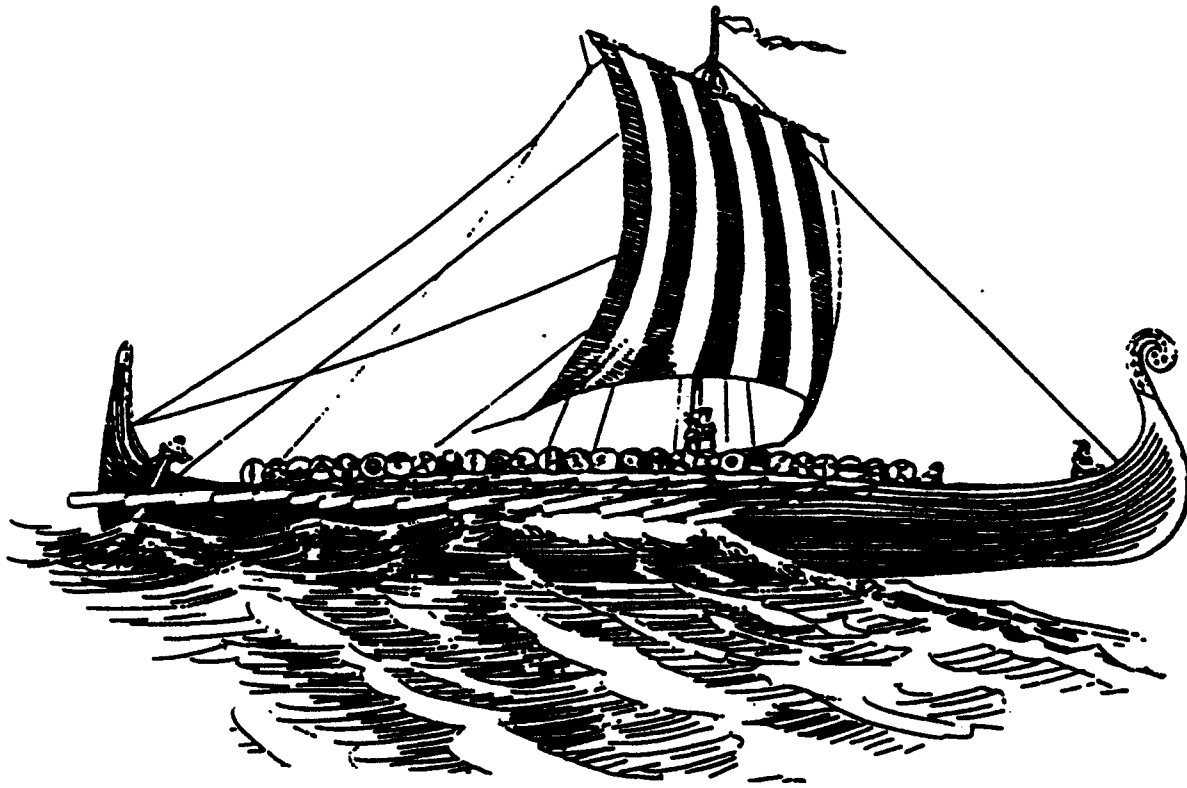
Illustration from Junia, Oars, Sails and Steam: A Picture Book of Ships



Roman Trireme

c. 200 B.C.

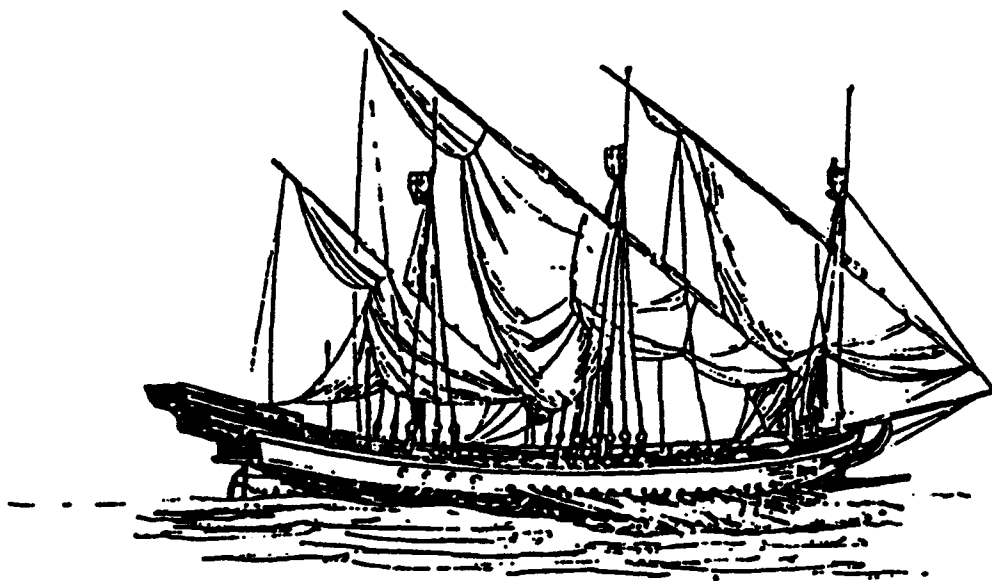
Illustration from Junks, Oars, Sails and Steam: A Picture Book of Ships



Norse Ship

c. 835 A.D.

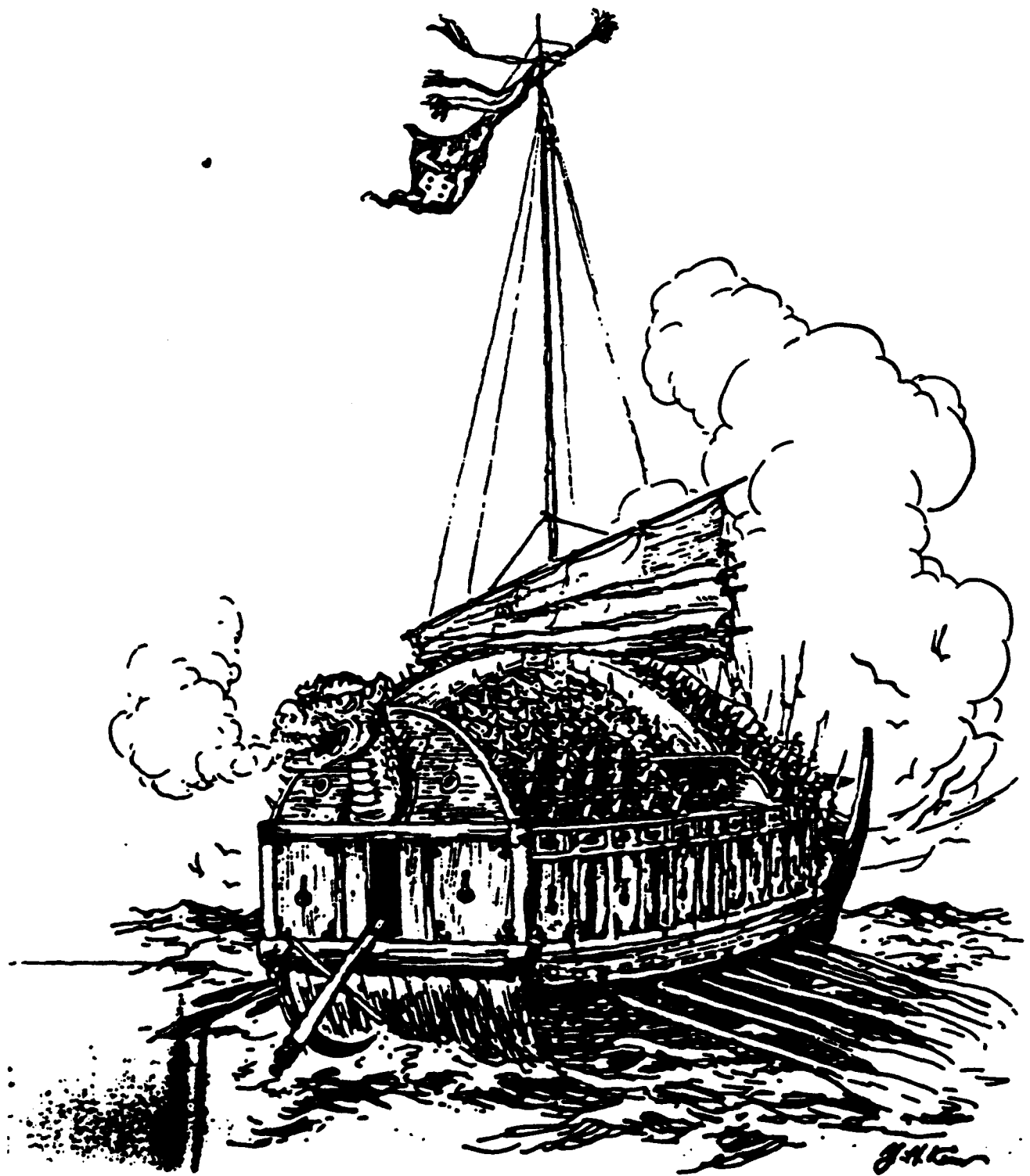
Illustration from Junis, Oars, Sails and Steam: A Picture Book of Ships



Mediterranean Galleass

Sixteenth Century

Illustration from Junis, Oars, Sails and Steam: A Picture Book of Ships



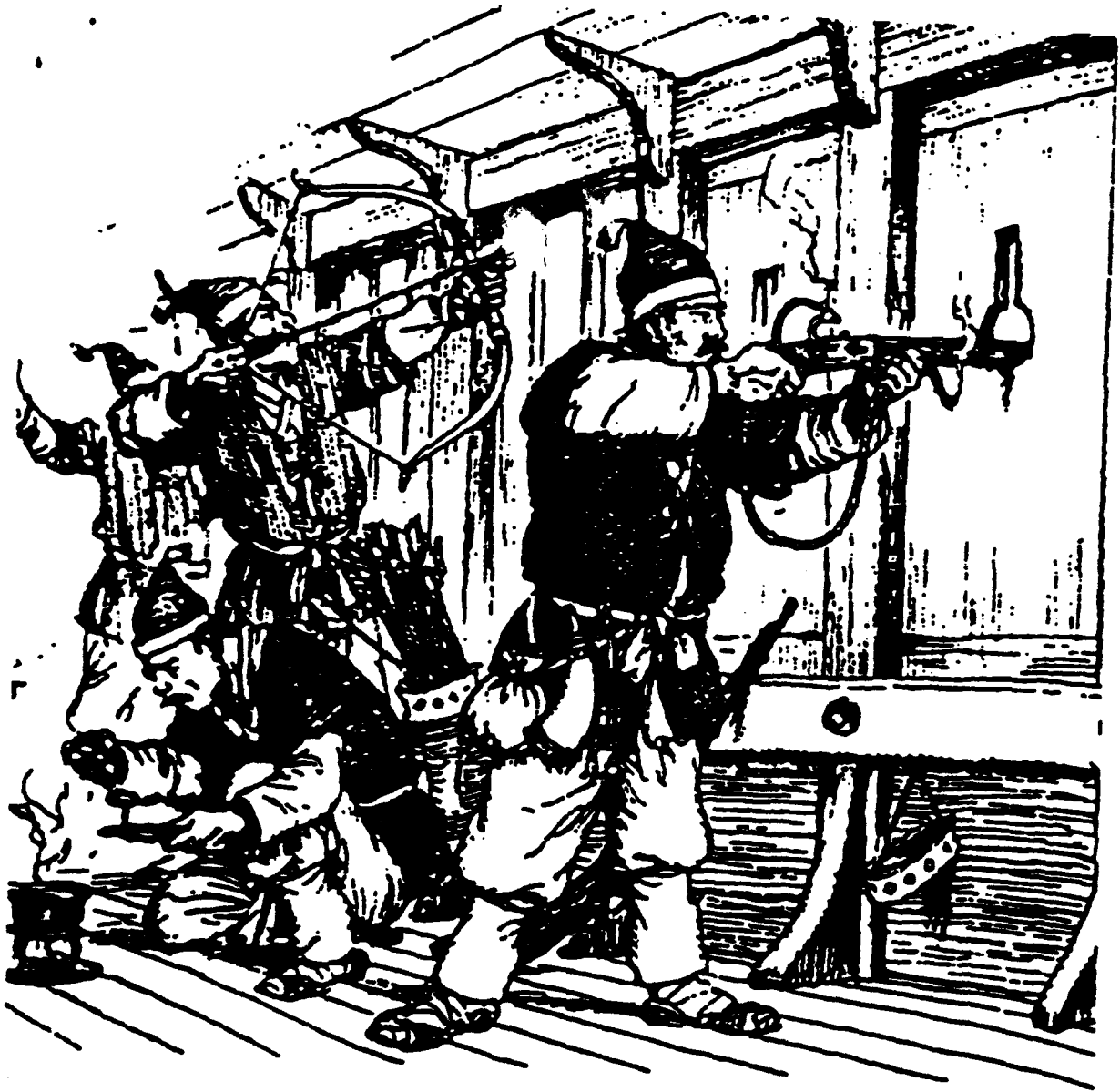
Artist's Conception of a Turtle Boat
Convex Covering and Spikes Designed to Thwart Boarders

Drawing by Y.H. Kim from Hagerman, "Lord of the Turtle Boats"

In 1591 Admiral Yi, looking forward to a possible Japanese invasion, launched a program to repair ships in his inventory and fit them for combat against an enemy with relatively known capabilities. Working with Na Taeyong, a naval architect, he came up with a revamped design for the old turtle ship concept which would provide technological advantage over his projected enemy even if the enemy had superior numbers. The older Korean version of the turtle ship was the *t'ongjeyong-* (Fleet Flagship Base) type (cf., illustration). The new model was the Cholla *chwasuyong-* (Cholla Fleet Admiral of the Left Base) type (cf., illustration).²¹⁶

There is considerable discussion about whether or not the new turtle ship was iron clad with all writers tending to speak *ex cathedra* on the subject. The major argument against the iron cladding view, besides the fact that it would mean the Koreans did this way before the West with its industrial revolution did it, is that the iron cladding is not specifically mentioned in the collected writings of Admiral Yi. On the other side of the ledger we may place the fact that there is a Japanese report that it was iron clad. What tips the balance for me, besides the strong Korean tradition that it was iron clad, is that in 1593, the Japanese government placed levies on the *daimyos* to supply iron plate for building warships!

*Artist's Conception of Archers and Marksmen Firing Through
Ports of a Turtle Boat*



*Korean Troops Probably Had No Muskets of the Type Envisioned
But Small Cannon of Several Types Were Reportedly Employed*

Drawing by Y.H. Kim in Hagerman, "Lord of the Turtle Boats"

The turtle ship was improved further after the development of the Cholla *chwasuyong*-type and this was described in a report written by Admiral Yi's cousin, Yi Pun, which stated:

"Another special war vessel has been developed. About the size of a *p'anokson* . . . planked cabin-junk, its surface is planked, with narrow passageways through which sailors can move about. The whole surface of the ship, other than the passageways, is covered with blades and spears so that no enemy can walk over it. At the bow is a dragon head from which cannon can be fired; another cannon is installed at the stern. It is also called a turtle ship from its appearance. During battle, the blades and spears are hidden under heaps of seaweed as the ship charges into the enemy fleet."²¹⁷

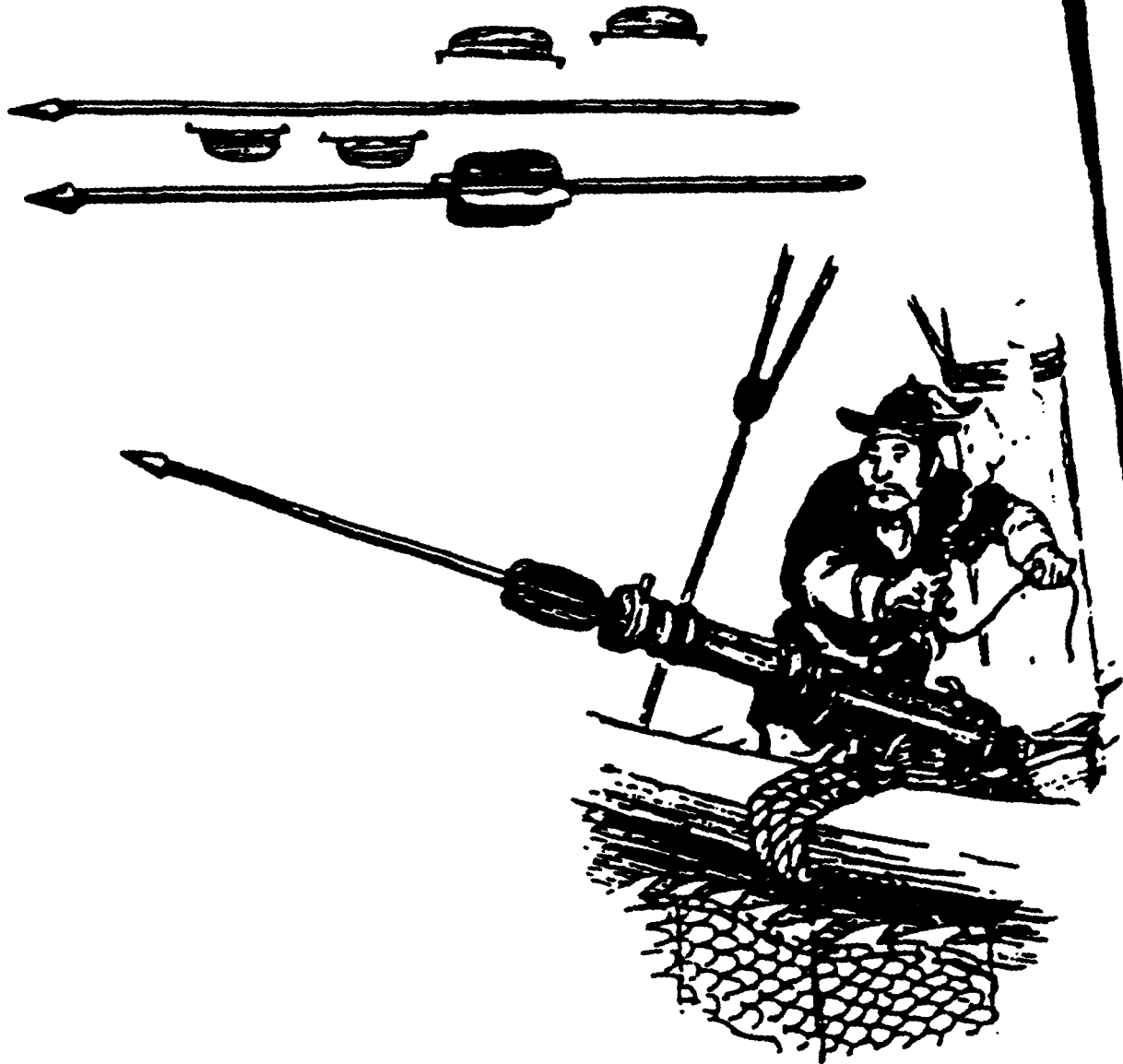
What made Admiral Yi's turtle ships so effective was not just the great technological leap forward that they represented, but also the fact that Admiral Yi was able to develop and implement tactics which permitted the Koreans to take full advantage of the new weapons system qua platform:

"Tactical and technological developments are so intertwined as to be inseparable. That is why Mahan rejected (rather too readily) constants of tactics while he promoted principles of strategy. . . . *To know tactics, you must know weapons.*"
Hughes, *Fleet Tactics*²¹⁸

"How often will the effect of new technology be great enough that, exploited in a series of battles, it will affect the outcome of a war? That is, what is likely to be the frequency and magnitude of technological opportunity?"
Hughes, *Fleet Tactics*²¹⁹

My opinion is, and the events of this war bear it out, that technological advantage is extremely transitory in a long war.

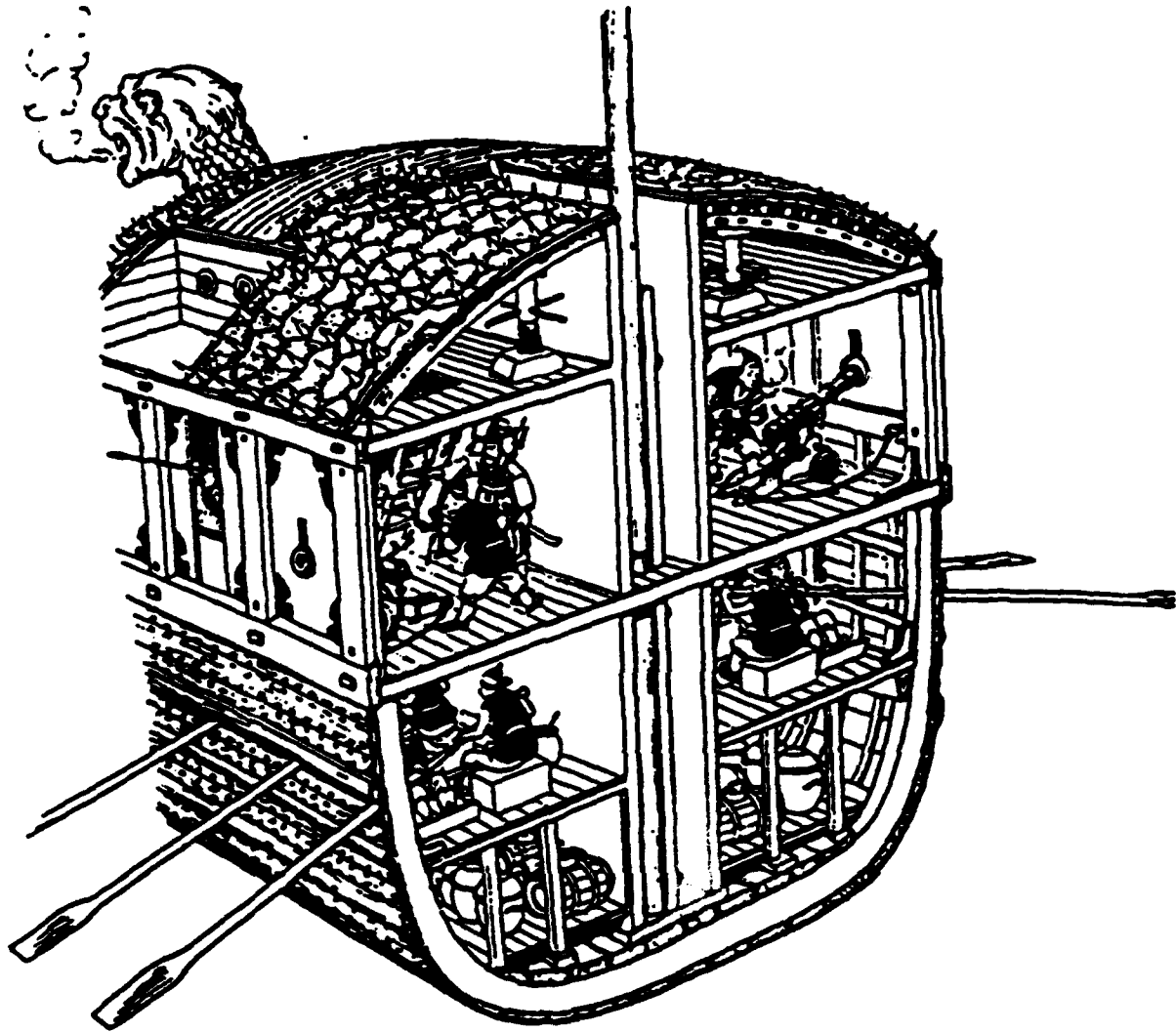
*Artist's Conception of Korean Sailor Firing an Arrow from a
Cannon Mounted on the Deck of a Turtle Boat*



*Fire Arrows Shot from Cannon Were a Key Weapon Employed
by Admiral Yi Sunshin's Turtle Boats Against the Japanese Fleets*

Drawing by Y.H. Kim in Hagerman, "Lord of the Turtle Boats"

Cross Section View of a Turtle Boat



Arrows and Cannon Were Fired Through Ports on the Upper Deck
Two Oarsmen Rowed Each Oar on the Lower Deck

Drawing by Y.H. Kim in Hagerman, "Lord of the Turtle Boats"

If that advantage does not, together with the entire war effort, gain victory quickly enough, either defensive technologies to reduce or eliminate the advantage will be developed, or new and superior offensive technologies will be developed to balance the scales. We see that on both sides in this war. The Koreans rapidly developed muskets. The Japanese improved their ship designs, ship's armor and anti-ship weapons, although they appeared to shy away from making cannon indigenously, preferring to get it from Western sources. The Chinese came up with thick hide cloaks to protect soldiers in sieges from Japanese muskets. The Koreans armored their ships. The technology-counter-technology battles continued throughout the war.

Finally, as a sidelight, it should be noted that Japan gained several new technologies as a result of this war. Japanese troops swept up Korean craftsmen and technicians and shipped them off to Kyushu, often with their equipment. Two notable advances were in the fields of ceramics (where a large portion of the craftsmen were all taken to Japan and one of them made the first find of kaolin in Japan which marked the beginning of the production of porcelains in Japan), and printing. The Japanese carried off Korean printers and moveable type Chinese character fonts (the Chinese invented moveable type long before Gutenberg was born and the Koreans were the first to cast and use metal moveable type fonts--Gutenberg's real contribution to printing was the application of the press to printing) to Japan.

Intelligence

"Now the reason the enlightened prince and the wise general conquer the enemy whenever they move and their achievements surpass those of ordinary men is foreknowledge. What is called 'foreknowledge' cannot be elicited from spirits, nor from gods, nor by analogy with past events, nor from calculations. It must be obtained from men who know the enemy situation."
Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*²²⁰

Some have criticized Hideyoshi for having had little or no intelligence about China and Korea before setting out to conquer them, "rolling them up as one would a mat." Throughout the wars for the reunification of Japan there is evidence that Hideyoshi had an excellent and effective intelligence apparatus. There is no reason to think that he would not have appreciated the importance of intelligence and have had the same for Korea. What is mistaken by some as a lack of intelligence information is, rather, I think, a shortsighted, ethnocentric view. Hideyoshi, like many Japanese and not unlike many westerners, even some in the military, easily fall into the mental trap that "different" means less competent and less effective than one's own, this can be a dangerous and tragic mind set.

It could be argued that Hideyoshi's intelligence must have been very good based on the initial results. It was the longer term view that tripped up the Japanese. It was the effect of the Clausewitzian friction and the lack of a good middle and end game plan or philosophy that wrecked the Japanese effort, not poor

intelligence. Moreover, on both the operational and tactical levels the Japanese seemed to have very good ideas of what the enemy capabilities were; where they were; and what their weaknesses were, at least on land.

The first invasion clearly wound up in disaster because the Japanese allowed themselves to lose operational tempo and failed to secure their sea lines of communication. They can be excused somewhat on the latter, since they hadn't really had to be concerned overly by such issues during their civil wars in which they gained so much military experience otherwise. The former, on the other hand, is less excusable, but a direct effect of the latter.

Was it a failure of intelligence for Hideyoshi not to have been prepared for the logistical nightmares that both invasions were plagued by? I would argue that it was not. I think it was Japanese ethnocentrism and a poor match of policies and strategy. I think Hideyoshi's actions and planning clearly indicated that he expected conquered Koreans to behave like conquered Japanese. He had ordered Kato and others to handle civil affairs like they did in Kyushu and elsewhere. The Koreans weren't Japanese and the Japanese weren't Koreans! The invasion was by foreigners and somehow oppression by foreigners raises one's hackles much more than oppression by one's fellow countrymen. In Japan the average peasant cared less about the warlord than he did about having

some stability and may have welcomed the reunification once the initial trepidations about the war passed. Not so in Korea where once the incompetent sycophants were swept away, real patriots stepped in to defend their native soil from the usurpers. The Japanese needed a quick victory, but had no strategy to clinch one.

The Japanese appear to have had quite adequate operational and tactical intelligence throughout the war. What they really lacked was a well-considered, robust strategy.

"At sea better scouting--more than maneuver, as much as weapon range, and often times as much as anything else--has determined who would attack not merely more effectively, but who would attack decisively first."

Hughes, *Fleet Tactics*²¹

The most notable applications of intelligence in the war were Admiral Yi Sunshin's extremely effective scouting at sea. Yes, Yi generally had superior craft (in part probably because of preparations owing to intelligence about the prospective enemy), superior fire power (designed to exploit weaknesses of the enemy's craft and armament and known tactics), better trained crews and excellent tactics, but it was scouting which constantly provided him the opportunity to seize the initiative which he never failed to do. If the offense is the key to naval tactical and operational success, scouting must be one of the keys to offense and it was not neglected by Admiral Yi. On the other

hand, we get glimpses of the Japanese fleets being surprised on occasion by Korean naval forces and must attribute some of this to inferior scouting--part of an undeveloped, immature naval tradition.

Coalition Warfare

"In countries subject to domestic strife, the center of gravity is generally the capital. In small countries which rely on large ones, it is usually the army of their protector. Among alliances, it lies in the community of interest, and in popular uprisings it is the personalities of the leaders and public opinion."

Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*,²²² quoted in Shafritz, *Words on War*

Korea's troubles with Japan stemmed, to a great extent, from the nature of Korea's relationship with Ming China, the major power of the area, and from Ming's antagonistic policies toward international trade, particularly with respect to Japan. Japan wanted and needed international trade just as it does today. Japan showed considerable flexibility and willingness to trade within a rationally regulated system. However, when the intention to trade was frustrated, Japan also demonstrated a willingness to fight to get what it needed. Ming China's anti-trade orientation was not the result of popular will, but rather was foisted on the nation by a bloated and unresponsive bureaucracy, riddled with corruption. Yi Dynasty Korea was little better, particularly on the point of corruption; however, its smaller size required it to have a more intelligent and

responsive policy to accommodate Japanese needs in order to survive. This is what the limited, regulated trading port system accomplished.

Yi Songgye, the founder of the Yi Dynasty, in his search for legitimacy, sent his dynasty down the road locked into step with Ming in order to receive the legitimacy of its recognition. The Yi styled its institutions on Ming and sought to be more Confucian than the Chinese Confucianists. It is small wonder then that King Sonjo, during his headlong flight ever northward to save his neck, would think that the only salvation for his shadow-puppet nation was through appeal to the mighty, "heavenly" forces of Imperial Ming. Wise advisors in his court counseled patience and pointed out that there was a risk of suffering from the tyranny of China as much as from the tyranny of Japan, but were ignored by the king.

Korea and China were bound, somehow, inextricably, to one another out of a long tradition and more recent interaction. Japan's war was with Ming China, but was fought in Korea when Korea refused, due to its subordinate relationship to its giant neighbor, either to join in the enterprise or to permit Japan free passage through Korea to make war on her ally.

China turned a deaf ear to her long term, nearest ally as long as it was in her own interest. And it was in Ming's

interest to let China's would-be attacker burn itself out against her little ally. The Chinese were willing to resist the Japanese in Korea down nearly to the last Korean. It was only the propinquity of Konishi's invading army in P'yongyang that finally galvanized the Chinese into action to aid Korea.

"Better a known enemy than a forced ally."

Napoleon Bonaparte, *Political Aphorisms*,
1848, quoted in Wintle, *The Dictionary of War
Quotations*²²³

King Sonjo, ultimately, appealed to China for military relief and Ming fiddled while Choson burned. Ming finally sent forces only when it felt that it was actually threatened (i.e., when the Japanese forces had taken P'yongyang and were at China's door) and in order to fight the inevitable battle on Korean soil and not in China. Homer Hulbert in his early *History of Korea* and James Murdoch in his *A History of Japan* both argue that by the time Ming did come to Korea's rescue, the tide had turned against the Japanese due to the continuing attrition of Japanese forces, the worsening famine and the increasing success of Korean guerrilla activities in interdicting Japanese lines of communication.²²⁴

Furthermore, the successes of the Korean navy in keeping the Japanese troop and supply ships limited to a small area of the east coast, cutting off access to the west coast and the Yellow Sea, and in threatening even Japan's single access point in Pusan

regularly while inflicting great losses on the Japanese in the brown water, contributed to the downhill slide of Japanese troop health, efficiency and morale.

In 1601, when Tokugawa Ieyasu was trying to open trade relations with Korea, he sent representatives from Tsushima to Korea with a message. The response came back:

"Since 1592, the Ming Imperial Court has stationed military leaders in our country. All our national affairs are now under their control. We cannot even decide minor matters without their supervision."²²³

Clearly, the Koreans had received more help from Ming China than King Sonjo envisioned in his panic on the banks of the Yalu in the winter of 1592.

One might argue that China came to Korea's aid much more quickly the second time around. The truth of the matter is, however, that the Chinese were really angry with the Japanese by then. Japan had insulted them as no one ever had before. In the whole long history of China, no other ruler had ever refused investiture by China. Japan also abused Chinese envoys and made unreasonable demands out of all proportion to their situation. They got the Chinese angry. The Chinese weren't so much helping Korea as fighting an enemy more conveniently on someone else's territory.

The Ming-Yi alliance, such as it was, then, largely functioned for and served the interests of the more powerful partner and the weaker partner only was aided when that became a prime interest of the stronger. Moreover, the Chinese army of relief extracted a heavy price from the recipients of its assistance.

A final word on ethnocentrism might be appropriate here. The Chinese cultural, ethnocentric arrogance led to several disasters because they completely failed to assess the true quality of the opposing force which they regarded as "barbarian" and, hence, easily overcome.

Centers of Gravity

" . . . one must keep the dominant characteristics of both belligerents in mind. Out of these characteristics a certain center of gravity develops, the hub of all power and movement, on which everything depends. That is the point against which all our energies should be directed."

Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*²²⁶

A center of gravity is the point on any object (any object which is capable of being knocked over) at which, if the object is pushed toward one extreme or another, gravity will begin to pull the object over rather than pull it back to its original position and the object will topple over. Clausewitz mapped this concept onto the grid of strategy to illustrate that there is an analogous point in warfare at which, if pushed beyond it, the

enemy will topple and victory will be achieved. Conventionally, this has been viewed as being either the enemy's army or the enemy's capital (based on European experience) although Clausewitz also includes the enemy's alliance in cases of weaker or smaller nations and the people's will to resist in the case of popular uprisings (and, by extension, guerrilla warfare).

What was Korea's center of gravity in 1592? We can fairly confidently say that it wasn't Korea's army which was crushed almost instantaneously. Likewise, we can be reasonably confident that it wasn't the Korean capital since it fell in a fortnight. It wasn't the Korean navy, although it played such a key role in foiling Japan's plans. Was it its alliance with China? Not in my view that the Koreans had essentially stalled the Japanese prior to China's crossing the Yalu is correct. Was it, then, the will of the Korean people? Perhaps, but I think we've missed an important factor here.

Seoul was the major city of Korea at the time and its destruction was a severe blow. Seoul was not the only capital Korea had ever had, however, and had only been the capital for 200 years, a relatively short time on the East Asian scale. Korea was a very provincial country and, most importantly, was primarily agricultural. Consequently, the land was more important than the capital and the Japanese could not hold all that with the force they had invested in the enterprise. Was the

land the center of gravity? No, because it lacked the potential to be successfully manipulated, threatened or destroyed in order to achieve the Clausewitzian toppling. The Japanese certainly should have understood that the capital was not the key to victory as they had recently experienced the devastation of the Imperial Capital of Kyoto during their civil wars without significant impact on the outcome.

If not the army and not the capital, was it the will of the people? The will of the people was key to Korea's survival, to be sure, but could it have been attacked any more than it was by the incredible hardships inflicted on it? It is difficult to imagine that it could have. Could it have been won over through kindness and generosity? Perhaps, but I think not. The will of the people, in this case, was relatively unassailable, at least before the culminating point of victory was passed. So it must not have been the center of gravity because it, too, appeared to lack the potential to topple the objective.

Was there a center of gravity in this war for the Japanese to target or is Clausewitz' concept not applicable in this case? I believe there was a center of gravity. In order to understand another country's centers of gravity, their weaknesses, if you will, you must understand their society and the glue which bonds it. You must understand their national polity. National polity is a key factor, in my opinion, in the center of gravity

equation. Yi Dynasty national polity was based on the divine right of king and the king was the physical embodiment of the nation. He was the focal point and glue for any national loyalties. By virtue of his flight, criticized by his ministers and the citizenry of the major cities, he preserved the national polity long enough for the tide to turn. The king, I think, was the center of gravity and key to the will of the people. Not King Sonjo so much because he was such a beloved king, but, rather, because he was the embodiment of their concept of king and of their national polity. My view, in this case, is supported by the disproportionate amount of attention which the two captured princes, neither the heir apparent, received both from the Koreans and the Chinese. The capture of the king, in my opinion, would have given the Japanese the best chance for achieving their war aims for their Korean adventure. If the Japanese had a clear understanding of this, however, it is not at all clear from the records. Nevertheless, it is to analogous cultural view that we must attune ourselves in the development of strategies to avoid making similar miscalculations.

Deception and Surprise

"Force, and fraud, are in war the two cardinal virtues."

Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (1651), quoted in Shafritz, *Words on War*²²⁷

The Chinese, in the best tradition of Sun Tzu, tried to employ both deception and surprise at the beginning of their first major effort of the war. They attempted to take P'yongyang by lulling Konishi into thinking that they were escorting a peace envoy rather coming to storm the city walls. This was only marginally successful in that it probably prevented Konishi from bringing reinforcements in to help hold the city; however, his supply situation was probably so bad that his position was untenable. Later when Liu T'ing tried to trick Konishi similarly at Sunch'on. He invited him to truce talks while planning to kill him once he was outside his fortress, in order to facilitate his siege of Sunch'on by destroying its leadership. Konishi easily penetrated the ruse having been burned once before.

"Righteous Armies"--Guerrilla Warfare and Resistance Movements

"The passions which agitate the masses that are brought into collision, the warlike quality of these masses, the energy and talent of their commanders, the spirit, more or less martial, of nations and epochs,--in a word, every thing that can be called the poetry and metaphysics of war,--will have a permanent influence on its results."

Baron de Jomini, *The Art of War*²²⁸

The key points about the movement are that it cost the Japanese manpower in several ways. There was a steady attrition of forces through skirmishes. It became necessary to disperse the forces every time the Japanese moved further against new Korean-held territory since it took more and more manpower to hold onto what had already been gained.

"Once the victor is engaged in sieges, once he has left strong garrisons all along the way to form his lines of communication, or has even sent out detachments to secure his freedom of movement and keep adjoining provinces from giving him trouble; once he has been weakened by a variety of losses in men and, materiel, the time has come for the defending army to take the field again. Then a well-placed blow on the attacker in his difficult situation will be enough to shake him."

Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*²²⁹

The guerrillas disrupted and, in some cases, closed off lines of communication between Japanese units, exacerbating command and control problems and making resupply over land difficult and perilous. It made forage in the countryside difficult and perilous. It wearied the Japanese who were homesick and alone with their morale ebbing.

"All guerrilla units must have political and military leadership. ... Such units may originate locally, in the masses of the people; they may be formed from an admixture of regular troops with groups of the people, or they may consist of regular army units intact.

"All these must have leaders who are unyielding in their policies--resolute, loyal, sincere and robust."²³⁰

Mao, Mao Tse-tung *On Guerrilla Warfare*

In the Korean case the admixture of surviving, fighting remnants of the government troops and officer corps with the volunteers insured political and military leadership for the guerrilla armies. They also had varied origins just as Mao outlined. It is clear that the "Righteous Armies" were guerrillas in the Maoist mold, or more accurately that Mao organized his guerrillas in the "Righteous Army" mold.

"The guerrilla must hammer away constantly. The enemy soldier caught in this operation is not allowed to sleep, his posts are attacked and systematically liquidated. Throughout the day in woods and crags, and throughout the night in open country, the enemy is made to feel that he is inside hostile jaws."

Che Guevara, *Che Guevara on Guerrilla Warfare*²³¹

The Korea "Righteous Armies" also measured up to Che Guevara's prescription to press the enemy relentlessly. It was always the Chinese, rather than the Koreans, who wanted to ease up.

Culminating Point of Victory

"As a war unfolds, armies are constantly faced with some factors that increase their strength and with others that reduce it. The question therefore is one of superiority. Every reduction in strength on one side can be considered as an increase on the other. It follows that this two-way process is to be found in attack as well as in defense."

Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*²³²

One might argue that the Japanese forces reached their culminating point of victory with the taking of P'yongyang and the nearly simultaneous loss of sea access to the west coast of the Korean Peninsula. This was abetted by their squandering the concentration of their remaining force by sending Kato off into the wilds of Hamgyong Province where he hunted Princes, tigers, Jurchens and taxes while the critical war raged in the southern three provinces and slowly strangled the Japanese effort.

The Japanese war aims were too great for the force invested and for the way the force was expended. The war aims were only adjusted downward years later when the more moderate aims, too, were extremely difficult to achieve although they might have been obtainable in 1592. The Japanese had passed their culminating point of victory before the armies of Li Jusung crossed the Yalu. Konishi may have sensed this more readily than those in Seoul and much more readily than Hideyoshi across the sea. The delayed command and control represented by Hideyoshi in Japan, coupled with the lack of unity of command in Korea, insured that the flexibility required to meet the changing circumstances would not be available. The Japanese had made strategic blunders and lost their opportunity:

"Thus the superiority one has or gains in war is only the means and not the end; it must be risked for the sake of the end. But one must know the point to which it can be carried in order not to overshoot the target; otherwise instead of gaining new advantages, one will disgrace oneself."

Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*²³³

Chapter XI. Parallels

Japan in the Russo-Japanese War

Japan's behavior in the Russo-Japanese War, her surprise attack on the Russian Fleet at Port Arthur prior to landing troops on the west coast of the Korean Peninsula, gain a new perspective when viewed in light of Japan's foreign adventure in Korea in the sixteenth century. Japan's obsession with protecting her sea lines of communication show that she learned a lesson from that old war and that it was still weighing heavily on her mind. Japan, moreover, built and continued to build both ships, including submarines, and airplanes that were leading edge technology. All this seems to me influenced by echoes of 1592.

China's Intervention in Korea 1950

Was it surprising that when the US-propelled UN juggernaut rumbled further and further north into China's Korean Peninsula client state, that China felt threatened and came to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's (DPRK) aid? I don't think that anyone who knew the history of the area would have thought so.

The big question is what happens if the DPRK invades the Republic of Korea (ROK) now? Will China feel threatened by a ROK-US advance into the DPRK which threatens the DPRK's survival

and might put a non-Communist government on China's border? I think that there is a reasonable assumption that China will try to protect the DPRK in the UN, but not on the battlefield if diplomacy is handled intelligently and if we make it a war against aggression and not an ideological crusade. China has emerged as one of the most important world economies and is climbing back into the world power rankings. China certainly would not wish to jeopardize this unless we force her hand through precipitous diplomatic or military action that would push her over the line. China now, it must be remembered, is the superpower of the remaining Communist states.

The Narrow Neck Strategy

Isn't it wonderful how history repeats itself? This was a losing strategy when it evolved in the sixteenth century and it is a loser now! The narrow neck strategy takes too much for the south in victory and leaves too little for the north in terms of resources and agricultural potential. It doesn't offer a viable surrender, but merely invites a fight to the bloody end. It also invites the Koreans to call to China for help and China, realizing that it is not viable would have been just as threatened by this as by a continued military advance. Mao was no such fool as to allow this strategy to fly. Would it be acceptable in a Korean War II? China might accept it, but I don't believe that either of the Koreas would.

Chapter XII. Insights--A Japanese "Manifest Destiny" in Asia?

Hideyoshi, the Greater East-Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere and Japan, Inc.

Hideyoshi's vision of Japanese domination of Asia did not die with him. The Japanese, like Hideyoshi, are the descendants of the sun. They know that they are different, separate and special. They saw themselves as having a special role to play in Asia. They see themselves as the rightful and worthy successors of the Chinese. They have, however, found out that they do not possess the military wherewithal to rule Asia for its own good by force and, additionally, have constitutionally renounced the use of force forever. Forever is a very long time. In the interim there is a new Japan vision and it is economic domination not military domination. Japan has sufficient force to protect its wealth and interests defensively from most would-be aggressors and has the economic warriors who are carrying the revised vision and agenda forward. Is this bad or evil? No, it is only competitive and only Japanese. Will they succeed in dominating Asia economically? No, I think not. But Japan will continue to be a major force in Asia and the world for a long time to come. It will be weakened internally, however, I predict, by rising expectations in younger generations and by lower productivity rates.

Chapter XIII. SUMMARY

The Impact of Yi Dynasty Korea's Brown Water Dominance on the
Japanese Invasion and the Future of Asia

"Naval warfare does not begin and end with the destruction of the enemy's battle-fleet, nor even with breaking his cruiser power. Beyond all there is the actual work of preventing his passing an army across the sea and of protecting the passage of our own military expeditions. ... In all such operations we are concerned with the exercise of command. We are using the sea, or interfering with its use by the enemy; we are endeavouring to secure the use or to prevent the enemy from securing it."

Corbett, *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy*²⁵

Corbett, the student of the Russo-Japanese War, neatly sums up the key role that Korean naval forces had in the defense of Korea from the invasion by Japan. The Koreans did not command the sea, nor did they need to--they need to contend for control, challenge for control in the littoral which they did quite successfully. They didn't forestall the passage of the Japanese armies over the sea, but they did help to choke off its supplies. For Korea, command of the sea was neither affordable, nor feasible; however, control of her shores was within the realm of possibility and was a key to her survival.

"This will begin to come clear the moment we begin to consider defence against invasion, which naturally takes the first place amongst operations for the exercise of control. ... In the case we have now to

consider--defence against invasion--the objective of the special operations is, and has always been, the enemy's army."

Corbett, *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy*²³⁵

With the several hundred ships and thousands of troops that the Koreans sent to the bottom of the sea went the access to the west and the ease of supply which the army on the land needed. The seat of the purpose was on land and it was gravely affected by the bloody work in the brown water south of Korea.

"A mass of transports and warships is the most cumbrous and vulnerable engine of war ever known. The weaker the naval defence of the threatened country, the more devoutly it will pray the invader may use this device."

Corbett, *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy*²³⁶

The Japanese provided Admiral Yi with the opportunity for lasting fame just as Spain provided Drake (born in the same year as Yi, harassed by his own government, cashiered and reinstated, all like Yi) the opportunity to attack one of the "most cumbrous and vulnerable engine(s) of war." They both did with inordinate success.

"Naval battle is attrition centered. Victory by maneuver warfare may work on land but it does not at sea. At sea, first effective attack is the aim of every tactical commander."

Hughes, *Fleet Tactics*²³⁷

Yi always had the smaller force compared to the Japanese. He had to work toward attrition and he did so aggressively.

Beyond attrition, he achieved fear. The Japanese avoided his territory and dreaded his approach. Hideyoshi himself ordered the fleet to avoid all battles with Yi. Yi continued his war of attrition against the enemy, effectively, to his dying breath.

Did Hideyoshi Have a Chance of Winning?

I think that the Japanese would have had the potential to take Korea and to take China and India, too, with a navy, a larger initial troop commitment, a faster and steadier op tempo, some luck and a well thought out strategy. Ming China fell shortly (1644) to the Jurchen (Manchu) tribes and I think the Jurchen were the real lurking variable.

How different might the history of the world been if not for the Korean navy's dominance of its own brackish brown water!

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