



*Icheojn Jeonjaeng Waegu – Geu yeoksa ui
hyeonjang ul chajaseo*

잊혀진 전쟁 왜구 – 그 역사의 현장을 찾아서 –

By Lee Young. Seoul: Hanguk Bangsongtongsindaehak Chulpanbu, Korea, 2007.

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As ethnic confrontation sharpens between Korea and Japan, the confrontation between scholars from the two countries focuses on the Japanese-inflicted wars as *Waegu* (J. Wakō) Invasions. Each side accusing the other as the aggressor in these conflicts further aggravates the problem when it comes to defining *Waegu*. Korean scholars define *Waegu* as the Japanese pirates who frequently looted the coastal towns of China and Korea while they cruised along in the coast in the name of trade. Likewise, the Japanese blame the Koreans as tormentors of Japanese during the Koryo and Choson dynasties. Studies conducted to refute the Japanese allegations include this book, among others of particular interest. Authored by Lee Young, Professor at the Korea National Open University, the Tokyo University Press published this book in 1999. This book features scholarly logic to refute Japanese allegations on the basis of evidence supported by cogent theory. Interestingly enough, the author finds a parallel between the wars led by great warriors such as *kugōnin*, *yamabushi*, *aburemono*, and *nobushi* during the chaotic period of North-South confrontation, and that waged

by *Waegu* against the people of the Goryeo (Koryō) Dynasty. Much of his scholarly concern concentrates on those wars waged during the period of 1350-1380.

This book consists of lengthy dissertations clustered around six chapters. In Chapter One, the author insists that the *Waegu* should be differentiated in terms of time; those who had aggrieved the Three Kingdoms were different from those tormentors of the Goryeo or Joseon (Chosŏn) dynasties. The *Waegu* who plundered Korea after 1350 were the siblings of the Sō clan behind which stood the feudal lord of Tsushima, Shōni Yorihasa. Chapter Two describes the *Waegu* invasion into the southern port of Masan. The strategic advantage of port in defending the looters lured them into Masan, where they long remained.

The *Waegu's* plunderings of the Korean sea shores went beyond the bounds of plundering pirates. Occasionally, operations escalated into all-out armed clashes between the two countries. Chapter Three provides vivid accounts for the three major wars fought in Korea, namely Hongsan battle (1376), Jinpogu (Chinp'ogu) battle (1380) and Hwangsan battle (1380). Together with the major battles, the author discusses the two previously unknown battles of Hyeolgye (Hyōlgye) and Gyubongsa (Kyubongsa) battle, giving their scenes a visual effect.

Chapter Three unfolds with the title of “*Waegu* and Hongsan battle.” A search of the historical and geographical literature identifies the site of the battlefield. His search revealed the naked nature of the battle through the comparison of strategies employed by the two sides. This battle attests to the strategy *Waegu* employed, identical to those used in the wars during the north-south confrontation period of Japan. Topographical features of Hongsan favored the strategy of Japan to penetrate deep into land from the seashore. Entitled “The Historical and Geographical Investigation of Jinpogu battle,” Chapter Four explains that the *Waegu* deployed 500 warships along the shore of Jangam-ri (Changam-ri), the present location of Janghang on the West coast. This location offered the advantage of navigation and geographical features

that favored the landing operation of Japanese fleet. Japanese warriors sanctified a nearby rocky mountain as the harbinger of victory. Chapter Five explicates the strategy used by the Japanese forces. Study of the strategy reveals that rather than a hastily organized combat outfit, the Japanese invaders represented an outstanding combat outfit adept in navigation, mountain and guerrilla warfare, and hardened through battle experience.

Chapter Six reviews the Hwangsan battle in terms of the Sunzi strategy which both sides employed. Depicted in a lively manner, the presentation of the battle draws on classical literature such as the History of Goryeo, the Summary of *History of Goryeo* and the *Annals of the Dynasty of Joseon*. The clash between Yi Sönggye and Ajibaldo, Commanding General of the Japanese forces, deserves special attention, since the result of the war would determine the fate of the waning monarch. Again, *Waegu* proved itself to a cohesive and seasoned combat outfit, hardly rivaled.

Having summed up the history of the Japan-imposed wars, Lee Yeong regarded the *Waegu's* invasion as a kind of war. By virtue of the scale of resources mobilized, the invasion assumes the aspect of a large-scale war. The author's view of the matter cast a few issues into doubt. The first one relates to the use of the word "war." To justify the use of this term, the author refers to the military expedition of the combined Mongol, Chinese, and Korean forces against Japan. Due to the intervention of Divine Wind, the forces aborted two such expeditions, one in 1274 and another in 1281. The author regards the *Waegu's* invasions as retaliatory acts whose scale and commitment of resources assumed the proportion of a war. The dictionary definition of war requires the commitment of the concerned countries not only to personnel and material resources, but to all means, military or diplomatic, to repel the opponent forces. If pirate plundering qualifies as war, the subject of retaliatory acts should be either the government or the military regime (*bakufu*) of Japan. None of the research conducted so far

provides clues to the person or entity in charge of the retaliatory acts. Equating the *Waegu's* invasion with a war, despite the ambiguity of the subject, cannot but be viewed as a flight of the imagination. The author's line of argument concurs with that of some Japanese scholars who justify the *Waegu's* invasion in 1350 as a retaliatory campaign. However, in this respect his argument cannot escape skepticism. After the second aborted Mongol campaign, *Waegu's* invasions remained in low profile until 1350, presumably because the Japanese feared possible invasion by formidable Mongol forces. The reason for the activation of the *Waegu's* invasion after 1350 may be found in the sustained political melee resulting from the north-south confrontation.

Another flaw of his argument lies in the equation of the *Waegu* with Al Qaeda terrorists. The extension of this equation puts the anti-*Waegu* struggle on a par with the current campaigns against terrorism. The United States spearheads anti-terror initiatives resulting from the September 11 attack on the World Trade Centers as a retaliatory campaign against terrorists. The phrase "war on terrorism" names a military campaign purporting, among other things, to overthrow the Taliban Regime of Afghanistan which many suspected of supporting the terrorists. In this sense, Goryeo engagement in struggles caused by the *Waegu's* intrusion - such as the Hongsan battle, the Jinpo-ri battle, and the Hwangsan battle - do not deserve the name of war against the *Waegu*. Rather, Pak Wi's expedition against Tsushima in the last stage of Goryeo (1389) and Yi Chongmu's expedition of Tsushima (1419) might as well be called a anti-*Waegu* War in the true sense of the word. These are the wars which brought Koryo troops to extirpate the source of *Waegu's* invasions.

This study most conspicuously departs from previous studies known for their exclusive dependence on the existent literature. On-site visits, coupled with the relevant theoretical background, made it possible to combine historical with geographical study, and to add vividness to the description of the battles. This study reveals that the Japanese intruded

with professionalized, battle-hardened fighters whose strategy identically matched that used by warriors during the north-south confrontation period. Even in the structural feature of the cavalry employed in the battlefield, the two strategies were strikingly identical. The strategic accord between the two proves that they adopted Sunzia's strategy hardly distinguished from *Taiheiki's* approach. This study also identifies the *Waegu* unit led by Ajibaldo in 1380 with a group of professional warriors previously hardened through battles in the north-south confrontation. A segment of Japanese scholars insists that Koreans formed an integral part of the *Waegu* unit and then extends this allegation to endorse the equation of Koreans with the *Waegu*. The author views these Koreans as collaborators whose dissidence against the government or motive to struggle for survival made them turn their backs against their own country. It should be noticed that they were merely the turncoats who should be distinguished from those who volunteered to join the *Waegu* outfit. In view of the prevailing situation, it is fair to place them in the psychic condition of hostages under the glaring scrutiny of captors. Aptly depicted by "Stockholm syndrome," under this condition the antipathy of hostages to captors gives way to sympathy or collaboration with the foes out of an appreciation for the warmth of heart that withheld harm from the hostages. If allowed to continue, this psychic state even turns hostages against the police who free them from their captivity. One may speculate that the immediate concern for survival in such a threatening situation could overshadow their sense of obligation to the country if they did not see an alternative. The dearth of material evidence seriously impedes the study of history. There is no other way but to rely on the existent materials like the *History of Goryeo* and the *Annals of the Dynasty of Joseon*. On the part of Japanese historians, the problem becomes more serious with the absence of relevant materials to conduct a study that might substantiate the equation of Koreans with the *Waegu*. The day when scholars might declare this equation as valid remains far away.