

## YI SUN-SIN: AN EXAMPLE OF A CONFUCIAN WARRIOR

**GRADES:** 6-12

**AUTHOR:** Kevin Richins

**SUBJECT:** History

**TIME REQUIRED:** 90-120 minutes

### **OBJECTIVES:**

1. Students will understand the narrative of Yi Sun-sin's life by reading and analyzing primary and secondary source documents.
2. Students will be able to explain how Yi Sun-sin is an example of Confucian virtues by citing evidence from primary and secondary sources.
3. Students will be able to create an original answer to a question using primary source evidence.

### **STANDARDS:**

#### **NCSS:**

Standard 2: Time, Continuity, and Change

Standard 4: Individual Development and Identity

Standard 5: Individuals, Groups, and Institutions

#### **Common Core Standards:**

RH 1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources

RH 2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source

RH 7 Integrate visual information with other information in print and digital texts

SL 1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions

### **MATERIALS REQUIRED:**

An overhead projection of the photo for photo analysis (transparency or LCD Projection)

Copies of handout 1 (Background Essay and photos of *kōbuksŏn*) for each student

2-3 Copies of handout 2 (Primary source analysis worksheets) for each student

1 set of handout 3 (Primary source information) for each team of students

### **BACKGROUND:**

Before teaching this lesson it may be helpful to familiarize students with Confucian values. There are many lessons that would help teach these concepts, but I will offer an overview here. One of the concluding activities in this lesson will ask students to look at why someone is a hero in America and in Korea. An understanding of Confucian values will make this discussion/analysis much easier.

During the medieval period of Japan Toyotomi Hideyoshi sought to unite all of the warlords under his rule. He successfully brought them under his control, but found that he could not control these nobles in absence of the threat of war. His ambition became to subject all of Asia to his rule. Thus Hideyoshi launched an invasion of the mainland of Asia. This brought him into direct conflict with Korea in 1592.<sup>1</sup>

The tale of this conquest is often told from the Japanese side, and is an episode in the story of unifying Japan. However in Korea this story of the Japanese invasion has a much different place in the national history. The destruction that was wrought upon the Korean people still echoes in the collective memory of Koreans.

The invasion, which lasted from 1592-1598, was a disaster for Korea. The battle hardened Japanese armies won victory after victory and brought humiliation, death, and destruction to the Korean peninsula. From this invasion tales of bravery, cowardice, valor, and vice have all entered into the Korean library of tales and history.

The Chosŏn Kingdom that ruled Korea from 1392-1910, had established itself on the virtues of Neo-Confucianism. The values of Neo-Confucianism were advanced during this time period. In general Neo-Confucians valued scholars and government officials over military men. This served a beneficial purpose in that it kept the military under civilian control to a large degree. Ambitious individuals saw the bureaucracy as the path to power, and not military conquest or coup. This allowed Korean government to be very stable. Unfortunately it also allowed Korea to be ill prepared for a determined invasion.

Korea's relationship with China as a "little brother" to her larger neighbor also put Korea in a poor position to repel the Japanese invasion. The Chinese offered Korea protection militarily, so there was little need for Korea to have a large and highly developed military. The distance for Chinese troops to travel in order to repel the Japanese invasion was another major cause for Korea's defeats during Hideyoshi's invasions.

Admiral Yi Sun-sin stands as a shining example during this dark time in Korea's history. He was able to score consistent victories against the Japanese against tremendous odds. Because of this Yi Sun-sin has been elevated in Korean consciousness to a nearly godlike level. He is revered as a savior of the nation in a time of terrible trial. He is a warrior, not a scholar, but when looking at his life and character one finds that his Confucian traits are emphasized as much as his military prowess.

*A note on pronouncing Yi Sun-sin. Sometimes Romanization of Korean words does not make it easy to know exactly how to pronounce a word. For the name Yi Sun-sin it is pronounced "EE" (like the letter "e") "soon" "sheen". I make special mention of that because Yi Sun-sin is the center of this lesson.*

## **PROCEDURE:**

1. Introduce the lesson with the Yi Sun-sin photo analysis. In this activity engage students in analyzing the photograph of a statue of Admiral Yi Sun-sin that is located in downtown Seoul Korea. (instructions are included with the photograph). As students analyze the photograph

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<sup>1</sup> Hooker, Richard. "Toyotomi Hideyoshi." Washington State University - Pullman, Washington. 1996. Web. 04 Sept. 2010. <<http://wsu.edu/~dee/TOKJAPAN/TOYOTOMI.HTM>>.

check that they are noting details of scale and the attitude of the statue. Also note the smaller statue that is located at the base of the pillar.

2. Debrief the student's photo analysis and solicit questions that the students may have about this statue. Some questions may include:

1. Why is this statue in the center of the city?
2. What did this person do to deserve a statue?
3. Why is his sword so big?
4. What do the Chinese words mean?
5. What is the thing at the base of the statue?

Students should draw some conclusions about him as well

1. He is probably an important military leader
2. An admiral from a long time ago
3. Someone who is still important to Korea today
4. Probably seen as a hero.

3. Discussion: Have students work with one or two others to brainstorm who are heroes in America. Have students answer the following questions about the heroes they think of.

- A. Is this hero a real person?
- B. What did this person do to make him or her a hero?
- C. What is it about this person that people should try to follow?

4. Lead the students in a discussion about what makes one a hero. Guide students to an understanding that heroes have "virtues" that people would like to emulate. These virtues are often revealed through stories of heroic deeds. These stories have a purpose, which is to show an example of what a righteous person should do, believe, and be. Use the examples students gave about heroes to illustrate this point.

5. Explain that in Korea there are also heroes. These people demonstrated virtues that many people in America would recognize as heroic. Such as:

- Bravery
- Honor
- Overcoming tremendous odds
- Enduring hardship

However, some Korean heroes also are examples of Confucian virtues. These virtues are based on the teachings of Confucius (Kung Fu-tze) who taught in China. His teachings spread to Korea and were adopted as the standard of righteous living. These virtues stressed

- Honoring family relationships
- Loyalty to one's leader

- True friendship
- Study and scholarship
- Following the traditions and ceremonies of the past
- Humility
- Faithful service
- Fulfilling one's duty in every situation

6. Explain to students that Admiral Yi Sun-sin was involved in a war to defend Korea from a Japanese Invasion from 1592-1598. Admiral Yi became unstoppable as he brought victory after victory to the Korea forces at sea. Through his accomplishments he became a hero, and one who was seen as an example of heroic and Confucian virtues.

7. Give students the background essay about the war. Read with students, or independently.

8. Yi Sun-sin inventions, battles, stories, and personality sort activity:

Divide students into teams of 3 or 4. Each team will get a collection of primary sources about Yi Sun-sin. Have students analyze the sources. (use the analysis worksheet attached) The students should be looking for what makes Yi Sun-sin a hero during his time period. (Use the attached handout for this activity) Students should read the sources more than once, and work as a team to make sure that every source is examined.

#### **ASSESSMENT:**

1. Students use the "Yi Sun-sin Primary Source Analysis Worksheet" to answer the question, "How was Yi Sun-sin a hero to Korea and an example of Confucian virtues?" Answers can take many forms. Students could:

- Write an essay answering the question
- Draw a graphic representation of Yi Sun-sin's virtues
- Act out a play of the various episodes in Yi Sun-sin's life that demonstrate these virtues.
- Create a poster that answers the question using images and paragraphs
- Create a PowerPoint slide show explaining the virtues
- Other...

The important thing is that students use the worksheet to facilitate their analysis of the sources, and then create something worthwhile from it.

#### **RESOURCES:**

Hooker, Richard. "Toyotomi Hideyoshi." 1996.

<http://wsu.edu/~dee/TOKJAPAN/TOYOTOMI.HTM> (accessed September 4, 2010).

Lee, Peter H trans. *The Record of the Black Dragon Year*. 1 ed. Translated by Peter H. Lee. Korea: University of Hawaii, 2000.

Yi, Sun-Sin, trans. *Nanjung Ilgi* [War Diary of Admiral Yi Sun-sin]. Edited by Pow-Key Sohn. Translated by Tae-Hung Ha. Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 1977.

Yu, Song-Nyong, trans. *Book of Corrections: Reflections on the National Crisis During the Japanese Invasion of Korea, 1592-1598*. Translated by Byung Hyun Choi. Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, 2002.

### PHOTO ANALYSIS INSTRUCTIONS

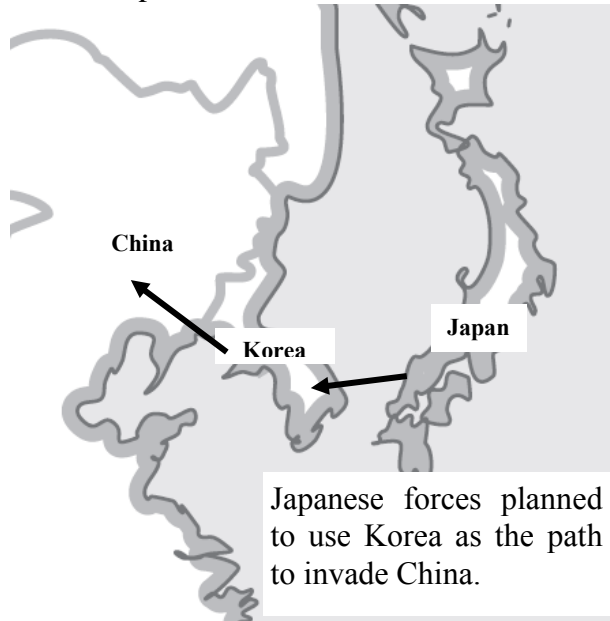
1. On a piece of paper write down your general observations of this photograph.
2. Divide the photograph into quadrants.
3. Look at each quadrant separately (it helps to use a couple pieces of paper to hide the quadrants you are not looking at) and write down a very *detailed* list of observations from that quadrant.
4. Write down questions you have about what you observed.
5. Write down ideas that you have about the meaning of this photograph.



Handout 1  
**JAPANESE INVASION OF KOREA 1592-1598**  
**Background Essay**

Toyotomi Hideyoshi had a desire to unite all of Japan under his rule. He had moved up in the army of his local Daimyo (lord), Oda Nobunaga, from a regular soldier to become a great general. Nobunaga had made a lot of progress in uniting the Daimyo of the regions of Japan under him, but he could not unite all of Japan together. After his death, Hideyoshi tried to accomplish what his master could not.

Through battle and strength Hideyoshi found he was successful in gaining the loyalty of all of the Daimyo of Japan. This meant that he now controlled all of the Japanese islands. But to have control is not the same as being able to keep control. Hideyoshi was afraid that some of the Daimyo might take their warriors and overthrow him. He also believed that he could use the now united Japan to take over the mainland of Asia. He set his sights on China.



Hideyoshi wanted to use Korea as his road to conquest in China. The Koreans had a strong relationship with the Chinese and refused to allow the Japanese to march their armies through Korea to attack China. The Koreans informed the Chinese of what was being planned by the Japanese, but there was not enough time to get armies from China to protect Korea. In 1592 Hideyoshi launched his invasion of the mainland by attacking Korea.

Korea was not ready for a war. The Japanese forces were battle hardened and won massive victories as soon as they landed in Korea. Their march north through Korea quickly brought them to the capital of the Chosŏn kingdom,

Seoul. The Korean King was forced to flee from the invaders as his armies were no match for the Japanese force. Armies were coming from China to help, but it would take some time for them to arrive. In the mean time, the Koreans were hoping to find a way to slow down the advancing Japanese armies. This hope was found with the appointment of Yi Sun-sin to lead the naval forces of the Koreans.

Admiral Yi would use the naval forces of the Koreans to keep supplies and reinforcements from the Japanese armies. He would gain many victories against much larger Japanese forces, and keep the Japanese from being able to maintain their forces on Korean soil. Admiral Yi's successes have made him a hero to the Korean people. His adventures are inspiring, and his virtues have been used to show the right way to behave.

## Reproduction of *kōbuksōn*

A large scale reproduction of Yi Sun-sin's *kōbuksōn*, based on written accounts. It is housed in the War Memorial of Korea



Interior view of *kōbuksōn* reproduction.





Handout 2

**Yi Sun-sin Primary Sources Analysis Worksheet**

Use the chart below to keep track of the sources you analyze about Yi Sun-sin.

1. Read the source through first without writing anything to get an idea what the source is saying.
2. Summarize what was said in the source on the chart.
3. Read the source one more time, noting “heroic virtues” and “Confucian virtues”. Note a specific quote, line, or paragraph that highlights that virtue.

<b>Source (Title: Subtitle)</b>	<b>Summary</b>	<b>Heroic Virtues</b>	<b>Confucian Virtues</b>
<b>Source (Title: Subtitle)</b>	<b>Summary</b>	<b>Heroic Virtues</b>	<b>Confucian Virtues</b>


## Handout 3

### Sources on Admiral Yi Sun-sin

In the following pages you will find information about Yi Sun-sin written during the time when he lived. These primary sources are from the “Nanjung Ilgi” Yi Sun-sin’s own diary that he wrote during the war, from “The Record of the Black Dragon Year” a book of popular fiction written not long after the war, from “The Book of Corrections” which is a reflection on the events of the war from the prime minister of Korea during the war with Japan. Also included are some photographs and drawings of the Gobukson, or turtle ship, that Yi Sun-sin used against the Japanese in the war, to help visualize the weapons he was using.

*Note: The spelling of some names are inconsistently rendered when transliterated into roman letters. In many sources Yi Sun-sin is spelled, Yi Sunsin. To be true to the original source, spelling has been kept in context as much as possible.*

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#### Source from “The Record of the Black Dragon Year”

Continuing with our story... there was a person whose family name was Yi and his given name Sunsin. ... He had lost his parents at an early age and was now twenty years old. He was a person of magnificent spirit; he could lift three thousand pounds; and he daily practiced horsemanship and archery.

At this time he said with great joy, “This is an opportune time. With my talent I will deliver millions of people.” He left home and endeavored to build a boat by the sea, waiting to be summoned by the court. In general, the boat was ten thousand feet in length and ten fathoms in height, and its four sides were rounded so that on water could enter. Seen from afar, it looked like a large turtle floating on the water. He built several thousand and called them *kōbüksōn* (turtle ships)

He then went to various bureaus, directing and pressing for military provisions and horse fodder. He went down to Chōngju and saw the provincial intendant Paek Naesu, and said: “Now the Japanese bandits are everywhere, so please send a message to the king quickly. If the king summons me, I will repel the enemy with my own sword.”

The impendent replied with great joy: I have already sent several dispatches, but there’s been no news. It must be because the roads are blocked. Please take action against the marauders at once, general. There are twenty thousand soldiers assembled from seven villages. Achieve merit and protect the Altars of Soil and Grain.” Yi Sunsin readily agreed to put Paek Sūngsu in charge of transporting military supplies and launched an attack against the Japanese invaders. Mahūng invaded the seven villages south of Chōlla province. Entering a large river, he sent a dispatch ahead. Yi Sunsin, with a helmet that displayed the sun and moon, wearing star studded armor, carrying a seven foot long sword in his hand, and riding a Mongol horse, came out surrounded by soldiers and provoked a fight.

The Japanese general Madūng, who led naval forces of ten thousand soldiers waiting at sea, cried: “Yi Sunsin! Little boy! Come out at once! Let’s test our skills in sea battle!” So Yi Sunsin,

overjoyed, gathered his boats into formation in the shape of the graph *myo* (rabbit) in the water, killed fifty thousand Japanese bandits beneath the waves, and then surfaced.

Mahŭng, who had been in the base camp, came running and said: “Sunsin, do not harm my soldiers.” As columns of flames arose from somewhere, Yi Sunsin looked away in surprise. Mahŭng, taking out an arrow, shot Yi Sunsin in the chest. Madŭng, in turn, raised a sword, cut off Yi Sunsin’s head, and held it up. With a sigh he said: “Because of this single child, tens of thousands of generals and soldiers are now lonely underwater spirits.”

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### Selections from “The Book of Corrections”

#### *A description of Yi Sun-sin as a boy*

When Yi Sunsin was a little boy, he was very intelligent and so high-spirited that no one could restrain him. When he played with his friends, he liked playing with bows and arrows, and he tried to shoot the eyes of people he disliked when they passed by him. Because of this, even elderly people became afraid of Yi and tried to avoid passing by the gate of his house. When Yi grew up, he passed the state examination for the military service because he was good at archery. Yi’s family, traditionally, had been in the civil service for generations, but it distinguished itself in the military starting with Yi’s generation.

#### *A story of Yi Sun-sin as a young man*

After passing the military examination, Yi was appointed an officer of the Military Training Command. At that time, Minister of War Kim Kwiŏng wanted to make Yi his son-in-law by giving him his daughter, born of his concubine, but Yi refused. Someone asked Yi about the reason. He answered, “I have just entered the government service. How can I dare seek promotion by making a connection with a powerful family?”

#### *A description of Yi Sun-sin’s virtues*

Yi Sunsin was a man who seldom spoke or laughed. His appearance was so dignified and graceful he looked like a scholar devoted to his work, but the man inside was very tough and courageous. His selfless sacrifice and dedication to his country were the outcome of self-cultivation that he practiced in his daily life.

#### *How Yi Sun-sin related to his family*

He had two elder brothers, ... but they passed away before him. Yi Sunsin took care of the children left by his brothers as if they were his own. He married off his nephews and nieces before his own children.

#### *A description of the turtle ships and how they were used*

...Yi Sunsin had created the turtle ships. Covered by wooden planks on top, they looked like turtles with their middle sections raised and the remaining parts toward the edges lowered

gradually. Inside the ship, there were soldiers as well as cannons and firearms on all sides, left and right, in the front and in the rear. Moreover, they were so fast and nimble that they looked like spinning spindles.

Whenever our ships encountered the enemy, they fired cannons and destroyed enemy ships, launching a joint attack with other ships. Their concerted attacks proved to be so effective that the air was filled with fire and smoke, and numerous enemy ships were burned down and sank. The commander of the enemy was in one of the tall ships equipped with an observation deck on top, and it was decorated with red silk and colorful blankets. Our cannon also hit this ship, and those on board were all drowned. After that, there were still many more battles, but the enemy continued to suffer defeats and, finally, fled...

#### *A description of Yi Sun-sin's first major battle*

...leading forty battleships ... Yi Sunsin arrived in Koje... Yi said, "The sea of this area is narrow and the water is shallow. It will be hard to turn the ships around. What we should do is lure the enemy into the wider sea, pretending that we are defeated and anxious to run away from them." Frustrated and angered Won Kyun wanted to fight the enemy straightforwardly. Yi said to Won Kyun, "You seem to know little about warfare. If you do not listen to me you will most certainly lose." In a moment, Yi lifted his banner and led his battleships out to the wider sea, and, excited to see that our forces were retreating, the enemy immediately pursued Yi's fleet. As soon as his fleet came out of the narrow pass, Yi beat the drum once, and with that sound all his ships turned around and made a battle formation in the middle of the sea. His intention was sail straight into the battleships of the enemy, the distance between the two sides being only several scores of paces.

...The enemy originally planned to attack us from the west side with the joint army of land and sea, but as a result of this single defeat in the battle with Yi Sunsin, they lost their momentum, and Yukinaga dared not advance any further...

#### *A description of Yi Sun-sin wounded in battle*

One day, while leading the battle, Yi Sunsin was hit on the left shoulder by a stray bullet; the blood ran all the way down to his toes, but he did not say a word about it until the battle was over. He had the bullet which lodged a couple of inches deep pulled out of his shoulder. The people who saw it turned pale, but Yi just talked and laughed as if nothing had happened.

*An account of the arrest and imprisonment of Yi Sun-sin. Note that the one who accuses him is the one he rescued in the previous account. In general Yi Sun-sin had enemies that were jealous of his accomplishments, and the Japanese also try to trick him into falling into a trap. When he refuses to attack the Japanese in a very suspicious situation, his enemies have a solid reason to have him arrested.*

Yi Sunsin was arrested and imprisoned. At first Won Kyun was on friendly terms with Yi. He appreciated the help that Yi gave him during the time of crisis, but their relationship soon began to deteriorate in the process of claiming the credit victory against the Japanese.

Won Kyun was cunning and treacherous in nature and had extensive connections with government officials both in the capital and other regions throughout the country. Therefore, he did everything in his power to accuse in his opponent.

Prior to Yi Sunsin's imprisonment, Konishi Yukinaga, a general of the Japanese forces in Korea, often sent one of his men names Yozira to the camp of Kim Ungso... to establish a friendly relationship and build mutual confidence. Yozira passed secret information to Kim that Kiyomasa and his troops would be on their way to Korea in the near future. He said, "I heard our commander Yukinaga declare, 'The reason the recent peace negotiations failed is because of Kiyomasa. I am sick of him. I am sure he will cross the sea sooner or later. Since the Korean navy is good at fighting at sea, it will defeat or even kill him if it goes out and launch an attack on him in the middle of the sea. So, this opportunity should not be missed.' This is what he said."

Kim Ungso immediately sent a report on the information he had obtained, and the people in the court took it for fact. [They] unceasingly submitted requests to the king that he order Yi Sunsin to go out and fight the enemy. However, Yi Sunsin tried to delay his move for many days because he became suspicious of a trap in the given information.

After a while, Yozira paid a visit to our camp once again and said, "Kiyomasa has already landed. Why did you not attack him?" And he pretended that he was truly sorry that we had missed a good opportunity to win a battle. As this came to be known, the general opinion of the court was turning against Yi Sunsin...it was decided that Yi be arrested and that Won Kyun replace Yi as the new regional navy commander. ...Yi was tortured only once and his sentence reduced. The final sentence was to deprive Yi of his military rank and make him serve in the army as a private soldier.

Yi's old mother, living in Asan, was so shocked and heartbroken to hear the news of her son's imprisonment that she soon passed away. Being released from jail, Yi reported to the garrison of Kwon yul. On the way to his assignment, he happened to pass by Asan, where he mourned the death of his mother, wearing sackcloth. The people were very saddened to hear the news.

*A description of Yi Sun-sin's behavior while in jail*

When Yi was in jail, his future appeared to be doomed, and no one could tell what would happen to him. One of his jailers approached Yi's nephew named Yi Pun and whispered into his ear, "With a little money you can buy his freedom." Listening to his nephew talk about the idea of bribing the jailor, Yi became indignant. He said, "If death is my destiny, I must accept it. How can I beg for life by taking the wrong way?" This indicates the intensity of his integrity.

*An account of Yi Sun-sin being restored to his command.*

*Under Won Kyun's command, the Korean navy was crushed by the Japanese. The history records that Won Kyun was prideful and foolish. It compares Yi Sunsin's strengths with Won Kyun's Weaknesses. In the end Yi Sunsin was sought to lead the Korean navy again]*

When the report arrived that our navy was defeated at Hansan Island, both the court and the people were alarmed and dismayed. The king called in the officials ...[they said] "This happened because of Won Kyun. The best thing to do is to reappoint Yi Sunsin as the commander of the navy." The king followed their advice.

... Yi had a tough time reaching the naval base because the Japanese, at that time, were very high in spirit. ... Hiding himself from the enemy and often taking detours, he walked day and night until he finally reached Chindo. There he gathered scattered soldiers and made preparations to fight the enemy.

When he first arrived in the island of Chindo, Yi Sunsin managed to secure a dozen battleships. ... Matashi, the commander of the enemy, was famous for his battles at sea. He led more than two hundred warships to invade our West Sea...

After loading his twelve warships with cannons, Yi Sunsin launched an attack on the enemy using the sea currents to his advantage. The Japanese were defeated and ran away, and as the result of this victory, the reputation and prestige of our navy [led by Yi Sunsin] soared.

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*This account from the Nanjung Ilgi describes, in Yi Sun-sin's words, the battle mentioned above.*

Early in the morning a special scouting unit reported, "The enemy vessels in countless numbers, having passed the Channel of Myongnyang, enter the area where we have our positions." At once I ordered all ships in my fleet, including my Flagship, to weigh anchor and I led them out to sea. Soon after one hundred and thirty odd enemy vessels enveloped us. Our ships' Captains lost their fighting morale at the sight of the enemy's overwhelming strength of numbers, and used various devices to fall out from the line of battle. ...I had our oarsmen row the Flagship swiftly and dash forward like an arrow while our gunners at my signal poured down fire on the enemy vessels from our "Earth" and "Black" type cannons. The cannon balls burst on the enemy vessels like a hailstorm, and the fire arrows flying from the bows of men standing on the Flagship fell like rain. Before this attack the enemy only milled around and did not dash against us. Being surrounded two and three deep by the enemy vessels, however, the officers and men on our ships looked at each other with fear. At this time I reassured them once again in a quiet voice "The

enemy vessels are many, but they cannot come to attack us. Have no fear, but shoot them with all your might.” Then I looked around for our ships, which had fallen far astern. I thought of turning the bow of my Flagship to issue my commands, but if I did, the enemy will come nearer and I would find myself between the devil and the deep sea – impossible to advance or turn back. Just then a fresh idea flashed in my mind. I blew a horn and ordered my Staff Officers to raise a military command flag together with a call signal, accompanied by shell trumpets, then the ship of Kim Ung... drew nearer to my flagship preceded by the ship of An Wi... Standing on the bridge of my Flagship, I roared, “An Wi! Do you wish to die at my order? An Wi, do you wish to die under court martial? If you escape where can you find a place to live?” Then An Wi plunged into the line of battle. Next, I called Kim Ung-ham, and roared “As leader of the central squadron, you fell far astern and would not come to rescue your Commanding Admiral. How can you escape from your guilt?” I wanted to execute him right away, but since the attacking enemy was so near and so dangerous, I gave him an opportunity to redeem himself with a fine military feat. As the two ships were darting toward the enemy position, the enemy’s flagship ordered two ships under its command to attack, then the enemy hordes like black ants climbed up An Wi’s ship. Seeing this An Wi’s sailors fought them off desperately... I ordered my men to turn the bow of Flagship and to dash forward under cover of gun-fire and fire-arrows. In a moment three enemy vessels were burnt and turned over.

[At this point in the battle the body of the Japanese commander was found in the water by Yi. Yi commanded the body cut into pieces which destroyed the enemy morale.]

Knowing that the enemy could come to fight us no more, our ships, beating drums and shouting battle cries, darted forward, and attacked the enemy vessels, shooting cannons marked “Earth” and “Earth” and “Black”, whose bursting detonations shook the seas and the mountains. Together with the rain of arrows, they destroyed thirty-one enemy vessels in this single battle. The enemy scattered and returned no more.

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These accounts from “The Book of Corrections” give an account of the impressions he made on people and Yi Sun-sin’s death.

*An Account of Yi Sun-sin viewed as a god of war.*

When ... Yi Sunsin stayed in the garrison, he never took off his armor because he was always on guard against the enemy.

One day when he had a standoff with the enemy... the masts of the entire war fleet were lowered. That night the moonlight was very bright. Still wearing his armor, Yi lay down with his head on a war-drum. All of a sudden, he raised himself and sat up. ...he sent for all the commanding officers and said, “Being so cunning and tricky, the Japanese will attack us not only when there is no moon but also when the moon is bright like tonight. The moon is indeed very bright tonight, and I want you to be more watchful.”

With this warning, he ordered all the masts of his warships to be raised high at the sound of horns. He also sent a messenger to the vanguard ships in which the soldiers were sleeping. He woke them up to get ready for battle.



After a little while, our scouts ran in and reported the advancement of the enemy fleet. At that time the moon was hanging on the western mountains, which reflected the mountains upside down, and half of the sea was covered by their dim shadow. Out of that shadowy darkness countless enemy warships emerged and approached our ships. At that moment, a battleship in the center of our fleet raised roaring shouts, firing cannons at the enemy, and the rest of our ships responded at this signal. The enemy realized that we were waiting for them and discharged their muskets all at once. The sound of their guns shook the sea, and the bullets rained down into the water. However they would not dare advance further and soon disappeared to where they had come from. [So much impressed by Yi's wonderful foresight], his generals regarded Yi as a god, not a man.

*An account of the death of Yi Sun-sin*

Yi Sunsin and Chen Lin of Ming China had blocked the entry to the sea... Watching the Japanese forces approach, Yi Sunsin launched out against them and broke them apart, burning more than two hundred enemy battleships and killing countless enemy soldiers. ... Despite the arrows and pellets, Yi fought bravely but was hit by a stray bullet that went through his chest. His aides carried him inside, and Yi said, "Since we are in the middle of a battle, do not tell anyone about my death." With these words, he breathed his last.

Yi's nephew... concealed the death of his uncle as he was told to, pressing the soldiers to fight harder. Therefore no one knew about Yi's death until the battle was over.

...Hearing the news of Yi's death both our soldiers and the Chinese cried aloud as if they had lost their own father. As the hearse carrying Yi's body passed through villages, people set up a memorial table for the dead and mourned aloud, holding on to his hearse. They cried out, "You truly saved us. How can you abandon us now, and where are you going?" The vehicle carrying Yi's hearse could not move forward because the road was filled with wailing crowds, and there was hardly anyone who did not shed tears. ...the residents of coastal areas voluntarily gathered together to build a shrine and named it Minch'ungsa (Shrine of a Loyal Patriot). They regularly held memorial services at this shrine every year.