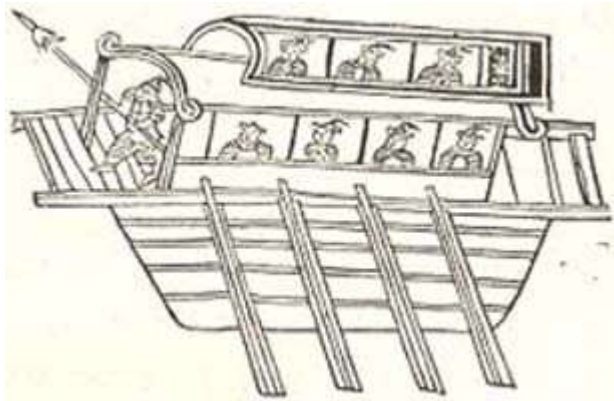


Sea battles

■ The History of Korea's sea Battles

1. Ancient Times

Korea's first maritime activity ever recorded was the maritime trading between Gojoseon (an ancient Korean country) and the country of Je, located in the Shandong region of China during the period of Warring Nations in China. As Je was one of the most culturally advanced countries, Gojoseon attempted to make alliances with Je in spite of its poor maritime transportation ability. In order to do so, Gojoseon must have risked the threat of Yeon, another Chinese country, located north of Je. The first foreign invasion of Korea via sea was Han's invasion of Wiman Joseon (another ancient Korean country). Though records do not exist, we can imagine that Wiman Joseon must have confronted the Chinese navy with their naval forces



Dongchong, an Ancient Chinese Ship

A special naval war vessel which was designed to move fast to attack enemy vessels.



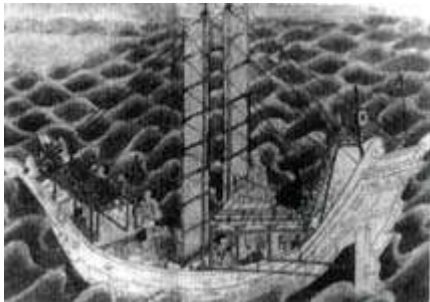
Ruseon, an Ancient Chinese War Vessel

Ruseon had a canopy on board and was propelled by both oars and sails.

2. The Three Kingdom Period

Baekje was most vigorously engaged in maritime activities among the three kingdoms. There were frequent contacts between Baekje and Japan, though the distance from Baekje to Japan was much farther than the distance from Silla to Japan. It was because in Baekje Kingdom, people had a higher level of culture and technology than Silla and they were keenly interested in overseas trade. Relying on its powerful naval forces, Baekje, in cooperation with Japan, went on a military expedition to the seven countries around the Nam River, countries were closely associated with Silla, in A.D. 227. On the way back, Baekje conquered the country of Tamna. Baekje was such a naval power that it stationed its forces to the west of the Liaoheo, northern China, and at the mouth of the Yangtse River. However, for some unknown reason, maritime activities of Baekje began to decline at the end of the 4th century. When the 40,000 forces of Goguryeo's Gwanggaeto the Great invaded Baekje along the Yellow Sea coast in A.D. 396, Baekje could not prevent the enemy from landing at the mouth of the Han River. A few centuries later when the united

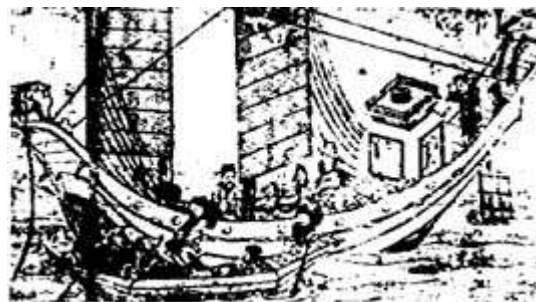
forces of Silla and Tang attacked Baekje from the Yellow Sea, Baekje could not even think about defending the country by the sea. It is an irony that Baekje, once a strong naval power, was destroyed by a foreign invasion of the sea. Goguryeo had not only a powerful army but also a powerful navy. Goguryeo was well aware that the logistics of supplies was the key to China's invasions on the Korean Peninsula. Goguryeo strengthened its navy as well as its army. When Sui of China attacked Goguryeo in A.D. 598, Goguryeo's navy killed 90% of the Chinese navy. When Emperor Yang of Sui invaded Goguryeo, Geonmu, the king's brother, and General Uljimundeok took charge of the navy and the army respectively, and defeated the Chinese forces. The invasion of Emperor Tae of Tang was successfully blocked in the sea area ranging from the mouth of the Yalu to the mouth of the Liaohe River. Silla witnessed the least maritime activities among the three kingdoms. Due to the existence of Baekje and Goguryeo to the north of Silla, people of Silla was prevented from exchanging with mainland China directly. Moreover, the unfriendly relations with Japan interfered with Silla's seafaring to the south. Indeed, there is no record that Silla ever defeated even one of Japan's invasions from the sea which had started since Silla's foundation. The Silla Kingdom did not pay much attention to strengthening its navy. It was not until Silla conquered the region around the Han River when Silla started direct overseas trade with Tang. Silla was able to mobilize large-sized naval forces when the united forces of Silla and Tang attacked Baekje. Silla is said to have built over 100 naval vessels and sailed west along the Han River to meet the Chinese forces at the present Deokjeokdo.



Baekje's Diplomatic Vessels to Tang



A Baekje Vessel



A Silla Vessel

3. United Silla

During the United Silla period, much attention was given to maritime activities immediately after the unification of the three kingdoms. For example, King munmu established the Department of Vessels and he even pledged to become a sea dragon after his death so that he could defend his country. However, Silla's maritime

activities were limited to marine transportation to and from Tang. Silla people lost interest in the navy because it kept peaceful relations with Tang, and Japan did not cause much trouble for Silla because of its concern for its own internal affairs. The establishment of Cheonghaejin as the base of foreign maritime trade by Jang Bogo came from the awareness that marine trade without naval support inevitably entailed a lot of risk. Also the strong naval power formed by Jang Bogo was the result of Silla's economic prosperity accumulated over a long time period. But the assassination of Jang Bogo by his subordinate in the political turmoil brought the sudden downfall of Cheonghaejin.



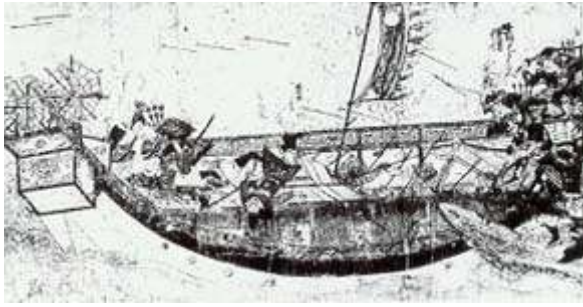
A Vessel of Silla which Ennin Took to Japan during Jang Bogo's Time



A Canoe-Shaped Earthenware Vessel

4. Goryeo

Goryeo, founded by Wang Geon, seems to have been interested in building and maintaining its naval forces. Goryeo reunited the post-three kingdoms after the downfall of Silla by mobilizing large-sized naval forces in order to defend the present Naju area. However, Goryeo's stake in the navy weakened after its reunification of the post-three kingdoms. It was mainly because Goryeo had to defend itself against the invasions of northern Manchurian peoples, all the while, having little time or room to strengthen the navy. As Goryeo prohibited private trade with Sung, the maritime activities on the Yellow Sea could not help weakening. However, it is noteworthy that Goryeo was able to maintain its government through the sea transportation of goods after Goryeo moved its capital to Ganghwado Island against the Mongol invasion. Goryeo's lack of interest in fortifying the navy eventually led to frequent raids by Japanese pirates. Japanese pirates not only frequented the southern coast of Gyeongsangdo, Jeollado and Chungcheongdo but they also went north, to the coast of Gyeonggido, close to the capital. The Goryeo government was not able to defeat Japanese pirates, who were one of the main causes of Goryeo's decline.



A War Vessel of Goryeo



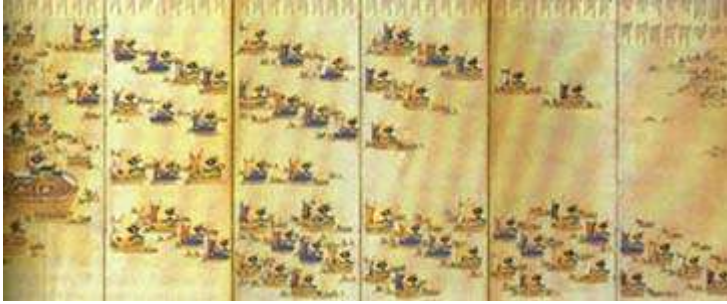
A War Vessel of Goryeo



A Goryeo Vessel Inscribed on a Bronze Mirror

5. Joseon

The maritime activities of Joseon were not so much different from those of Goryeo, its predecessor. Ming moved its capital to Beijing, which was located much closer to the northern border of Joseon than China's previous capital. Therefore, Joseon's diplomats depended on the land routes to visit China more than the sea routes and Joseon did not pay as much attention to the maritime activities. After the victory over Tsushima, during the reign of King Sejong, the raids of Japanese pirates decreased. Korea's conventional view of the Japanese as barbarians led Joseon to abhor Japan and contact with Japan was neglected. As a result, there was only a unilateral attempt by Japan to trade with Joseon. The lack of information about Japan caused Joseon to lose battles at the beginning of the Imjin War. The victory of Admiral Yi Sunshin in the Imjin War was not really the result of maritime strategies of the Joseon government, and many historians think that the wartime administration of Joseon was suspicious of Yi Sunshin's activities, for he seemed to be constantly expanding the naval forces. The naval forces dominated by one individual were regarded as a threat to the central government. Though Joseon recognized the importance of the navy because of the Imjin War, it again neglected strengthening the navy once the truce was reached between Joseon and the Tokugawa administration of Japan.



6.The Korean War

The Korean War started with the surprise attack of the North Korean forces. The Republic of Korea's Navy was inferior to its North Korean opponent in terms of military power and supplies. However, starting with the victories at the battle of Okgye and the battle at the Strait of Daehan, the Korean Navy gradually began to take control of the sea. The Incheon Landing Operation, led by United Nations Forces and the Korean Navy, confirmed Korea's control of the sea over the North Korean Navy. The Incheon Landing Operation was undertaken by the Seventh Mobile Unit of the United Nations Forces, on September 15, 1950: A total of 261 vessels(225 vessels from the U.S.A., 12 from the United Kingdom, 3 from Canada, 2 from Australia, 2 from New Zealand, 1 from France, and 15 from Korea) and 70,000 forces participated in the operation. By blocking behind the enemy's logistic lines, the war situation was turned in favor of Korea and the United Nations Forces.



An Aerial View of Incheon Landing Operation



The Landing Forces Boarding the LST in Incheon Landing Operation



The landing forces on board the LST are heading toward Incheon.



Vessels in the Middle of Landing



Landing Vessels at Weolmido



Landing Vessels at Weolmido



Supplies Being Shipped to the front



Streets of Incheon Afire