

# Neglect of Self-Defense Invites Invasions

By Yang Sung-jin  
Staff Reporter

Chief investigators from Korea and the United States are scheduled to hold their first meeting this week to discuss for a joint probe into the Nogun-ri massacre.

The investigation into the massacre of civilian refugees by U.S. troops during the 1950-53 Korean War may reveal how and why hundreds of Koreans were killed upon orders from U.S. Army commanders.

Whatever the outcome of the joint investigation, the Nogun-ri massacre would not have happened if the nation had been prepared for possible attacks from North Korea.

A similar logic can be applied to the military preparedness of Choson Kingdom which suffered numerous invasions from hostile neighboring countries.

The general perception is that Choson did not pay much attention to the military buildup, which led to the Japanese Invasion of 1592 and the Manchu Invasion of 1636.

But according to annals articles, the nation did make great efforts to defend itself against foreign invasions in the earlier period.

For instance, the Choson court was eager to learn techniques to manufacture swords and spears from Japan in the 15th century.

At the time, the Japanese sharpened their edge when it came to battle-oriented swords and spears.

Occasionally, Japanese diplomats visiting Korea presented refined swords to the Choson government as gifts in a show of their advanced technology.

On June 1 of 1430, King Sejong awarded Sim Ul, a naval officer who crossed the East Sea to Japan and acquired skills necessary to produce a Japanese sword.

Impressed by the high-quality sword made by Sim Ul, King Sejong gave clothes and food to him, while exempting the naval officer from his military duty.

In September of 1628, the Ministry of Military Affairs filed an appeal to King Injo over the declining military power: "In every battle, fighting with swords is the key to securing the final victory. King Sonjo knew the principle and that's why he ordered every military official to practice swordsmanship. But nowadays military offi-



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Seen above is part of "Pusan Garrison Fight" (National Treasure No. 391), a painting depicting Choson soldiers fighting against the Japanese invaders during the 1592 Hideyoshi Invasion.

cials do not practice with swords, which is deeply regrettable."

Certainly, the Choson kings and officials tried to beef up military readiness in the 15th century. As a result, the nation enjoyed an extended period of peace and stability.

In the following period, officials began to ignore military issues, taking the hard-earned peace for granted.

Moreover, today's historians point out King Sejo's coup as a key factor that undercut the overall military policy of Choson.

King Sejo staged a military coup and took over the throne of his nephew, King Tanjong, by force. Therefore, King Sejo understood the

tremendous ramification of the military power better than anyone else.

As soon as King Sejo settled down in the court, he began to reign in the military and weapons production in a bid to block any attempt of future military coup.

The tight control on the production of military weapons stifled innovation in technology, thus downgrading the nation's self-defense level.

At the same time, officials in charge of weapons production and management lost a sense of discipline.

In June of 1463, state-owned weapons were stolen and officials

involved were punished. In 1467, an official named No Cho-kyung was arrested on the charge of illegally producing weapons for private purposes.

Notably, a movable rocket named "Shinkichon," which played a key role in fighting off invaders in the earlier period of Choson, became a ritualistic tool.

According to an article dated on Oct. 20, 1456, when the court staged a royal procession, Shinkichon was used as a tool to create smoke in the background.

The humiliating downgrade of Shinkichon reached a climax when King Yonsangun ordered officials to use the powerful weapon for pleasure-seeking

in May of 1506.

"When I play at Mangwonjong, let no ship approach the pavilion. Use Shinkichon to fire shots at any intruder as a warning," the notorious tyrant said.

During the reign of King Chungjong, the military issue was pushed aside, giving priority to national affairs.

For instance, officials asked the king to produce weapons by melting huge bells at Hunchon and Hungduk Temples in 1512 but the material for military purposes never reached the furnace.

Instead, the bells were melted to produce bowls and kitchenware.

In the mid-16th century, Japanese sea-borne pirates began to assault Choson villages with gunpowder and explosives.

In 1555, a group of Japanese pirates raged in the southern coastal areas, which alarmed the Choson court.

Desperate to resolve the problem, court officials asked the king to melt bells at the East Gate and South Gate in Seoul to produce necessary military weapons.

But King Myongjong did not buy the idea. Officials filed another appeal, which was also rejected by the king who deemed the bell as an important Buddhist symbol.

"Although the objects are useless, we should not destroy them recklessly. The enemies can be quickly tamed if we dispatch a skillful military general who can handle the matter wisely," King Myongjong said.

Annals writers criticized Myongjong's short-sighted policy, predicting troubles ahead. And their worries proved on the mark. Four decades later, Choson suffered the devastating Japanese invasion, a shameful result of irresponsible insouciance.

### Source:

SEOUL SYSTEMS CO., LTD.  
Korean Studies Database Research Institute

### Readers Comments

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The Japanese play "Tokyo Note" by Seinenidan Troupe will be staged at Towol Theater, Seoul Arts Center, on Oct. 22-24 as part of the "Japanese Week" events.

## HK Director Captures Top PPP Award for New Film 'Little Cheung'

By Kim Su-yun  
Staff Reporter

USAN — A Hong Kong "New Wave" director pocketed the \$20,000 award at the Pusan International Film Festival (PIFF), the largest sum awarded at the festival.

A pre-marketing program, Pusan Promotion Plan (PPP), announced its beneficiary among the 17-entries this year. The \$20,000 Pusan Fund is now in the hands of the 40-year old rising director of Asia, Fruit Chan, for his new project, "Little Cheung."

The Hubert Bals Fund Award went to Indian director Murali Nair's "Unni," and the Ilshin Award was awarded to Japanese film maker Shinozaki Makoto for "The Unforgettable." Through these awards each of the directors received \$10,000.

The UniKorea Award and Hanul Award were given to the future projects of "I'm a Taxi Driver in Paris" by Kim Eung-su and "Africa My Love" by Bae Chang-Ho. Each director will be provided one thousand won for their film.

KF-MAP, the only award given to the those outside of the special 17, went to "Knife," by Song Il-gon and

the East Film Company of Korea.

Grand prize winner Chan's second feature "Made in Hong Kong" has gained critic's acclaim due to its social keenness and vivid portrayal of the life of youths in Hong Kong, despite its low budget. It was released in Korea in 1998.

His third film, "The Longest Summer," is the story of a retired soldier in Hong Kong and is also being screened at PIFF this year, drawing a huge crowd.

PPP is set to promote Asian films before they are in the shooting stage, holding meetings with film makers and the producing or distributing companies, to help finance the film before hand. During the three-day event, about 150 meetings have been set up, which is more than double of the number of last year's 70.

The 17 projects being presented were pre-selected by PPP programmers, but they could not bar non-entries, about 400 film makers are seeking investors for their future films.

Packed with producers from Korea and abroad, the second year of PPP established its name as a good connection between film makers and money-providers.

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## Chan Still Thirsts for Indie Films

PPP award winner Fruit Chan has had a long relationship with PIFF. His second film, "Made in Hong Kong" won the NEPEC award at the second PIFF in 1997 and his third work, "Last Summer," is showing in the "A Window of Asian Cinema" section.

The Hong Kong Chinese director Chan is one of the most popular people at PIFF, with his PPP project meetings, interviews with the press and promotion of his screening movie. He even extended his stay in Pusan because he couldn't squeeze in all the meetings.

The budget for Chan's second series on the handover of Hong Kong, "Last Summer," has been enlarged 12 times compared to his last piece, but

his mind of independent film making hasn't diminished.

The film depicts the life of Hong Kong people before and after the handover, through the experience of Ga Yin, a Chinese soldier in the British Army, when he finds himself suddenly unemployed.

After a screening in the Pusan 7 Cinema, director Fruit Chan and two youths in the film, Sam Lee and Jo Kuk, came up the stage to talk with excited Korean audience.

The three of them seemed to be delighted by the raving the audience and constantly waved to their fans. Lee instantly started taking pictures of the fans and the group on the stage during the question and answer session.

## Concerts, Masses Mark 150 Anniv. of Chopin's Death

WARSAW, Poland (AP) — Playing his sweetly melodic music and celebrating Mass at the cathedral where his heart is kept, Poland and the world on Sunday marked 150 years since the death of composer Frederic Chopin.

The events were the highlight of the worldwide Chopin year, declared in 1999 by Polish musical and cultural officials, to mark the death anniversary of Poland's greatest composer and one of world's leading piano music authors.

Chopin was born in 1810 in Zelazowa

Wola, some 60 kilometers (37 miles) west of Warsaw, to a Polish mother and French father. In search of best piano teachers and larger audiences, Chopin left Poland at the age of 20 and traveled to Vienna and then to Paris, where he settled in 1831 and died Oct. 19, 1849 at the age of 39.

"Chopin's music is the most valuable thing that Poland can offer to the uniting Europe," President Aleksander Kwasniewski said before a concert in Zelazowa Wola by Polish pianist Halina Czemy-Stefanska.

For Poles it is "a sign of national identity, at the same time its universal artistic value and beauty belong to the whole world," he said.

Earlier, Kwasniewski laid flowers at a Chopin monument in Warsaw's picturesque Lazienki park, where outdoor concerts of the composer's music are held every summer.

A Mass was celebrated in the Holy Cross church in Warsaw where Chopin's heart is deposited. The composer was buried at the Pere Lachaise cemetery in Paris, but according to his

will, his heart was brought to Warsaw.

In Paris, Polish pianist Krystian Zimerman was to give a concert at the Salle Pleyel, where Chopin used to play. Zimerman will be accompanied by an orchestra of Polish musicians that he formed to tour Europe and the United States this year with Chopin's both piano concertos.

Chopin wrote almost exclusively for the piano. His romantic compositions are marked by the beauty of their melodies and power of expression.

### CONCERT

•Pop singer Lim Hyon-jong concert at Live Theater on Taehangno on Oct. 27-31. Guest singers are Kim Chang-hun and Lee Sun-hee. The repertoire include "Dream of May," "Ah! Easily, Easily," "Moon Lover," "Fool's Box." The ticket price is W25,000 and for info, call 02-786-2270.

•The Seoul Arts Festival for Overseas Koreans: Western classical music including Mendelssohn's Overture to "Fingal's Cave," Violin Concerto in G minor by Vivaldi and Piano concerto in A minor by Schumann at KBS Hall in Yoido on Oct. 20, 7:30 p.m.; Korean traditional arts featuring "Chongga" by Hong Chang-nam, Fan Dance and Monk Dance at Ye-ak Dang at the National Center for Korean Traditional Performing Arts on Oct. 22, 7:30 p.m.

•Tuturim of New Millennium" at National Theater Main Hall on Oct. 20, 7:00 p.m. The National Traditional Music Orchestra and other instrumental troupes will present "Tuturak," "Pinari," "Total Eclipse," "Sound of Morning," "Sangsoi" and "Prayer." Tickets priced W5,000 to W10,000 and for info, call 02-2274-1151/8.

•Epilogue Concert at the Recital Hall of Seoul Arts Center, Oct. 19, 7:30 p.m. Violinists Lee Po-yon and Chong Tok-keun, violinists So Ui-song and Ku Mo-yong, cellists Lee So-kang and Kim

Chi-ung and clarinet player Song Chong-min will play "Clarinet Quintet" by Brahms and "Souvenir de Florence" by Tchaikovsky. Tickets priced W10,000 and for info, call 02-583-6295.

•Seoul Sinfonietta Environment Concert at Sejong Cultural Center Main Hall on Oct. 24 at 7:30 p.m., conducted by Kim Young-zun, featuring baritone Chun Ki-hong, saxophone player Kim Myong-suk and trumpeter An Hi-chan. On the program are "Rusland and Ludmila Overture" by Glinka, "Trumpet Concerto Eb major" by Haydn, "Largo al Factotum della ciffa" from "Il Barbiere de Siviglia" by Rossini. Tickets priced W10,000 to W30,000 and for info, call 02-732-0990/1.

•Percussion and chorus festival to celebrate Japan Weeks in Seoul at Concert Hall and Recital Hall of Seoul Arts Center on Oct. 24-29, 7:30 p.m. Oct. 24: Marimba player Keiko Abe will play "Shadow songs IV" by M. Udow, "Wind Across Mountains for Six Mallets," "Memories of Seashore for Marimba Ensemble," by Keiko Abe among others. Oct. 25: Ska Sakura and Seoul Percussion Ensemble will play "Bale Ganjur," "Tumtugan."

Oct. 26: Percussion group Paisa and percussion ensemble "4Plus" will present "The Rift Valley" suite and a few songs by Schubert. Oct. 27: Ensemble Clair and Karos percussion ensemble to

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play "Conversation in the Forest," "Wind Across Mountains for Six Mallets," "Cross Fire" and "Aeolian in October." For the last two days, Japanese and domestic chorus companies will take the stage in turn. Tickets priced W10,000 to W30,000 and for info, call 02-580-1300.

•Sacred Choir Concert at Main Hall of Sejong Cultural Center on Oct. 23 at 3 and 7 p.m. Repertoire includes "Song of Exaltation" by J.N. Beck, "How Great the Lord Is," "Gloria HI" by John Rutter, "O Vos Omnes," "Glorious Banners" and many others. Tickets priced W10,000 to W30,000.

•Stem di Praga concert at the Main Hall of Sejong Cultural Center on Oct. 25, 7:30 p.m., hosted by Czechoslovak embassy. On the program are "Overture to Prometheus" by Beethoven, Concerto for Violin and Orchestra No. 1 by Paganini and Symphony No. 4 "Italian" by Mendelssohn. Yang Sung-sik will join the concert and Lee Jin-kwon will take the baton. Tickets priced from W10,000 to W30,000 for adults and W6,000 for students. For further information, call 02-3991-554.

•Koreanische Musiker mit Deutscher Ausbildung concert to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Germany at Artsonje Center, downtown Seoul on Oct. 20 at 7:30 p.m. Repertoire are Sonata for Bassoon, Basso Continuo and Cembalo in F minor by G.P. Telemann, Piano Sonata for Four Hands KV 521 by Mozart, "Fuenf Gedichte von Mathide

Wesendock" by Wagner and "Trout" by Schubert. Soprano Kim Chong-ja will join. For info, call 02-790-3601.

•Jung-Ang Orchestra's First Special

Performance for Foreigners at Woo-Myon Dang of the National Center for Korean Traditional Performing Arts on Oct. 22, 7:30 p.m. On the program are "Chukhyeonmu" by Park Beom-hun, Kayagum concerto "Doraji" and reed performance "Chindo Arirang" and "Kunbam Taryong." Lee Yong-tak will take the baton. For more info, call 02-896-2091/2.

•Latest works of four leading painters at Garam Art Gallery (02-732-6170) until Oct. 21. Kim Young-kill, Kim Young-chol, Kim Hong-ju, and Um Hong-sun present Oriental painting in acrylics, oils, and mixed media flat collage. It is the first in the gallery's millennium series, and the next show (Oct. 22-31) deals with contemporary sculpture.

•Oh Kyoung-hwan's latest acrylics portraying the universe at Gallery Fusion (02-518-3631) until Oct. 24. The beauty and sublimity of night sky is

captured in dazzling blue and in varying styles, from figurative and abstract to diagrammatic composition.

•Ceramics by 24 member artists of Danwoong Club at Choson Ilbo Gallery (02-724-6328) Oct. 22-27. Tradition and modern sensibility blends into the greenish celadon jars, glazed flower vase, vessels, decorative objects and many others.

### MISCELLANEOUS

•Seoul International Women's Association (SIWA) to hold "Monthly Coffee Morning" at Hilton Hotel's Kukhwa Room on Oct. 20, 9:30 a.m. under the theme of "How to make your house in Seoul a home." Four speakers will make 10-minute presentation about their products and services about home decoration. For info, contact 02-797-8976.

### MUSICAL

•"The Last Empress" is back on stage in Seoul, Oct. 16-30 at the Opera Theater, Seoul Arts Center. Recently nominated for L.A. Ovation Awards, Yi Tae-won will perform the tragic Queen Min. English subtitle is available. Ticket price ranges from 20,000 to 50,000 won. For reservation, call 1588-7890.

### DRAMAS

•A postmodern take on Hamlet in which dialogues are replaced with series of video images, sounds, sculptural objects, and body movements will be showcased by Theater Sadari. Titled "Spectrum 2001," the show runs Oct. 21-24 at Jayu Theater of Seoul Art Cen-

ter at 7:30 p.m. on first night, 4:30/7:30 p.m. Friday, Saturday, and 3, 6 p.m. on Sunday. Tickets cost W15,000.

### DANCE

•'99 Chang Mu International Festival: a variety of dance performances are scheduled Oct. 19-26 in Seoul and Gangwon Travel Expo site in Sokcho City. Oct. 19: Gala Night by Kim Mae-ja who is a symbolic figure of Korean traditional dance, Chang Mu Dance Company, Sono Seni Dance Group from Indonesia, Guangdong Modern Dance Company from China and Akiko Kan da from Japan, at Hoam Art Hall, downtown Seoul. 7:30 p.m. Ticket price are 15,000 and 20,000 won. Oct. 21: Opening Night at Waterfront Amphitheater of Sokcho city, featuring three foreign groups above and Chang Mu. 5:30 p.m. Admission free. Oct. 21-22: Sono Seni Dance Group from Indonesia, Guangdong Modern Dance Company from China at Waterfront Amphitheater, 5:30 p.m. admission free. At the same time, Akiko Kanda, the first Japanese to study under Martha Graham and contemporary dancer Lee Chong-hi and her dance company, at the Post Theater near Hong-ik University area in Seoul, 7:30 p.m. Oct. 23-24: Leading Chinese contemporary troupe, Guangdong Modern Dance Company and Han Sang-kun, leading choreographer and traditional dancer at the Post Theater, 7:30 p.m. Oct. 25-26: Sono Seni Dance Group will perform Indonesian folk dance with modern flavor and Seoul Ballet Theatre will feature contemporary creative ballet pieces choreographed by James Jeon, 7:30 p.m. For further info, call 02-336-9210/9227. Ticket for Post Theater is charged at 15,000 won.



Keiko Abe



Lee Yong-tak