

THE JOSEON ARMY OF THE IMJIN WAR

By Tim Greene

In 1592, after unifying Japan, Toyotomi Hideyoshi launched an invasion of the Korean peninsula. His objective was not Korea per se, but rather the conquest of Ming Dynasty China. His motivation seems to have been genuine megalomania, tempered by the fact that he needed to keep the many warlords his own successes had created from turning on him.

In any event an ultimatum was sent to the Joseon Dynasty, to the effect of allowing Hideyoshi's armies pass through the peninsula to China and victualling them along the way. Needless to say the Joseon Dynasty, which ruled Korea as a vassal of Ming China, flatly rejected this ultimatum. Unfortunately the Joseon Dynasty was poorly prepared to defend Korea, especially against Hideyoshi's battle-hardened armies and generals honed by decades of fighting in the Sengoku Jidai.

Ultimately, Korea would be defended by an excellent navy led by admiral Yi Sun-sin, amateur armies, the *Ubyong* or 'Righteous Armies' of monks and outraged peasants, the armies of Ming China, and, perhaps most of all by Japanese operational and imperial overreach. So, why collect and paint a Joseon army for *Pike and Shotte*? Because some very nice miniatures are available from Perry Miniatures and because the army is colourful, and provides an interesting opponent for your Samurai army.

So, what was the Joseon army like? Joseon had a small standing army in garrisons and fortresses. Defense relied on mobilizing militia. In the Imjin War of 1592 there were about 85,000 regular troops and about 22,000 volunteers.

Light infantry protected their chests by wearing leather armour over a cloth robe, but some wore scale armour if available. Light infantry were armed with composite recurve bows and halberds. Heavy infantry wore

chainmail or plate armour and carried shields. Their main weapon was the sword. The nobility served as heavy cavalry. They wore brigandine armour and carried flails, halberds, and composite recurve bows. Horse archers in light or no armour and armed with composite recurve bows supported the noble cavalry.

Artillery was a strength of the Joseon army, with bronze guns modelled on Western designs, and the *hwacha*, a primitive multiple rocket launcher throwing 'fire arrows'. Joseon artillery was usually superior to what the Samurai had but was mainly used effectively in sieges. Handheld firearms were rare and of inferior quality to Japanese *teppo* arquebuses which were based on Portuguese designs reverse engineered by Japanese smiths. By the 1598 Chongyu War the Koreans began using better quality hand held firearms.

Tactically, the Joseon tried to make use of their mounted arm when the terrain permitted. The effective use by the Samurai of the arquebus supported by *yari* (spear) infantry was the cause of many Joseon defeats. The standard Joseon sword was curved, shorter and lighter than its Japanese counterparts. The flail was a unique weapon employed by Joseon troops. Joseon composite recurved bows outranged the Japanese asymmetrical longbows by fifty percent, and were the Joseon weapon the Japanese seem to have feared the most.

While the Joseon Dynasty's armies mostly failed to stop the Samurai invaders, who cut their way to the Yalu River in 1592, bands of Buddhist monks trained in martial arts and augmented by outraged peasants proved much more effective in slowing the invaders with guerrilla tactics and ferocity. These armies were known as *Ubyong* or 'Righteous Armies' and have the potential to lead to some interesting asymmetrical games.

JOSEON KOREAN ARMY - IMJIN WAR 1594-98

The armies of the Joseon Dynasty were poorly prepared for the Japanese invasions of 1594 and 1598. Mostly used to fighting bandits, pirates, and Jurchen nomads, they were commanded by an aristocracy of landowning officials and manned by peasant conscripts.

The *Ubyong* and monks were better motivated and put up a better fight than the regular royal troops. One area where the Koreans had the advantage over the Japanese was in artillery, which was used both in sieges and in the field.

Cavalry up to 50%	50% of the army may be cavalry
Noble Heavy Cavalry 50% of cavalry	50% of the cavalry may be noble heavy cavalry
Monks & Guerrillas	75% of Righteous Armies must be monks and guerrillas, but Righteous Armies get three free stratagems from Wars of the Samurai or Armies of the Daimyos.

ARMY CONSTRUCTION

The following section provides points values to use for the construction of armies.

COMMANDERS

- **Commander-in-Chief:** Random Command Rating 40 points
Roll D6 for rating. 1-3: Command Rating 7; 4-5: Command Rating 8; 6: Command Rating 9
- **Division Commander:** Command Rating 7 20 points

HORSE

Unit	Unit Type	Weapon	Hand-to-Hand Value	Shooting Value	Morale Value	Stamina	Special Rules	Points
Noble Heavy Cavalry	Horse	Halberd, flail, bow	9	1	4+	4	Heavy Cavalry +D3	58
Horse Archers	Skirmish Horse	Sword, bow	4	1	6+	3	Fiere and Evade, Marauder	35

INFANTRY

Unit	Unit Type	Weapon	Hand-to-Hand Value	Shooting Value	Morale Value	Stamina	Special Rules	Points
Armoured Swordsmen	Infantry Battle Line	Sword, Shield	6	–	4+	4	Swordsmen	38
Armoured Spearmen	Infantry Battle Line	Halberd	6	–	5+	4	Double Handed Infantry Weapons	32
Armoured Archers	Infantry Battle Line	Bow	3	2	5+	3	Bows	31
Armoured Arquebusiers	Infantry Battle Line	Arquebus	3	2	5+	3	–	25
Garrison Firelance	Infantry Battle Line	Firelance	2	1	6+	3	–	19
Garrison Spearmen	Infantry Battle Line	Halberd	5	–	6+	3	Double Handed Infantry Weapons	23
Garrison Archers	Infantry Battle Line	Bow	3	2	6+	3	Bows	25
Righteous Army Guerrillas	Infantry Battle Line	Mixed Bows	4	1	6+	3	Fanatics, Tough Fighters	29
Monks	Infantry Battle Line	Mixed Weapons	5	1	5+	4	Fanatics, Tough Fighters	38

ARTILLERY

Unit	Unit Type	Weapon	Hand-to-Hand Value	Shooting Value	Morale Value	Stamina	Special Rules	Points
Light Gun (Hwacha)	Artillery (Ordnance)	Light Cannon	1	3-2-1	4+	2	–	19
Medium Gun	Artillery (Ordnance)	Medium Cannon	1	3-2-1	4+	2	–	23
Heavy/Siege Gun	Artillery (Ordnance)	Medium Cannon	1	3-2-1	4+	2	–	27

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