Ch'oe Ch'ung-hn Biography

Ch'oe Ch'ung-hn

The following sections of this BookRags Literature Study Guide is offprint from Gale's For Students Series: Presenting Analysis, Context, and Criticism on Commonly Studied Works: Introduction, Author Biography, Plot Summary, Characters, Themes, Style, Historical Context, Critical Overview, Criticism and Critical Essays, Media Adaptations, Topics for Further Study, Compare & Contrast, What Do I Read Next?, For Further Study, and Sources.

(c)1998-2002; (c)2002 by Gale. Gale is an imprint of The Gale Group, Inc., a division of Thomson Learning, Inc. Gale and Design and Thomson Learning are trademarks used herein under license.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction: "Social Concerns", "Thematic Overview", "Techniques", "Literary Precedents", "Key Questions", "Related Titles", "Adaptations", "Related Web Sites". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults: "About the Author", "Overview", "Setting", "Literary Qualities", "Social Sensitivity", "Topics for Discussion", "Ideas for Reports and Papers". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

All other sections in this Literature Study Guide are owned and copyrighted by BookRags, Inc.

Contents

Ch'oe Ch'ung-hn Biography.....1

Contents.....2

Biography.....3

Biography

Ch'oe Ch'ung-hn (1149-1219) was a Korean general who in 1196 established a hereditary military dictatorship which lasted until 1258.

A descendant of a military family, Ch'oe Ch'ung-hn rendered conspicuous service to the Korean king in quelling a rebellion in the Western Capital (1174-1176). In 1196 Ch'oe assassinated a rival general and cleared the way for his own dictatorship. A year later he deposed King Myngjong and enthroned his own candidate to preserve the technical legitimacy of his position. During his lifetime Ch'oe enthroned four kings and deposed two. Ch'oe ruthlessly eliminated any opposition, including his own family members. In 1197, when his younger brother attempted to marry off his daughter to the heir apparent, Ch'oe opposed him and had him killed. Ch'oe also succeeded in severing the traditional alliance between monks and the nobility, thus forestalling a possible powerful opposition.

Ch'oe's "administration" was harsh, corrupt, and unfair. He sold offices, arbitrarily distributed merits and honors, and tyrannized the people. Outraged peasantry and slaves rose in revolt year after year, the most noteworthy, though unsuccessful, uprising occurring in 1198 in the capital. By 1203 Ch'oe was finally able to suppress the uprisings that had disrupted the social fabric of the country for 30 years.

In order to bolster the power of his clan, Ch'oe organized a private guard corps in 1200, first divided into 6 and later into 36 units, the upper stratum of which comprised elite retainers, and the lower, slaves. Other sources of power were great estates which the clan owned but never directly managed and a large holding of slaves. In 1209 Ch'oe established a supreme council, the chief governing organ of military rule, akin to the Japanese *bakufu,* and he himself occupied the position of chief councilor, the highest office. In this position he supervised personnel administration, levying of taxes, and surveillance of officials.

Legacy and End of the Clan

In 1225 Ch'oe Ch'ung-hn's son U (died 1249) extended the Ch'oe clan's power to the civil service. He also founded the "Three Special Service Corps," a private army designed to suppress internal dissension and to fight foreign invaders.

The undoing of the Ch'oe rule was the Mongol invasions, which started in 1231. U transferred the capital to Kanghwa Island (1232), determined to fight to the end. The civilian officials, however, allied with dissatisfied military groups, advocated peace, and in 1258 the last Ch'oe dictator was murdered.