Once upon a time, when Mr Yang lived on Cheju Island, he became Cheju’s magistrate commanded by the Seoul government. At that time, the Cheju government offered a hundred white horses to the Seoul government, where the royal palace was, as tribute each year. No matter who became Cheju’s magistrate, they offered the horses after the end of the year and before the first day of spring.

After becoming the magistrate, Mr Yang offered the horses as tribute three times without questioning. When it was the fourth time for him to offer the horses, he gathered a hundred white horses at the grazing land for horses. Suddenly, he became greedy and wanted to take these horses for himself. Therefore, he wrote a petition to an official in charge of tribute in the Seoul government, ‘If I offer a hundred white horses as tribute, the people on Cheju Island will be in difficulties and they have to live with deep sighs and worries.’

After presenting the petition, he told the horsekeepers, ‘You have offered the tribute until now. However, from now on, I will do it by myself.’

Usually, when they offer tribute, they are anxious to prepare extra horses in case the official rejects the horses that he doesn’t like. Therefore, they were delighted to accept his suggestion.

‘Please, do what you want’, they all said.

Then the horsekeepers and other people channelled all their energy into preparing a ship for the horses at Tonjitgae, Whabuk, and to taking the hundred white horses on board.

Mr Yang lied that he was going to offer the tribute, and anchored the ship at one of the provinces on the mainland. He sold all of the horses there, bought goods with the money, took the goods on board, returned to Cheju Island, and sold them all.

When Mr Yang didn’t come to offer the white horses, the official didn’t urge him to pay the tribute in order to see how long Mr Yang could be obstinate and not offer it. Mr Yang didn’t offer the tribute three times and took it for himself.

Thereupon, the official sent a subordinate to Cheju to investigate what had happened. After the subordinate investigated, he reported that it was outrageous for Yang not to send the horses. Shortly after, the official sent a commander and an assassin to kill Mr Yang.

Suspecting something, Mr Yang then called two local officials and asked, ‘Who has the best and the fastest ship on Cheju Island?’
‘The old man called Ko Tongji has the best and the fastest ship’, they replied.

After commanding them to anchor Ko Tongji’s ship at one place and telling a lie that he would go sightseeing, Mr. Yang departed there with Ko Tongji,

Fig. 98 A scene of tribute of white horses. Most mountain areas of Cheju Island are horse-breeding farms for tribute. If the number of horses for tribute is decided by the Ministry of War, it is first given to the government office that takes charge of the tribute of horses. And it is next given to the governor of Cholla Province and last to the magistrate on Cheju Island. Horses that are chosen from all horse-breeding farms are gathered by the main government agency on Cheju Island for inspection and carried to Haenam, Kangjin, and Yôngam of Cholla Province by ship, and again carried to the capital by land. At this time, feed for horses and wages for dray-horsemen were paid for by the people on Cheju Island. This painting by Kim Namgil is dated 1702.