This book is about Korea’s golden age and its cultural hero, King Sejong (r. 1418-1450), inventor of the Korean alphabet. The ultimate example of an enlightened ruler in the East-Asian tradition, Sejong combined deep compassion for his people with high intelligence and an aesthetic sense.

He was personally engaged in an amazing range of projects, from agriculture, calendrical mathematics, geography, medicine, law and printing to history, linguistics, literature, music, religion, and the Confucian classics, publishing a number of important works in a wide variety of fields.

This concise and accessible reader written by internationally known scholars that introduces King Sejong and the roots of Korean tradition to the English-speaking public has been translated into Korean—a rare case of Korean studies research published in a language other than Korean made available in Korean—and into German:

Korean translation: <세종대왕: 15세기 한국의 빛>, translated by Eunjoo Han, 1998. Seoul: Sin’gumunhwasa (251 pages);

The proceeds go to two fellowship programs, one for ICKL junior scholars presenting papers at regular ICKL conferences and the other for Korean language scholarship for students taking Korean at George Washington University.

Review:

"This book [the 1992 edition] is an introduction to the achievements of King Sejong for the general English speaking public. It is a beautifully produced book for such a purpose. The language is lucid and non-technical, footnotes are held to a minimum, and sixty-seve plates and charts add much pleasure to reading. The book consists of an elegant introduction by the editor and fourteen articles. The topics covered range from arts to agriculture, from law to literature, from Sillok [Royal Annals] to science."

– Chin W. Kim, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, the Journal of Asian Studies.