

The Go'ryeo dynasty and the Mongol Yüan Empire, "Separated" or not, or "Integrated" or not?

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1. Foreword

In the 13th and 14th centuries, some major changes struck the living styles and thought patterns of the Korean people. 40 years of war with the Mongols, and the uneasy beginning of a relationship between the Mongol Yüan Empire and the Go'ryeo dynasty, tested the Go'ryeo people's soul, and urged them to find a new way of life.

That 'new way of life,' was a life in which existing traditions of Go'ryeo were no longer the only set of values to be pursued. Previous institutions were no longer the only source of legal references to be consulted. A more politically powerful neighbor, armed with advanced institutions and culture, was asking Go'ryeo to do some things, and in some cases not to do some things as well.

In some cases the Go'ryeo people welcomed those new legal practices, and in some cases they did not. The hybrid Go'ryeo kings actively pursued the 'merging' of institutions from Go'ryeo, China and Mongol, but that does not mean that they were indifferent to the issue of 'preserving the past.' Sometimes the existing conventions of Go'ryeo were replaced, but sometimes the Go'ryeo traditions would be preserved, to coexist with the new ones.

The Korean people today, well aware of the so-called 'Mongol intervention' that happened in this time period, oftentimes jump to the conclusion that Go'ryeo was 'part' of the Mongol Yüan Empire (the "Great Yüan Ulus"). Not a small number of scholars do believe that a form of 'integration' was proceeding throughout Northeast Asia in the 13th and 14th centuries, as we can see from some glaring evidences of the Go'ryeo leadership ("the Wang Royal family") joining the Empire as part of the Mongol Imperial family. To quote from a recent Western study, "a far-ranging set of political, economic, cultural and military connections tied Northeast Asia together more tightly than ever before," and literally 'absorbed' all the adjacent areas into the boundaries or the 'realm of influence' of the Mongol Yüan Empire, "through constant exchanges of people,

money and ideas.”

There is no question that the level of communication among regions throughout Northeast Asia was strengthened and increased at this time. The nature of the Mongol Empire itself allowed people to engage in more long-standing relationships. The unprecedented size of the Empire encouraged people to indulge themselves in far more complicated and comprehensive exchanges of ideas, properties and influences, which humanity had never witnessed before.

But, the most important question that we should ask of ourselves, is that do we really have sufficient information to corroborate the aforementioned ‘conclusion,’ as well as enough understanding of the past to justify the above-said ‘belief.’ Saying the Go’ryeo Royal family was integrated into a larger political structure that was the Mongol Empire is one thing, but saying that the Go’ryeo dynasty itself was literally “incorporated” into the Mongol Empire is completely another.

Exactly what kind of ‘criteria’ should be satisfied, in order to claim that an entity was part of another entity, and what kind of aspects should be confirmed, in order to claim that a leadership of a sovereign country was part of a hierarchy of another entirely different larger one? In my opinion, first it should be determined whether the ongoing contacts between the two entities were causing those two entities to either partially or fully ‘merge with’ each other, or were actually pushing those two entities ‘farther from’ each other, or in fact enabled them to maintain a certain distance but also a close relationship between themselves. Only with such determination we should be able to ‘label’ not only the individual contacts but also the overall nature of the general relationship, as either ‘separated’ or ‘merged’ or ‘separate but close’ or even ‘integrated.’

Then, such determinations, conducted in many individual areas such as politics, economy, society, and culture, should all be combined. Two countries could be politically connected while economically severed. Two entities could be culturally interactive without sharing social or legal systems. Two peoples could have influences upon each other while pursuing their own respective, separate agendas. So describing the nature of a relationship between two entities, especially the ones with the magnitude of the Mongol Empire and the Korean peninsula, should be considered as an extremely difficult job and not to be taken lightly.

But many people only feel content in arguing that "Go'ryeo and China had been strongly connected" at the time. One Western scholar even said that "A national feeling in the modern sense that one belonged to a definite nation, or was a member of a specific race sharply distinct from any other one, hardly existed in China [East Asia] in the 14th century." Many scholars, including him, still believe that due to the Northeast Asian order established by the Mongol Yüan Empire, there was 'no meaningful division' between the Mongol Empire and the Korean peninsula in the 13th and 14th centuries. While some scholars do recognize that it was not like Go'ryeo was completely unified or 'homogenized' into the Mongol Empire, they too do not bother to clarify in what areas they were 'unified,' and in what areas they were not

This notion of borders or boundaries 'virtually nonexistent' at the time, or having 'lesser meanings' than before, may sound pretty intriguing. And actually in the case of Go'ryeo, from the kings to vassals and from commoners to low-borns, the entire population no longer had either the sentiment or luxury to set themselves apart from the Mongols or their influences. They decided to (albeit partially) embrace them and incorporate them into their lives, making the above notion partially true.

But the 'complexity' of the Go'ryeo-Mongol relationship, should not be construed (or misconstrued) as 'absence of distinction between them.' There have always been gaps, outer edges, and discernible walls between Korea and China. Examples of division and separation between Go'ryeo and the Mongol Yüan Empire are in fact abundant. Of course, in some areas those separations were weaker than in other areas, and in some areas the Go'ryeo institution was replaced by the new Chinese or Mongol ones. In some areas the existing Go'ryeo traditions and the newly embraced practices displayed an interesting mix, or even a hybrid form of compromise. But those were only 'parts' of the relationship. We should see the whole picture.

In this presentation, aspects which could show us the nature of the legal, political, economic, and cultural relationships between Go'ryeo and the Mongol Empire, will be examined to the best of my abilities.

2.

The Go'ryeo dynasty's legal system was clearly separated from the Mongol Yüan's Imperial legal system, even in the 1340s which was shortly before the Empire was dissolved and reduced. Such separation was at the clearest in the latter half of the 13th century. But as time went by, an interesting relationship between the Go'ryeo lawmakers and the Imperial Yüan law was formed. In the early 14th century, people began to feel the presence of 'influences' from a foreign legal system, in many areas.

In the early days of the relationship between Go'ryeo and the Mongol Yüan Empire, some of the Go'ryeo people, who were in desperate needs of 'class elevation,' wanted to have their appeals legally processed by the Mongol authorities, and based upon the Imperial Yüan law. The Go'ryeo government of course did not permit it, as allowing such motion would bring down the legal barriers between Go'ryeo and the Mongol Empire, and put the Go'ryeo government in an awkward position in cases in which the traditions of Go'ryeo and the purpose of Mongol Yüan institutions were at odds.

Yet in spite of the Go'ryeo government's hindrance, such attempts continued anyway during the latter half of the 13th century. The primary issue in such cases was how to determine the social status of an off-spring, born from a "cross-class marriage." The Go'ryeo government had a long standing principle to maintain a ban upon inter-class marriages, and for centuries it had designated the off-springs from such marriages to become 'low-born(the lowest).' Then, in the 13th century, some of the Go'ryeo people directly appealed to the Mongol emissaries who were visiting Go'ryeo, and asked those foreign officials to grant them the status of a 'commoner.' In some cases the Mongol officials did grant them the rank they wanted, but such action triggered without exception a diplomatic incident, and the foreign officials involved were swiftly recalled.

So, in the late 13th century as well as the early 14th, we can say that the Go'ryeo government was mostly successful in preventing the Yüan law and its legal practices from being applied to Go'ryeo's domestic quarrels and legal deliberations. But in the following days, the stance of the Go'ryeo government slightly changed.

The Go'ryeo kings who were enthroned in the 14th century had Mongol mothers, and therefore carried not only the heritage of Go'ryeo but also that of the Mongols. As a result, the Mongol customs and Imperial Yüan law were no longer considered as part of a foreign system that just had to be repelled. In the eyes of the "new" Go'ryeo kings, the Yüan legal system could also serve as a source of judicial precedents, just as much as the old Go'ryeo system. And in case of needs, the "new" Go'ryeo kings did just that, adhering to the past institution, while also 'consulting' the new foreign system that was made available to them.

The Imperial Yüan law even served as a 'model,' upon which the Go'ryeo policy would be based. The Go'ryeo kings would select specific elements of the Imperial law and then graft them upon existing Go'ryeo regulations. The most vivid example of this approach can be seen from the Go'ryeo government's policy of "Supporting Military households," and especially from all the changes such policy went through during King Chungseon-wang's (second) reign (1308-1313).

To restore a security net for the people who were undertaking military duties, and also by doing so rebuild the old traditions of the Go'ryeo military service system, Chungseon-wang/忠宣王 intended to provide all the military households with 'supplementary' personnel ("護養"). It was an old tradition and also legal institution of the Go'ryeo government to assign auxiliary manpower to military households, as "reserves" who would oversee the household's agricultural managements in place of the soldiers who were drafted away without a return date.

But the economic situation of the Go'ryeo society at the time would not allow Chungseon-wang to secure all the needed workforce, at least among the civilian population of commoners. So, inspired by the Yüan Imperial Military draft system, which designed the inner structure of military households to be composed of both 'commoner soldiers' and 'lowborn military servants ("軍驅");' Chungseon-wang launched a governmental campaign of absorbing either public or private "Nobi/奴婢" servants from all around the country, placed them under direct control of the government, and then utilized them in many areas of the military administration.

This was a huge departure from the Go'ryeo government's past stance toward the

incoming foreign law. The once-boycotted Imperial Yüan law system acquired the status as a system 'which could be consulted from time to time.' Of course, some aspects of the Yüan law were still rejected. King Chung Suk-wang/忠肅王, son of Chungseon-wang, still rejected the Yüan legal regulations concerning the determination of the social statuses of the 'cross-class marriage-produced offsprings,' just like former Kings Weonjong/元宗 and Chung'ryeol-wang/忠烈王 did in the 1270s and 1290s. Allowing those regulations to take dominant status over existing Go'ryeo rules in Go'ryeo would provoke too much controversy for the Go'ryeo leaders to handle.

The Go'ryeo people, well aware of the contents of the Imperial Yüan law, and the Go'ryeo kings who were ready to consult them whenever it was necessary, together created a rather new atmosphere, for all the personnel serving in the administrative and judicial branches of the government. In their legal deliberation, not only the existing Go'ryeo law but also the Imperial Yüan law came to be quoted and employed. In the mid-14th century, especially in the 1340s, people would express their frustration regarding the matter of choosing "which one to observe (either frequently or dominantly)" between the Go'ryeo rules and the Yüan Law. It was indeed a new situation for the Go'ryeo people. Two sets of law came to coexist inside the Go'ryeo society, and sometimes that would cause problems and confusion. People were more familiar with the Go'ryeo rules and in many areas still wanted to observe them, but in some cases the intimidating presence of the Mongol authorities would force Go'ryeo clerks to use Imperial Yüan law in the processing of their cases. We can see that the Go'ryeo people's view of the Imperial Yüan law came a long way since the mid-13th century. They came to not only tolerate but also partially embrace the Yüan legal system.

But at the same time, it should also be noted that the existing Go'ryeo system was still alive, and also separately existent from the Yüan legal system. It was never absorbed or replaced by it. It was still a living, breathing legal system which governed most of the Go'ryeo society and the people. In that sense, a level of separation was always there.

In terms of legal practices, we can say that there was a 'separation' between the Go'ryeo dynasty and the Mongol Yüan Empire for a long time, but it is also true

that the legal relationship between Go'ryeo and the Mongols somewhat evolved over the years. In the latter half of the 13th century, the Go'ryeo government was adamant that the Imperial Yüan law was not to be extended to the resolution of domestic matters of Go'ryeo. Then in the early half of the 14th century, in some matters the Imperial Yüan law began to be crucially consulted as a partial source of insight.

Interestingly enough, after the Mongol Yüan Empire was long gone, the Go'ryeo government in its ending days (the 1380s), announced that the "late Imperial law code of Yüan" was to be observed as the 'primary' law code for the Go'ryeo people. Many scholars came to believe that this 'announcement' shows us that the Go'ryeo legal system was in the process of being gradually replaced, and then was ultimately abolished, by the presence of Yüan law during the 13th and 14th centuries. This is simply not true. In the course of two centuries, the legal boundary between Go'ryeo and the Mongol Yüan Empire never collapsed, and Go'ryeo was not forced to become part of the Yüan legal system. The announcement in the 1380s was a decision only made in the wake of the Go'ryeo government desperately trying to navigate through diplomatic conflicts with both the Northern Yüan and the newborn but powerful Ming dynasty.

3.

In political terms, there was a separation between the Go'ryeo government and the Jeongdong Haengseong (征東行省) Provincial authorities. Although the two bodies were connected through no other than the Go'ryeo king, who served as both the leader of Go'ryeo and also the Governor of the Jeongdong Provincial government, the inside of the existing Go'ryeo government was never shared by the Jeongdong Provincial authorities, and the Go'ryeo kings' dual roles never violated or tampered with each other.

Of course, there were all those burdensome political interventions, which the Yüan imperial government never hesitated to cast upon Go'ryeo's domestic affairs. Yet those were political intrusions, and never a sign of the two countries, the Go'ryeo dynasty and the Mongol Yüan Empire, being either locked or even merged with each other.

Then again, there were certain examples of the 'agendas' of the Yüan government's political reform efforts, or the political 'institutions' created in the Mongol-ruled China, having huge influences upon the Go'ryeo people. For example, the political reforms launched by King Chungseon-wang were clearly inspired by Yüan political reform agendas. In his youth, Chungseon-wang was able to witness all the reform efforts that continued inside the Yüan government first hand, and later when he became the Go'ryeo king, he developed certain Goryeo-specific methods to address the old political malpractices of Go'ryeo. Eliminating the Jeongbang (政房) office, reducing the number of ministers and also the number of governmental offices, and reinforcing the authorities of the monitor offices, were all based upon three specific "reform principles" that were being pursued inside the Yüan imperial government, since the Muslim financial ministers had been purged from Emperor Qubilai's court.

But Chungseon-wang's efforts did not stop there. Sometimes he 'mixed' new foreign institutions with the older political traditions of Go'ryeo. In case of "restructuring" the Go'ryeo government, he restored in 1298 the inside of the governmental offices to their previous meta-structures which dated back to the very early days of the dynasty ("the reign of King Munjong'), and also to the extent of angering the Mongol authorities, which were so upset that they did not care to pay attention to the fact that Chungseon-wang also created several Yüan-inspired new offices.

And in 1308, when he was redesigning the Local administrative structure of Go'ryeo, he also mixed Go'ryeo traditions with elements from the foreign Yüan Local system. He newly installed additional Mok/牧 units, which had earlier served as the backbone of Goryeo's Local system in the past, to facilitate the kings' more efficient and appropriate governing of the country, through the Do/道 Provinces. In that regard, he chose to 'expand' the functions of a traditional element selected from the past Go'ryeo local system. But his idea to increase the number of these Mok cities, and have them serve as 'deputies' of the Do Provinces, was actually inspired by the ongoing 'local reconfiguration' that was continuing inside the Chinese Jiangnan region at the time. The Chinese model of new circuit offices (肅政廉防司) overseeing wider areas, and smaller units (州)

helping those circuit offices by directly managing the general population, is strongly reflected in Chungseon-wang's version of reconfiguration of Go'ryeo local regions. We can see yet another example of an interesting mixture of elements extracted from two distinctively different local systems, which absolutely had nothing in common before.

Of course, Chungseon-wang sometimes chose to radically change the nature of existing Go'ryeo traditions. In case of 'redesigning' the National Examination System, he displayed blatant disregard for the original design, and decided to make it a 'subsystem' of the Yüan Imperial Examination system. His intention was to send more and more students to Mongol-ruled China, where they would be able to become part of a much larger administrative system, with a greater prospect of political success. So, he abolished many of the related institutions of the original Go'ryeo examination system, and in the process almost thrown out the Go'ryeo government's age-old principle to oversee public education and encourage people to enter government-sponsored education facilities.

His alterations to the original design were only restored when his son Chung Suk-wang became king. Chung Suk-wang employed a completely different approach. He honored the original design of Goryeo's National Examination system, and restored all the related institutions. Yet he did not blindly return to the old days. He decided to apply some of the priorities that were being pursued at the time by the Yüan government's policy makers in the area of national examination, like particularly encouraging the students to study 'history' and 'tasks of the era' [論策], and then modified the existing Go'ryeo practice of 'Exempting one from certain stages of the examination (直赴)' in order to maximize the students' efforts to study and excel in those areas. We can see that the 'new tradition' of mixing Go'ryeo and Yüan policy elements, developed by Chungseon-wang, was inherited to his successors as well.

The apparent 'change' in the level of administrative separation between Go'ryeo and Yüan, as we can see from the events mentioned above, sometimes produced unexpected results, with rather interesting implications. We can see that from certain examples, in which the Go'ryeo government or at least the Go'ryeo officials would take an initiative and use Yüan's orders practically "against" the

Empire, or at least against certain formidable members in it. In the early 1340s, the Yüan Imperial government ordered the Go'ryeo government to create a new reform office which would oversee the overall task of 'rectification' inside Go'ryeo. The officials followed that order without hesitation, but when they were finally put in charge of that office, they used their authorities newly-vested not only by the Go'ryeo king but also the Mongol Yüan Empire, to eradicate several pro-Yüan factions working inside Go'ryeo and especially in the Jeongdong Provincial government. A close relative of the sitting Mongol Queen (who was from Go'ryeo as well) was one of the people who were targeted, and was accidentally killed in the interrogation process. Naturally the Queen was enraged and bowed to revenge, but the Mongol Emperor never retracted his support of the new office. This new office was eventually closed before its time, only after a year of service, but later in the 1350s King Gongmin-wang/恭愍王, who was deeply inspired and influenced by the actions of this short-lived reform office, used Qubilai's "Old Promises" to reclaim his own authority in filling the seats inside the Jeongdong Provincial government, and reducing the number of Yüan-planted military command centers (萬戶府) throughout the country.

We can see that the Go'ryeo government remained intact, and the Mongol Yüan Empire did not try to replace it with the Jeongdong Provincial government. Yet some of the kings tried to mix the old political conventions & institutions of Go'ryeo, with their counterparts in Yüan. Such efforts brought Go'ryeo and Yüan significantly closer to each other, in certain policy areas and also in terms of the governmental structure. And while sometimes old Go'ryeo traditions were replaced by new Mongol or Chinese practices, in some of those cases accepting such changes would interestingly lead to the restoration of Go'ryeo traditions and its power. In administrative terms, the two entities were indeed separated, but in certain individual policy areas they were also 'not so' separated. Instead they displayed some interest mixtures, with various ratios.

4.

Then what would have been the nature of the relationship between Go'ryeo and the Mongol Yüan Empire, in economic terms?

Tariff rates imposed upon the Go'ryeo cargo ships entering Yüan harbors suggest that the local Mongol authorities recognized Go'ryeo ships as 'foreign ships.' According to an inscription that was found upon an epitaph made for an individual(史燿) who served as the local prefect at the Ningbo (寧波) harbor presumably in the 1290s, Go'ryeo king Chung'ryeol-wang dispatched a trade vessel to Ningbo, and reportedly there was a brief clash between the traders aboard the Go'ryeo vessel and the authorities at the Ningbo harbor, over the issue of how much taxes should be levied upon the incoming Go'ryeo cargo.

Initially, 3/10 of the cargo was decided to be taxed, yet after some discussion, the rate was lowered to 1/30. Previous studies presumed that the Go'ryeo vessel was allowed to submit fewer items because it was considered to be a vessel 'under a nationality that belonged to the Mongol Yüan Empire.' But this lowering of taxes had nothing to do with that.

The general taxation process designed by the Yüan government at the time was composed of two stages. At the first stage, all vessels were designated to submit either 1/10 or 1/15 of their cargos. And this tax dispute occurred at the 'second' stage. In this particular incident, the former rate (3/10) was charged based upon an unofficial and also illegal tax practice from the past, while the latter rate was a 'new' rate officially authorized by the Yüan authorities, which were doggedly trying to bring down the general tax rate, in order to invite more foreign merchants to Yüan shores at the time.

The Go'ryeo merchants aboard the cargo ship did not demand any special treatment, and they just wanted to submit taxes according to the 'new rate' instead of the 'old one' which was so high that it would undoubtedly harm their business. The Ningbo prefect(史燿) accepted their appeal, and decided to apply the new rate, and by doing so he set an official precedent which practically announced that in the future all foreign vessels, including Go'ryeo ships, would be charged with the new rate. This incident, which lets us know that Go'ryeo vessels were not only treated as foreign vessels but were also 'taxed' as foreign vessels, shows us that there were indeed a separation between Go'ryeo and the Mongol Yüan empire, in terms of maritime administration.

And there was another important separation, which can be found in the area of

'currency.' There have been some people who believed that a whole lot amount of Yüan currency was introduced to the Go'ryeo market and disrupted the existing economic order of Go'ryeo. But the actual amount of value that accompanied such incoming currency was rather small, considering the value drop of the Yüan currency which continued in the late 13th and early 14th centuries. And in the meantime, the Yüan currency which did land in the Go'ryeo market were mostly recollected and dispensed with by not only Go'ryeo officials but also Buddhist personnel and merchants, who all frequently visited Mongol-ruled China or had ongoing business with either Yüan or Yüan-related foreign merchants. Other than them, the general population had less experience and of course fewer contacts with Yüan currency.

And apparently so did the Go'ryeo government's currency-related departments inside the government, as we can see from the fact that the paper currency system failed to establish itself in Korea even in the early days of the Joseon dynasty. Yüan currency's catastrophic value drop in the 1350s did affect Go'ryeo and Gongmin-wang's trade policy, yet not because it was in heavy circulation inside Korea, but for nearly a century it remained as just another form of 'foreign money.' We can see that in nearly all aspects, the currency circulation network of Go'ryeo remained separate from the currency circulation network of the Mongol Yüan Empire.

But even with these 'separations' in terms of taxes and currency, there were also some 'connections' between Go'ryeo and the Mongol Yüan Empire, in terms of policies and trades. Certain similarities could be found between the financial policies of the Go'ryeo Kings and the financial policies of the Mongol Emperors in the early 14th century. Chungseon-wang's financial reforms were partially modeled after its Yüan counterpart, just like his political reforms.

First, Go'ryeo's Salt Farms Registration act was modeled after the Yüan Salt monopoly system, and second, Chungseon-wang's support of the capital market and protection of its commercial transactions was inspired by the policies of Yüan Emperor Wutsung(武宗, 1307-1311) who levied taxes upon transaction fees and not the transactions themselves in order to protect the market's operations. And third, Chungseon-wang's launch of a brand-new tax system was also possibly

influenced by the Yüan government's "absorption project" of the Chinese Jiangnan region, which continued in the 1270s and '80s.

And these similarities do not end at Chungseon-wang's reign. His son Chung Suk-wang also demonstrated a financial policy, which was in conflict with his own father's policy, yet in sync with the policies of Mongol Emperors such as Jentsung(仁宗, 1311-1320) and Taejeong-je(泰定帝, 1324-1327).

When Jentsung employed a more moderate policy which was designed to 'protect' the general public from the government's collection of 'too much tax,' Chung Suk-wang launched a governmental body to oversee rectifying the "ownership" issues in Go'ryeo, an effort which included rescuing people who were wrongfully kidnapped to serve others, as well as returning land units that had been wrongfully taken to their rightful owners. And when Taejeong-je, who infamously supported Muslim merchants' activities in and out of the empire, promoted the Yüan government's trade relationships with partners of financial and commercial potentials, Chung Suk-wang also started to recruit foreign merchants (from not only China but also the West Asian Muslim world) into Go'ryeo's governmental service, and tried to create his own army of merchants who were capable of conducting remote trades in foreign worlds.

In other words, whenever a Mongol Emperor would change the direction of the existing financial policy, Chung Suk-wang would also switch his own, showing an even stronger connection between the two countries' policies of finance.

These examples show us that while there was indeed a separation between Go'ryeo and the Mongol Yüan Empire in terms of 'money and tax,' exchanges in policy areas also existed, and that in some cases the influences from Yüan facilitated and accommodated the financial reforms in Go'ryeo.

And of course, most importantly, both Go'ryeo and the Mongol Yüan Empire was closely connected through "international trades," either through the transactions made between Korean and Chinese/Mongol merchants, or between Korean merchants and merchants from other regions, such as India and Iran, which were both very important locations upon the renowned Silk Road route.

Of course at first, the Mongols were determined to strip Go'ryeo of all its resources. The Yüan Imperial government installed Falcon ranges (鷹坊) and

Garrison farms (屯田) inside Go'ryeo to systematically extract grain, silver, and expensive textile products from the households of Go'ryeo. Go'ryeo was also used as a 'transport route' at the end of the 13th century and the beginning of the 14th, when Imperial Sea stations were installed along the Southern coastline of the Korean peninsula.

Yet such relationship began to change at the end of the 13th century. With the aforementioned 'precedent (concerning tariff rates),' which instantly informed virtually all Go'ryeo merchants who were looking for an opportunity to either initiate or reopen trades with the Chinese Jiangnan region, trade traffics between the Korean peninsula and Mongol-ruled China started to explosively increase. And at the same time, the 'maritime policy' of the Yüan government began to heavily affect Go'ryeo ships' activities. When the imperial government actively promoted foreign trades, the Go'ryeo ships' activities would increase, and when trade bans targeting nearby areas were issued, the Go'ryeo ships' activities would decrease as well. We can see that from the case of King Chung'hye-wang/忠惠王, who was well-versed in everything related to foreign trades, yet chose to stick to land transportation instead of maritime shipments.

This connection through trades grew more diverse and considerably stronger with all the incoming foreign merchants old and new, as they all came to Go'ryeo through the Mongol Yüan Empire. The Empire actually served as a conduit through which foreign entities who had earlier not visited the Korean peninsula would visit Go'ryeo for the very first time.

The number of visiting Central Asian Muslims increased exponentially, and the purpose of their visits were also different from before. They visited the Korean peninsula as an extension of all their foreign activities, which were nicknamed as "Ortaq (斡脫) trades." Either to secure 'hot' items, or evade tax collection, or for other discreet businesses, they came to Go'ryeo. And they were followed by some leading figures of renowned trade centers, on the Indian peninsula and also in the Iranian sector, as mentioned before. In 1298 a former Mabaar minister visited Chungseon-wang, and in 1331 Abu Sa'id, the last leader of the Il Khanate (the 'Hulegu Ulus') dispatched an emissary to Chung'hye-wang.

The Go'ryeo kings, who were inspired by all those foreign merchants' visiting of

Go'ryeo, devised their own trade methods which were quite different from what had been before. Chung'ryeol-wang tried to invest the silver reserve accumulated at the Go'ryeo-based Mongol Falcon farms, and sought for guidance from skilled and trustworthy Uighur and Muslim merchants. Chungseon-wang merged governmental offices to build a mega-department which would oversee the production of high-quality dyed ramie products. Chungbuk-wang as mentioned above recruited many merchants, to build himself a merchant network. And Chung'hye-wang built a palace which he operated as a production center for high-quality ramie and silk products. In other words, while Chung'ryeol-wang reinitiated the government's foreign trade policies, Chungseon-wang wanted to establish administrative support for his trade policy, while Chungbuk-wang wanted to establish a trade force comprised of skilled merchants, and Chung'hye-wang wanted to establish a production plant which would supply him with all the items he needed for foreign export.

As we can see, the Go'ryeo dynasty and the Mongol Yüan Empire were connected by policy areas and also through trades. The two governments shared some financial policy directions, and their trade activities were intertwined with each other, through the activities of Korean, Chinese, Mongol, Muslim, Central Asian, and Indian & Iranian merchants.

5.

In terms of cultural exchanges, instead of a distinctive line of separation, "interesting combinations" can be spotted from the Go'ryeo-Yüan relationship.

The Confucian scholars of Go'ryeo, as well as members of the Go'ryeo Buddhist society, had not only close encounters but also long standing relationships with their counterparts in Yüan. Neo-Confucian school of thoughts, and new trends of the Buddhist Imje-jong (臨濟宗) school, were introduced to the Go'ryeo people, while Goryeo kings and governmental officials continued sponsoring Buddhist temples in the Jiangnan region and creating a Confucian education center ("萬卷堂") in Beijing.

Yet cultural exchanges between Go'ryeo and Yüan did not stop there. The governmental system of ritual protocols came to show a mix between traditional

Go'ryeo elements and newly embraced foreign institutions.

During Chungseon-wang's reign, the Go'ryeo National Shrine was redesigned to feature two sets of institutions inside it. Chungseon-wang was intent upon embracing advanced foreign discussions regarding national shrine operations, but did not want to lose the original design entirely. So first, by incorporating some foreign theories, he changed the original order of tablets inside the main chamber. Then, instead of completely overhauling the entire shrine, he brought in a series of 'flank chambers' and enshrined tablets of kings who had special meaning in the history of Go'ryeo there.

Then later, Chungbuk-wang, who was trying to renew his governing with help of foreign institutions, decided to apply two of the most noticeable policy agendas that were being pursued in Yüan government's ritual renovations, which was the reinforcement of (a) "Confucius" worshipping and (b) commemoration of "Holy Emperors" of the ancient days, to his own efforts of redesigning and revitalizing the Go'ryeo culture itself. In an interesting turn of event, his effort led to a reevaluation of the "Gi'ja/箕子" figure, and reactivation of national rituals designed to honor this figure. Gi'ja's contribution to the development of the Korean people had long been deemed incalculable, in terms of his providing of Confucian teachings and his help in the construction of the Korean culture.

While being eager to apply and incorporate all the 'foreign' elements into their own governance of the Go'ryeo society, the Go'ryeo kings managed to maintain or preserve at least some of past traditions, either intentionally or not. We can see that at this point, at least in terms of ritual protocols, 'separating' the Go'ryeo customs from Yüan institutions was no longer an issue. They could coexist without problems, in any form the Go'ryeo people would design for them.

6. Closing remarks

As we can see, there were indeed "separations" between Go'ryeo and the Mongol Yüan Empire, while there were also certain areas where such 'separation' was not that much distinctive. Various degrees of contacts can be spotted, from literally all over the spectrum of the Go'ryeo-Mongol relationship. There were just so many layers to it. Some of those contacts only benefited either one of them, but in

many of those cases the other's practical interests were not that much harmed, and some of those contacts turned out to be mutually beneficial to both sides.

Then again, that did not mean that they tended to 'share' their interests, as happy partners on a same boat. More often than not, their respective interests rather collided with each other. Some of the contacts were initially wanted by the Mongols, while some of them were pursued by the Go'ryeo people first. And in many cases of contacts, compromises were attempted without success. There were indeed barriers between them, which either one of the two parties could just never let go.

So, ambiguous terms like 'integration,' do not even come close to adequately describing that sort of relationship. Such term would only prevent the people today from properly appreciating this multi-faceted relationship, and the multi-layered nature of Go'ryeo's history of this time period.

Determining whether or not Go'ryeo was 'part' of the Mongol Yüan Empire is actually not an important matter. Finding out what kind of environment was surrounding the people of Go'ryeo at the time, and what kind of view they had toward all the 'new things' as well as their own past, is what's important and also what would ultimately count. People still throw around the question mentioned above, which is really an improper question, as a simple, clear-cut answer to that question does not exist. Yet they still come up with adjectives such as 'integrated' or 'assimilated,' before actual studies regarding the Go'ryeo-Mongol relationship are even done.

Studies of all the legal, political, economic and cultural relationships between Go'ryeo and the Mongol Yüan Empire are now just beginning. By accumulating more and more of those studies every day, in some future we would be able to comprehensively determine the 'general nature' of the vast array of relationships that were formed between Korea and China at the time.

In that regard, study of the Go'ryeo-Mongol relationship would not only enhance our understanding of the history of Korea, but would also let us have a glimpse into the possible relationships that would have existed between the Mongol Yüan Empire and nearby regions in the vicinity. And it could also contribute to the enhancement of our understanding of the Mongol Yüan Empire too.