

Go'ryeo King Chungseon-wang's Governance, and the Relationship between Go'ryeo and the Mongol Yuan Empire in the 14th century

- A Half-blooded king's consultation of both

Traditional institutions of Go'ryeo and New concepts from Yuan-dominated China-

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1. Foreword

People remember the history of Go'ryeo of the 13th and 14th centuries as a history of 'occupation and resistance,' because the Mongol Yuan empire was so powerful, and the Go'ryeo people had to suffer from the Mongol troops' invasion which devastated the entire Korean peninsula. As a result, people do not feel particularly interested to explore what kind of things exactly happened during this time period. Some people do not even regard this time period with the same amount of respect that they would usually have for other periods.

Of course, there has been a group of gifted scholars who did display interest in exploring the history of this time period, and dedicated their studies and passion in examining the people who lived back then, but they have also often frustrated me in their choice of topics, such as the invasion of the Mongols, or the Go'ryeo people's valiant struggle against them, or the reform efforts of king Gongmin-wang, or the fall of his crony Shin Don, etc. Admittedly these are all important aspects of this time period, but they are also stereotypical images and sporadic representations of what really happened. They do not provide an overall look of this period, and they do not represent the trail of evolution the Go'ryeo people went through in this particular period of time.

So, in order to further develop prior studies and achieve new understandings of our own, we should try to find out what kind of circumstances and environment they were actually facing, and also what kind of lives they wished to lead and wanted to accomplish.

People's view of this time period was formed upon the belief that this would have been a dark era for the Go'ryeo people. Forced to be slaughtered by the Mongols, then being oppressed for nearly a century. Such view led to two kinds of major misconceptions. First, a belief that the Go'ryeo people continued to suffer from exploitation of Mongol oppressors or Go'ryeo's own greedy aristocrats, and led a dismal life for over a century. Second, a belief

that the Go'ryeo people always singlemindedly tried to restore Go'ryeo's culture and sovereignty at all cost, and continued resisting the evil Mongol oppressors.

Back then, this was hardly the case. For sure, the aftermath of the bloody war with the Mongols significantly hurt the peasantry population and the merchants society. The Go'ryeo people in the latter half of the 13th century had to endure all kinds of political intervention of the Mongol authorities, and also economic extraction and exploitation by not only their foreign oppressors but also Go'ryeo's own powerful landlords and corrupted officials. Merchants in particular were forced to provide the government with materials without compensation, as the government had to deal with the Mongols who came with a long list of tributary requests. Such circumstances pushed the peasant population into an economic turmoil, and forced the merchants' communities to go deeper into depression.

Yet things started to change, at the turn of the century. The Go'ryeo people started to rise from the ashes in the 1280s and 90s, and with their continuing efforts in the 14th century they entered a new era of prosperity in terms of agricultural production. More lands were cultivated, effective techniques were implemented, and the tax system was overhauled so that there would be less unrealistic and harsh collection of taxes. All lawsuits concerning ownership issues were reviewed too, in order to put a stop to a wide variety of illegal and immoral practices.

And on the outside, things started to change as well. After conquering the Southern Sung dynasty in 1276 and assimilating the Chinese Jiangnan region, the Mongol empire no longer needed Go'ryeo's resources. The political climate of the Korean peninsula was changing too, as half-blooded kings who carried both Go'ryeo and Mongol blood in their veins started to govern the Go'ryeo society. As a result, the Mongol dignitaries' request of tributary items diminished, and the government no longer had to exploit the market and the merchants. As the government initiated a reform program designed to protect the merchants and provide the market monitors with broader jurisdiction, the merchants society also started to recover, and that recovery led to certain successes of their own on the international stage, which was an unprecedented scale of a merchants turnout and an explosive wave of civilians visiting China to test their fate and explore prospects for profits.¹⁾ We can see such phenomena from the tariff rates and additional fees charged upon cargos aboard Go'ryeo vessels sent to Chinese shores in the late 13th century, and from the linguistic manuals like <Lao Qida> which contained dialogue examples that were needed in making conversations with foreign merchants, and not to mention detailed information of their journeys as well.

In such process, people came to perceive Mongol Yuan as a companion for this particular time period, instead of a mortal enemy. So they tried to find ways to coexist with them, in the pursuit of many goals of their own. Instead of boycotting everything Mongol, they developed a new perspective, which viewed Go'ryeo institutions and foreign influences as not to be clashing with each other, but in fact to be potentially supplemental to each other.

So, it becomes clear that this particular chapter in the Korean history should be approached from a balanced, non-prejudiced attitude and perspective. And in order to do so, it would be helpful to select a particular human being, who was most bluntly exposed to the bare reality of the time and therefore was forced to embody all such efforts that were being generally displayed by the majority of the Go'ryeo people, in progressing our discussion.

One of those figures and the most interesting one at that, who lived in this time period and did meet the said criteria, was King Chungseon-wang(1274-1325). He was the first hybrid king to be born between the Go'ryeo and Mongol royal families, and lived more than 70% of his fifty years of life inside Yuan. He was armed with knowledge and experience accumulated through his own dealings with powerful figures inside the Yuan court. As a result, he came to exhibit unconventional ways of thinking, and after growing up he was granted with unprecedented kind of a political authority.

With all those knowledge, experience and authority, he implemented a series of strong political and financial reforms in Go'ryeo. Interestingly but also quite naturally, those reform efforts were based upon several policy agendas that had been being discussed and employed inside the Yuan government for the past half century. We can see that his own expertise which he grew with his ties to Yuan actually paid off, in terms of changing things in Go'ryeo for the better.

Yet at the same time, he was also well aware of the institutional traditions and cultural conventions of the Go'ryeo people. He tried to restore them throughout his entire life, in many areas including the Go'ryeo government's internal structure, the Go'ryeo Dynastic shrine, and the Go'ryeo taxation system. It is a rather unexpected thing to see a king who willfully chose to go through reforms inspired by foreign institutions also intending to resurrect the Go'ryeo dynasty's past. Let's just see how he was able to do that, in the following chapters.

2. The Go'ryeo kings of this time period: Demoted kings with new infusions

As we all know, the kings who were enthroned during the latter half of the 13th century and the early half of the 14th, had demoted titles. Former Go'ryeo kings were always granted with posthumous titles that ended with either '-Jo' or 'Jong,' yet starting with Chung'ryeol-wang, the following kings all received posthumous titles that ended with '-wang.' It is generally believed that such titles were bestowed by Yuan in recognition of Go'ryeo's efforts to stay loyal toward the Yuan court.

Previously, these kings were viewed as kings stripped of their power and authority, and most importantly with no determination or aspiration to do good things that would save the country and the people. Since the days of Chung'ryeol-wang, all the kings became sons-in-law to the Yuan imperial family, and served as governors of the Jeongdong Haengseong provincial government, which was one of eleven Mongol provincial governments at the time. So one might indeed regard this period as a gloomy one for the Go'ryeo people, who were apparently led by incompetent kings.

Yet being a relatively small country positioned on a peninsula surrounded by powerful neighbors always forced us Koreans to devise more elaborate ways of communicating and most importantly coexisting with them. This particular period was no exception, and those efforts had to be led by no other than the government, headed by 'half-blooded kings.'

Since the marriage of king Chung'ryeol-wang and a Mongol princess, all the following kings carried Mongol blood in their veins, and quite amazingly they learned to appreciate the best of both worlds, and managed to integrate their own dual nature into their governing of the country. With all the influence they accumulated as being members of the Yuan imperial family, and with the knowledge and expertise educated to them during their stay in Yuan, they launched detailed reform programs, and while doing so they also looked into Go'ryeo's past.

King Chungseon-wang was the prime example for such efforts. Son of Chung'ryeol-wang, he was the first Go'ryeo king to have a Mongol woman as his mother. He was the legitimate grandchild of Qubilai Khan. He married a Mongol woman himself. His life too reflected his heritage. He was born in 1274, named crown-prince of Go'ryeo in 1277, and before 1298 he visited Yuan for total of 7 times, logging 8 years worth of stay in Mongol-dominated China. Later he was sent to Go'ryeo to be enthroned as the Go'ryeo king in 1298, yet was dethroned only 8 months later, and soon after his dethronement he returned to Yuan where he spent another whole decade. Although he was reinstated as the Go'ryeo king when his father died in 1307, he again chose to return to Yuan, and 5 years later passed the throne to his son

Chungsuk-wang, in order to remain inside China. Released from the Go'ryeo throne, he continued to live in China, until he died in 1325. We can see he spent more than 3/5 of his life in China. He was practically raised under Mongol/Chinese institutions, and his authority almost doubled when he successfully assisted the enthronement of two emperors Wu'tsung and Jen'tsung, to whom he had earlier served as both a mentor and a big brother.

Yet what really counts is what he actually did in Go'ryeo, with all those power that was given to him by his nature and his efforts. As mentioned before, with all the influence he accumulated as a prominent member of the Mongol imperial family, and with all the knowledge and expertise he acquired during his stay in the empire, he launched detailed reform programs. And quite naturally his reforms reflected to a certain degree the administrative reforms which were in progress inside the Yuan imperial government. In short, he used the inspirations he drew from foreign reforms, in resolving a pool of age-old problems that had been haunting the Go'ryeo society. We can see that from the first remark that he made with his enthronement, which said "I learned from Yuan Emperor Qubilai, and witnessed the grandeur of Daidu's institutions." Unlike his own father, the former King Chung'ryeol-wang who failed to implement any significant reforms during his thirty years in throne, Chungseon-wang performed a series of successful reforms in less than 5 years, with some impressive results. Let's take a look at that.

3. His reforms, modeled after Chinese/Mongol institutions

Chungseon-wang excelled in the area of political reforms and fiscal managements. With the former efforts, he concentrated upon reforming the officer appointment process, regulating the size of the government, and enforcing corruption monitors. In the meantime, through the latter efforts he promoted issues such as market protection, trade initiatives and the monopoly of salt.

In his political reforms, he pursued three specific agendas, both in 1298 when he was enthroned for the first time, and since 1307 when he was reinstated. First, he abolished the "Jeongbang" office in April 1298, which had been organized during the Military Regime period(1170-1270) and had abused personnel appointments ever since. He did so to either build or resurrect replacement offices which would oversee fair assignments. Second, he eliminated superfluous posts from the government, by drastically reducing the number of minister seats(from the traditional number of 12 to a radical '7') and forcing minor offices to be placed under larger offices' jurisdiction. He did so to simplify the resolution process in the

upper echelon of the government, and enhance the offices' job efficiency through merger & abolition. And third, he enforced governmental discipline both in the capital and other local areas, by elevating the ranks of the inspection officers and expanding the size of their staffs. He did so to dissolve previous connections of corruption, while restoring the integrity of the Go'ryeo government's operations.²⁾

What should be noticed, is that in terms of timetable and the actual process, his reforms did exhibit traces of influences and inspirations from the Yuan empire's political reforms that were in progress at the time. During the days of Qubilai(1260-1294), responding to the harsh taxation policy of a group of Muslim and Uighur ministers(such as 阿合馬, 盧世榮, 桑哥), Confucian scholars and officials with traditional thinking strongly criticized those foreign ministers' abuse of the personnel appointment system, and argued that they brought both needless personnel and significant disorder to the government. They demanded that the government's personnel structure and the appointment process be reformed, superfluous posts involved in the taxation process be eliminated from the government, and functions of disciplinary monitors be considerably enhanced. Echoing their voices, during the subsequent reigns of Timur(1294-1307) and Qayishan(1308-1311), unofficial orders or requests that circumvented the authority of Chung'shu-sheng(Central Secretariat) office were condemned and abolished, reduction of the government's size continued, and the authority of the Yu'shih-t'ai(the Censorate) office was reinforced while penal codes for bribery were newly enacted.³⁾

Chungseon-wang, who lived in Yuan for the better part of his life, witnessed all these policy directions of the Yuan government. It is highly possible that all those Yuan conventions could have had certain level of influence upon him, or at least inspired him to engage in highly concentrated political reforms. Admittedly, the agendas exhibited through his reforms were traditional and conventional ones, which could have and should have been implemented in Goryeo anyway without any exterior stimuli, but considering Chungseon-wang's unique status in terms of his relationship with Yuan, and the fact that he implemented a strong reform even when he almost completely vacated his seat in Go'ryeo for the duration of his reinstatement years(1307-1313), one should consider the possibility of a potential relationship between his reforms and the Yuan court reforms.⁴⁾

In the meantime, he also employed a series of financial policies that were designed to dramatically increase the government's revenue. He protected commercial transactions in the market by banning the government's and other powerful beings' wrongful commandeering of commercial items. He did so by elevating the status of the officials in charge of monitoring

market activities and by weakening potential perpetrators by putting them under other offices' jurisdiction. He then launched a joint effort among governmental offices and integrated the 'dyeing phase' of textile materials into the general production process, in order to develop more attractive items suitable for export in foreign trades. And he also had all the salt farms throughout the country registered by the government, and initiated the government's monopoly on salt, to secure a vast new, higher level of income for the government.⁵⁾

His such efforts as well displayed many policy details which he apparently shared with his Mongol counterpart at the time, the Yuan Emperor Wu-tsung(Qayishan, 1308-1311). Emperor Wu-tsung is known to have increased 'certification' fees related to commercial transactions in order to enhance the government's revenue, while allowing free commercial trades to continue smoothly without being burdened by additional trade taxes. He also expanded the government's monopoly over salt, by ordering more productions of salt throughout various regions of the empire. And he had the government reengage in 'Ortaq trades' with the West Asian market, an action which was definitely frowned upon by his immediate predecessor, the former emperor Temur.

In the 1300s, Go'ryeo dynasty and the Mongol Yuan empire were both facing monetary difficulties, and were in dire need of exploring new avenues to increase financial revenue. Both of them were forced to abandon their governments' prior fiscal policies, take new initiatives in their dealings with taxpayers, and aggressively pursue the development of new resources. In the process, both Chungseon-wang and Wu-tsung exhibited policies that had either similar appearances in details or at least similar perspectives regarding financial resources. Such sharing of fiscal policy agendas was probably possible as Chungseon-wang had already befriended the Qayishan and Ayurbarwada(later Jen-tsung, 1312-1320) brothers during his dethronement years(1298-1307). According to records, they were very close to each other, and such relationship would have led to many discussions regarding several aspects of governing. Such exchanges in their youth could have been one of the reasons why both countries came to display a similar series of financial

policies in the 1300s, when Chungseon-wang and Qayishan(Wu-tsung) were both sitting on the throne.⁶⁾

As we can see, Chungseon-wang's overall reform efforts were based upon the inspiration and information he drew from foreign institutions. There must have been some merits in his employing such foreign conventions and practices, in his efforts to reform Go'ryeo-specific situations.

In order to crush the corrupted officials who were abusing the officer appointment system, Chungseon-wang needed to employ methods that were truly unexpected to any kind of entities involved in the mud fight that was the political arena of Goryeo. In order to regulate the government's size while reinforcing the governmental monitoring system, and yet evade being accused of defying the authority of the Yuan government, he had to 'synchronize' the pace and color of his policy agendas with those of the Yuan government and avoid the appearance of 'moving too fast.' In order to boost the governmental income, he had to vitalize the merchants' activities instead of merely depending upon the peasantry population's agricultural production, and the former area was where he could tap into the advanced discussions of Yuan more easily and effectively. And as would be mentioned later, in order to restore the governmental structure of the early days of Go'ryeo and restore the national shrine and the taxation system as well, he had to not only use his knowledge in Chinese institutions to make those original Go'ryeo customs more sophisticated, but also 'exploit' the cause of 'reviving East Asian traditions,' with all its legitimacy and authenticity that had always been associated with such 'Old ways' intact.

In other words, he was well aware of the fact that in order to go forward with his reforms, he had to 'rely' upon alien institutions and administrations. That was why he was so eager to embrace them and consult them in the first place. And the result was a stark departure from the days of his father king Chung'ryoel-wang, who did not do anything to dismantle Jeongbang but instead used the facility to breed his own cronies, did nothing to regulate the size of the government and had no plans to bring integrity to the government. Where the father grossly failed, the son actually implemented a significant and lasting reform.

Yet even with such successes, Chunseon-wang's aforementioned position and stances earned him the reputation of 'only trying to import new things from the outside without paying any sizable attention to the issue of preserving things that had existed in the inside all along.' Supporting such mixed reputation, he did try to introduce either Chinese or Mongol

ways of life to the Go'ryeo people in quite a unilateral, and often oppressive fashion. In some cases he even did so by overruling specific Go'ryeo traditions and removing old practices.

We can see that well from his attempts to modify the national examination system. He intended to redefine the traditional dynastic examination system as a 'subsystem' that would serve the Yuan Imperial examination system, in order to have more Go'ryeo people apply to the Imperial examination and serve as officials inside Yuan. He also attempted to modify the military and civilian service system, by embracing the Mongol Yuan's institution of taxation & mobilization, much to the dismay of his vassals and his father.⁷⁾ Such attempts, if succeeded, would have had tremendous implications and probably ill effects upon previously established Go'ryeo conventions. Therefore, one might conclude that he deserved the reputation said above.

Yet at the same time, he also rejected any attempt that could threaten the position of Go'ryeo, which the country had maintained for a long time even under the strong influence of the Yuan empire. The demands to establish a new and stronger provincial office to rule the Korean peninsula, or to enthrone a new figure who had ties with the Liaodung region of China as the Go'ryeo king, which were both political campaigns maneuvered by ironically not the Mongol officials but instead the Go'ryeo people, were all met with severe resistance by king Chungseon-wang. He may have been overly inclined to change some of the Go'ryeo conventions, but he sure was not ready to compromise the general status of his kingdom, and from that fact we can see what Go'ryeo meant to this half-blooded king, to whom not only Yuan but also Go'ryeo were his 'homelands.'

Even though he wholeheartedly embraced foreign policy agendas in his political and fiscal reforms, he always came up with solutions that were applicable to the Go'ryeo environment. He used methods specifically designed to respond to Go'ryeo's own internal situations, like targeting Jeongbang or merging the offices instead of simply eliminating them. And he employed policies that reflected the reality of Go'ryeo, like choosing to pursue market protection and registration of salt farms. In fact we can further explore that side of his psyche, from another set of reform efforts he displayed.

4. Also looking into the dynasty's own past

As mentioned earlier, his own unique status granted him considerable political influence, and with such influence he ventured upon many projects he deemed necessary during his reign. In many ways, we can see that he was clearly determined to introduce Yuan dynasty's

institution and other cultural properties to the Go'ryeo people. Yet oddly enough, during the reign of this unique King, who virtually lived all his life in Yuan instead of Go'ryeo, reforms and administrations that restored(either completely or partially) cultural conventions and institutional practices of the Go'ryeo dynasty's early days, continued in various areas of dynastic governing. What is really interesting about Chungseon-wang is the fact that he was not only well-trained in Chinese and Mongol institutions, but also well-versed in the traditional customs of the Go'ryeo people. It is not a very well known fact that he actually went a long way to restore Go'ryeo's past glories throughout his entire life.

First, he partially restored the Go'ryeo government's internal structure, which was disrupted and disfigured by early Yuan intervention. In 1298, when he ascended to the throne for the first time, he decided to remedy certain problems that were associated with the 'revised' government structure created during the era of his father, and emphasized the fact that the current government structure was not sufficiently reflecting the standards of the traditional Chinese governmental structure. He declared that he would renovate the government structure to reflect such ancient East Asian customs, yet he was also interested in reviving elements that existed inside the governmental structure of the early days of Go'ryeo(which was in itself based upon Chinese ancient customs yet later evolved into a Go'ryeo-specific variation). As a result of his efforts, the government structure that was established in the early days of Go'ryeo was partially restored, in terms of the internal structure of individual offices and departments. His such efforts continued when he resumed his governance in 1307.

Second, he completely reconfigured the Go'ryeo Dynastic shrine, in order for it to reflect its original features, and function as a true monument honoring the early days of the Go'ryeo dynasty. In 1308, he found himself in a position in which he was required to repair the shrine system that was damaged and disrupted by the military generals who ruled the government in the early 13th century, and restore the original features of the shrine as they were in earlier periods. Yet, it was also necessary to acknowledge Go'ryeo's relationship with Yuan, and downgrade the features inside the shrine accordingly, to that of a feudal state. So, first he 're-enshrined' the tablet of king Munjong, who had long been revered as the king who completed the task of 'civilizing' Go'ryeo and its government, as a gesture of making his intentions to restore the 'original glory' of the past very clear. And then he moved over to design issues. In order to fulfill the second obligation mentioned above, he reduced the number of designated 'Myo(Entities to be enshrined)' figures from '7(established in the 12th

century)' to '5(used to be in the 11th century),' but to honor the first requirement, he implemented the Chinese practice of constructing series of 'flank chambers' in the east and west side of the central chamber, to maintain the number of individual chambers, which had been established as '9' in earlier periods(also the 11th century). And finally, to integrate advanced discussions regarding the inner structure of the Yuan Imperial shrine to the Go'ryeo shrine while also preserving the old features of it, Chungseon-wang 'divided' the inner space of the shrine in two. He designed the main chamber as a space where 'new features' inspired by Yuan would be installed, and the flank chambers as a refuge space where the 'traditional rules' would be observed. By doing so he succeeded in adding advanced foreign discussions to the shrine, while also retaining the original look of it as well.

Third, he renovated the taxation system based upon the principles laid out by the founder king, while also using the authority of that figure to suppress resistance from corrupted social influentials. He continued his such efforts for several years until the task was finally completed around the time Chungseon-wang retired from the throne(1314). In the process he continuously quoted the former kings' efforts(mainly the founder of the dynasty, Taejo Wang Geon) regarding the establishment of the Go'ryeo tax system, and declared that the basic principles that had been implemented in the past should be implemented again to reform the tax system. Such determination and efforts led to a full scale survey project accounting for all the changes that had accumulated for centuries in terms of land ownership and census status, and eventually resulted in a reformed tax system(the "Gabin Ju'an" tax register).

Things he did with the Go'ryeo conventions were all attempted by former kings, who tried yet failed to come home with presentable results. It was nothing less than an astonishing irony that a king who apparently had a remarkably weak connection with the inside of Go'ryeo managed to contribute to the restoration of all things Go'ryeo.⁸⁾

There may have been several reasons that made him engage in such projects that led to the restoration of old Go'ryeo traditions(either Chinese conventions embedded in Go'ryeo structure or original Go'ryeo administrative features that hailed from the early days of the dynasty). And once again, it seems that Chungseon-wang's long term stay in Yuan, along with a natural experience of being showered by Yuan cultural influence during those times, was one of them. When the Yuan empire was newly being constructed and established in the early days, especially during the reign of Emperor Qubilai(1260-1294), the Mongol leaders had to consult many Chinese intellectuals(such as 劉秉忠, 張文謙, 竇默, 王磐, 姚樞, 陳祐, 王約, 尙文, 魏初, and most notably 許衡), and many of them responded with their own administrative

expertise, which were in most cases firmly based upon ancient Chinese administrative conventions and the teachings of the past sage kings. As a result, the Yuan government in its early days made it a priority to enforce Chinese conventional features in its governing, even more strongly than any other ordinary Han-race dynasty that had ever existed. And Chungseon-wang had been witnessing all those discussions and activities since his childhood. Yuan government's such deliberate efforts to return to the old days must have profoundly inspired him to study those old conventions and analyze their merits. And there are records which tell us that he used to discuss fondly and at some times exclusively the issue of 'returning to the old ways' with renowned scholars(including 王構, 閻復, 姚燧, 蕭爽, 趙孟頫, 虞集) at the Man'gweon-dang study hall that he opened in Daidu. Such discussions with them would have prompted him to implement such attempts in his own governing of Go'ryeo as well. Only in this case, it would mean restoring not only universally accepted Chinese conventions in Go'ryeo, but also Go'ryeo's own customs and traditions, in administrative terms. We can confirm his will to do so from the fact that even during his stay in Yuan he maintained contacts with Go'ryeo officials who were visiting Yuan, and that he maintained access to Go'ryeo's own history books("Annals of the Go'ryeo dynasty"), which he kept with himself wherever he was.

5. Ending Remarks

From the things we examined in this article, we can conclude that Chungseon-wang was determined to reform things, yet he did not 'choose sides' in terms of resources at his disposal. Whether a certain idea or clue for reform was from the outside or the inside, or from the past or the present, he never made a distinction. He just approached them with equal sincerity and even practicality. Go'ryeo was his home country, yet the Mongol Yuan Empire was his other as well. He was not at liberty to draw lines, and in nature he refused to believe in borders, when it concerned developing a momentum or cause for viable reforms. All the things surrounding him, either Mongol, Chinese or Go'ryeo, represented possibilities and potentials. He was not so fortunate in his personal life: going through a turbulent marriage, eventually forced to go into exile after being implicated in a power game that engulfed the Yuan government. Yet he was still a reformer, who tried to do things to the best of abilities, and he had a soul ready for a more open world.

And later, his son Chung Suk-wang and grandson Gongmin-wang continued reforms in that vein. Chung Suk-wang is generally regarded as a king who was only interested in protecting

the customs and traditions of the Go'ryeo people, as if he was the exact opposite of his father. Yet in reality we can see that he was no different from his father, as he in fact sometimes accepted and embraced certain practices and institutions of the Mongol-dominated China and applied them to Go'ryeo situations. He for sure tried to resurrect the earlier conventions concerning the Go'ryeo dynasty's national examination system,⁹⁾ tried to maintain the 'original' feature of the national shrine,¹⁰⁾ intended to prevent Yuan law codes regarding the definition of social classes of the offspring from interclass marriages from being applied to cases of interclass couples inside Go'ryeo,¹¹⁾ and also decided to resume the practice of holding memorial services for 'Sage Gija' who had been well known to the Koreans as the 'origin of the Korean culture.'¹²⁾ In that regard, we can clearly see his will to protect and preserve things from Go'ryeo's own past instead of destroying them and replacing them with newly imported exterior institutions. Yet in order to address social problems that had arisen from his father's fiscal policies, he in the 1310s shared some policy initiatives with Emperor Jen-tsung who also in the same manner vetoed the fiscal policy of his own predecessor (and older brother) Wu-tsung. Then as such policy turn resulted in decrease of the governmental revenue, he then shifted his policy once again in the 1320s and sided with emperor T'aiting who revitalized the Yuan government's investments in the West Asian trades.¹³⁾ Contrary to general beliefs, Chunguk-wang did employ both stances, pursuing the embracement of foreign institutions and the restoration of Go'ryeo's past at the same time, albeit in different areas.

And later, Chungseon-wang's grandson Gongmin-wang also displayed a wide range of policies, and interestingly enough, they all turned out to be variations of his grandfather's. He had a reputation for modifying the Go'ryeo government's internal structure for total of four times. In that process, two times he returned to the original governmental structure which was established during the early days of Go'ryeo(the reign of Munjong[1047-1082] actually), and two times he returned to the governmental structure that was devised by his grandfather Chungseon-wang, who infused his knowledge in Chinese and Mongol governmental structures in his own creation. Such various shifting between two sets of governmental structures was necessary for Gongmin-wang's own dealing with the domestic situations inside Go'ryeo and the ever changing foreign dynamics. We can see that he was extracting the best of both worlds even in deciding the general layout of his own government.¹⁴⁾

And his fiscal policies were essentially reincarnations of Chungseon-wang's policies (and some of Chunguk-wang's agendas too) as well. It began with a series of efforts to newly

create tax resources after eliminating the Gi house family members who were obstructing the government's taxation efforts with their abusive economic conduct. Then Gongmin-wang continued with tasks to look after the land ownership issues, and monitor the commoners' welfare in their own dealings with powerful landlords, and finally bookended his efforts with a complete overhaul of tax registers throughout the country. We can see that in the process, by repeating the policies of his father and his grandfather, Gongmin-wang too either intentionally or unintentionally, integrated both Yuan-inspired policy initiatives and Go'ryeo-originated institutional practices, in his handling of fiscal and monetary issues.¹⁵⁾

Yet in conducting such a wide range of reforms, he never tried to sever the relationship between Go'ryeo and Yuan. Instead he wanted to use and 'count' upon the authority of the Yuan court in creating a momentum to propel his own reforms. He was yet another pragmatist, just like his father, and his grandfather.¹⁶⁾

We can see Chungseon-wang's efforts created a legacy for the kings who served after him, as they continued to put their dual nature to a good use. They were no empty hats indifferent to the fate of the Go'ryeo dynasty. They wanted to devise strategies and debate finer points of governance, and to do so they had to utilize everything they had, Go'ryeo's traditions, Mongol policies, whatever.

As mentioned earlier, in the end of the 13th century the peasants and merchants were experiencing changes in their lives, and recovering from the damages. Their lives considerably improved in the early days of the 14th century. Peasants tried to enhance their situation and boosted productivity. Merchants went out there and restored their reputation as international traders of East Asia once again. We can say that the people of this period continued to adjust their ways of life, in terms of quality and perspective.

Yet until recently we only viewed them as people who continued to suffer from the war's aftermath or corrupted extractors' wrong-doings for over a century. We can't deny they were in pain. Foreign forces intruded into their lives, so they had no choice but to resist. But that was not the entirety of their existence. We have to pay attention to their intentions and their achievements. Their lives should not be portrayed with fractured images like 'oppression' or 'resistance.' Describing the Go'ryeo people of this time period as merely 'causing troubles for themselves by collaborating with the Yuan oppressors' or 'not fully determined to correct social problems that had either been existing in Go'ryeo or newly caused by Yuan's presence,' is nothing but unfair and cruel. They had much more in their lives. They were searching for a life beyond mere survival, and they continued to reinvent

themselves everyday, so it'd be only fair that we should do the same in our examining of them. We should try hard enough to determine what kind of changes they went through, and how much efforts they put into the task of making such changes.

And the same perspective should be applied to the task of examining the lives of the kings. In that regard, Chungseon-wang is an epitome of such efforts displayed by the Go'ryeo people. As we can see, he pursued two monumental agendas which in appearance might have seemed to be conflicting one another, yet he never regarded these two objectives as issues colliding with each other. And many others shared this kind of perspective, as we can see from the actions of his successors like Chungbuk-wang and Gongmin-wang.

Chungseon-wang was indeed a formidable figure who displayed intelligence and determination that surpassed any imaginable kind of ethnic borders. In order to better and enhance a specific area in Go'ryeo, he would carefully assess the situation. When he reached the conclusion that he would be needing methods that had never before been employed in Go'ryeo, or an authority that was completely cut off from any preexisting philosophical discourses that had been circulating inside Go'ryeo, then he would simply access the Mongol/Chinese side of his own identity embedded in his character and relentlessly deploy Chinese methodologies and Mongol authorities in his reforms. On the other hand, whenever he encountered a realization that the current status of an affair would be resolved for the better by simply restoring the original principles and conventions of Go'ryeo, then he would access the Go'ryeo side of his identity and his character and then bring back the traditions that had been established at the time of Go'ryeo's foundation.

One might say he was a true pragmatist. Instead of being trapped between agendas and between heritages, he was able to put both of his heritages to a good use. I only hope that I would be able to have a better understanding of the achievements and failures of this outstanding figure, and those of his colleagues and descendants. Hopefully in the future, based upon such understanding, we would be able to establish a new understanding of how the people lived in this period, what were their characters, and what was the nature of their intentions that motivated such efforts and endeavors.

1) Lee Kang Hahn, *Trades between the Goryeo dynasty and the Mongol Yuan Empire, and the Nature of those trades, in the 13th ~ 14th centuries*, Doctoral Dissertation, Department of Korean History, Seoul National University, August 2007

- 2) Lee Kang Hahn, "Go'ryeo King Chungseon-wang's Political Reforms and Yuan-related aspects in them", *Han'guk Munhwa: Korean Culture* No. 43, Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies, Seoul National University, Seoul Korea, September 2008.
- 3) Admittedly these were all general agendas that could be spotted in any kind of political reforms. Yet the Muslim ministers during the early days of the Mongol Yuan Empire 'deviated' from those general norms of China farther than ever, and in response, the Chinese traditionalists had to criticize such deviations with according proportions, which was more aggressively than their predecessors. And as a result, all these three general agendas were strongly show-cased as primary issues of the time, more so than ever.
- 4) Surely there were differences. Chungseon-wang's efforts concentrated upon eliminating a corrupted office, while Yuan's efforts intended to establish public channels of communication inside the government. Yet both efforts made it clear that they would not allow crony groups or other organizations of officials with private agendas to gain any influential voice or political cover or corrupted support inside the government. So, there were indeed differences in details, yet similarities in the overall objective. Governmental personnel layoff in Yuan was executed out of an effort to eliminate all new presences established by the Muslim ministers, while that in Go'ryeo was done to take unnecessary weight off the government. Yet both efforts allowed the respective governments to return to their original shapes, a government operating upon Chinese principles(Yuan) and a government operating upon a ministry system from the dynasty's early days(Go'ryeo). And finally, it is interesting to note that the timetable for promoting the rank and status of the inspection and monitoring offices in both countries actually 'intersected' with each other, as if Chungseon-wang and the Yuan emperor were rivaling to promote their side of the office much faster and higher.
- 5) Lee Kang Hahn, "Go'ryeo King Chungseon-wang and Yuan Emperor Wu-tsung, 'Sharing' many policy details in handling monetary difficulties", *The Journal of Korean Studies(Dongbang Hakchi)* Vol. 143, Institute of Korean Studies, Yonsei University, Seoul Korea, September 2008
- 6) Of course there were some differences between their respective fiscal policies. While Chungseon-wang concentrated upon protecting the merchants from the wrongdoings of the government, Emperor Wu-tsung tried to sever the unofficial connection and shady business between the government and the merchants. Yet it should be noted that they both tried to ultimately establish a positive relationship between the government and the market which they could both benefit from. The salt monopoly system showed a similar case. The system was a time-honored tradition in China, while it was merely a newborn institution in Go'ryeo, yet both Chungseon-wang and Wu-tsung was well aware of the fiscal potentials of salt monopoly than any other leaders in their recent history, and as a result the salt policy on both sides shared many technical details. Same set of 'similarities within differences' can be spotted in the foreign trade area as well. Go'ryeo was only part of a vast network of foreign trades in East Asia headed by the Mongol Yuan empire, but both Yuan and Go'ryeo were interested in producing high quality textile materials and exporting them to foreign markets, so in the end both parties displayed taking impressive initiatives in textile production.
- 7) Lee Kang Hahn, "Gorgis' attempt of changing the official and customary practices of the Goryeo dynasty", *The Journal of Korean History(Han'guk-sa Yeon'gu)* No. 139, The Association for Korean Historical Studies, Seoul Korea, December 2007

- 8) Lee Kang Hahn, "Go'ryeo King Chungseon-wang's governing, and partial restoration of Go'ryeo's 'Administrative conventions' in various areas, during his reign", *The Chin-tan Hakpo* Vol. 105, the Chin-tan Society, Seoul Korea, June 2008
- 9) Lee Kang Hahn, "King Chungsuk-wang's Restoration of the National Examination System's Conventions, and his objectives", *The Journal of Eastern Studies(Daedong Munhwa Yon'gu)* Vol. 71, Daedong Institute for Korean Studies, The Academy of East Asian Studies, SungKyunKwan University, Seoul Korea, September 2010
- 10) Lee Kang Hahn, "Goryeo dynasty's Renovation of Its National Ancestral Shrine in the 14th Century", *The Chin-tan Hakpo* Vol. 109, the Chin-tan Society, Seoul Korea, June 2010
- 11) Lee Kang Hahn, "Goryeo Dynasty's Interclass Marriage Laws and its Differences with Yuan Imperial Regulations", *The Journal of Korean Studies(Dongbang Hakchi)* Vol. 150, Institute of Korean Studies, Yonsei University, Seoul Korea, June 2010
- 12) Lee Kang Hahn, "The Nature and Meaning of the "Gi'ja" Service Resumption in 1325", *Han'guk Munhwa: Korean Culture* No. 50, Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies, Seoul National University, Seoul Korea, June 2010
- 13) Lee Kang Hahn, "Chungsuk-wang's Rectifying of Land Ownership & Human Condition problems, and Enlisting merchant figures into the government", *Quarterly Review of Korean History(Yöksa-wa Hyönsil)* No. 72, The Organization of Korean Historians, Seoul Korea, June 2009
- 14) Lee Kang Hahn, "Revisions of the Government's Structure, during King Gongmin's reign", *The Korean Historical Review(the Yöksa Hakbo)* No. 201, The Korean Historical Association, Seoul Korea, March 2009
- 15) Lee Kang Hahn, "King Gongmin-wang's Financial management, and his Acknowledgement of King Chungseon-wang's policies", *The Journal for the Studies of Korean History(Han'guksa Hakpo)*, Vol. 34, The Society for the Studies of Korean history, Korea University, Seoul Korea, February 2009
- 16) Lee Kang Hahn, "Reexamination of the so-called 'Anti-Yuan Reforms' conducted by King Gongmin-wang in 1356", *The Journal of Eastern Studies(Daedong Munhwa Yon'gu)* Vol. 65, Daedong Institute for Korean Studies, The Academy of East Asian Studies, SungKyunKwan University, Seoul Korea, March 2009