

Clashes between Liaodong Koreans and the Goryeo Royal House in the 13th to 14th Centuries*

Ki-seung OH**
Chung-Ang University

1. Introduction

During the war between Goryeo and the Mongols in the mid 13th century, a sizeable number of Goryeo people (henceforth, Koreans) broke away in groups from the domain of Goryeo. Some surrendered voluntarily, leading some groups of their followers, to the Mongol Empire that welcomed them and bestowed official posts such as local directorate-general (總管) and chiliarch (千戶) for its newly acquired Korean subjects. Their duty was, mainly, to supervise people and households for military and labor mobilization, whereby they expanded their sphere of influence and elevated their positions within the system of the Mongol Empire.

Having established their power in Liaodong, this Korean diaspora often clashed with the Goryeo royal house while collaborating with the Mon-

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** Ki-seung Oh is a lecturer at Chung-Ang University. His major works include: “Wondae yodong yeowon jeopgyoeng-eseoui yoanghaengseong-ui yeokhal gochal” [The role played by Liaoyang Haengseong in the border region (Liaodong) between Goryeo and the Mongol Yuan Empire], *Yeoksawa Hyeonsil* 107 (2017); “Yodong goryeoin hongssi seryeokui hyeongseokgwa honggunsang-ui haengjeoke daehan gochal” [A study on formation of Liaodong Goryeo people group Hong clan and achievements of Hong Gun-Sang], *Chiyeok Kwa Yeoksa* 40 (2017a); and “Mongoljeguk-ui dongbang gyeongyeong-gwa yodong goryeoin seryeok” [A ruling tactics of the Mongol empire in their eastern territory and Goryeo people group in Liaodong-especially in Liaoyang and Shenyang area], *Jungangsarom* 43 (2016).

gols to compete against their homeland for postwar gains. These powerful Korean groups in the region dispersed throughout the north of the Korean Peninsula and Liaodong. But, as the Dongnyeong Commandery (東寧府), installed in the north of the peninsula, was returned to Goryeo and the conflict between Goryeo and Ssangsyong Commandery (雙城總管府) had escalated in the late 13th century, Liaodong Koreans became the main force behind the conflict with the Goryeo royal house especially from the early 14th century.

The Liaodong Korean groups even frequently competed with each other, so they rarely banded together under any united force. In addition, their conflict with Goryeo did not manifest in a uniform fashion but varied in terms of time and context wherein each group was situated. For instance, the warlord Hong clan, the enfeoffed King of Shen (瀋王) faction, and the imperial relative Gi clan in the region confronted the Goryeo royal house all in different manners according to their capabilities and circumstances.¹ The rivalry between Liaodong Korean groups and the Goryeo royal house came to an end in the late 14th century when Goryeo solely survived as a polity. The Korean groups in Liaodong lost their political statuses and became absorbed into Goryeo or Ming China (1368-1644).

This paper investigates the tug of power between the aforementioned three Liaodong Korean groups and the Goryeo royal house in late Goryeo. For this purpose, it first examines how the conflict emerged and developed until its end during the Yuan-Ming transition period. What is further explored is the distinctive status of Goryeo kings under the Mongolian Empire, its impact on their power struggle with their rivals, and the final outcomes.² By doing so, this paper will help offer historical insight as to how Goryeo in the 13th to 14th centuries preserved its polity under the Mongolian world order.

¹ More discussions on Liaodong Korean power groups in the 13th to 14th centuries can be found in the following studies: Chu Chae-hyok (1974), Kim Gu-jin (1986), Chang Dong-ik (1999), Kim Hye-won (1999), Lee Jung-shin (2001), and Oh Ki-seung (2017b).

² On the complex status of Goryeo and Goryeo kings in the 13th to 14th centuries, refer to the following studies: Kim Ho-dong (2007), Choi Yoon-jung (2013), and Lee Myung-mi (2016).

2. The Emergence of Conflict

The first Liaodong Korean who secured his position in the Mongol empire was the local overlord Hong Bokwon (洪福源). His family had lived in Inju (麟州)³ for generations, which was the main military post of northern Goryeo. His father Hong Daesun (洪大純) was the local commander of Inju⁴ who controlled its prefectural army. Hong Bokwon inherited this post from his father and commanded Inju's cavalry regiments but he surrendered immediately after the Mongols' first invasion to the prefecture in 1231. This deed earned him the Mongols' recognition for the "shuaixian guifu (率先歸)" or *act of surrender ahead of all others* as well as trust such that they continued to keep him in important positions.⁵ Protected by Saritari's Mongol troops since his surrender, Hong extended his influence to the northwest region of Goryeo. The central Goryeo government implicitly condoned Hong's action by appointing him assistant commander (郎將) of Seogyeong (i.e., West Capital, modern-day Pyeongyang), signaling its intention of conciliating him. By that time, Hong Bokwon still allowed Goryeo officials' visits in his territory and did not entirely sever ties with the Goryeo government.⁶

Their relations changed abruptly, however, as Saritari, who invaded Goryeo again in 1232, was killed in the battle of Cheoinseong and the

³ Present-day Sinuiju in the Northern Pyeongan Province.

⁴ *Goryeosa*, Book 130, *Biographies* 43, "Hong Bokwon." For more discussions on the development and status of the Bukgyeong region of Goryeo, refer to the following studies: Lee Kibaik (1968), Kim Gap-dong (1996), and Park Oak-kol (1999).

⁵ Oh Ki-seung, "Yodong goryeoin hongssi seryeok ui hyeongseong gwa Hong Gunsang ui haengjeok e daehan gochal" [A study on formation of Liaodong Goryeo people group Hong clan and achievements of Hong Gun-sang], *Chiyeok gwa Yeoksa* 40 (2017a), 59; Choi Yoon-jung (2016), "13-segi ryeowon gwangyewa Hong Dagū" [The 13-century Goryeo-Mongol relations and Hong Dagū], *Jungguksa yeongu* 105 (2016): 100.

⁶ During the years of 1231-32, Hong Bokwon appeared to maintain his relations with both the Mongols and Goryeo so as to maximize his interests in the northwest region of Goryeo. See Oh, "13-14-segi yeomong cheopgyeong jiyek goryeoin seryeok yeongu" [A study of Goryeo people group in the Goryeo-Mongol border area in the 13-14th century] (PhD diss., Chung-ang University, 2017b): 30-33.

Mongol troops had to retreat. At that time, the Mongols temporarily deferred attacks on Goryeo and concentrated their forces on the final showdown against the Jurchen Jin (1115-1234) and Dongzhen regime (1215-33). Without missing this opportunity, Goryeo took some measures to recover its control over Bukgye (北界), the northwest province of Goryeo. Without the protection of the Mongol troops, Hong Bokwon faced great pressure from the Goryeo government.⁷ To conciliate Hong, Goryeo sent a pacification commissioner (宣諭使) but Hong killed him to demonstrate his will to support the Mongols. In response, Goryeo condemned his act as ‘mutiny’ and deployed 3,000 private soldiers of Choe U (崔瑀) with Bukgye’s military commander Min Hui (閔職) to attack Hong’s base.⁸

Goryeo succeeded in seizing Seogyong and captured Hong’s father and his brother Hong Baeksu (洪白壽) with his children,⁹ but Hong Bokwon escaped and submitted himself to the Mongols with his retinue of 1,500 households in early 1233.¹⁰ In the following year, the Mongols appointed him and Kim Bu (金符) Directorate-General of Surrendered Goryeo Military and Civilian Populations (管領歸附高麗軍民長官), thereby securing him the position of powerful Korean overlord in Liaodong.¹¹

Due to the military clashes with Goryeo in the course of establishing their power in Liaodong, the Hong clan’s relationship with Goryeo fell apart and they were inevitably hostile to Goryeo. After settling in Liaodong, Hong Bokwon vilified Goryeo and took part in the Mongols’ military expeditions. Choi U, the de facto ruler of Goryeo at that time, tried to appease him by bestowing his father Hong Daesun and his brother Hong Baeksu, both of whom remained in Goryeo, with government posts and sending him bribes. *Goryeosa* [History of Goryeo] records that Hong Bok-

⁷ Yun Yong-hyok, “Goryeo daemong hangjaengsa yeongu” [Goryeo Anti-municipity History Research] (Seoul: Iljisa, 1999): 62-63.

⁸ *Goryeosa*, Book 23, *Annals* 23, Gojong 20th year, 12th month.

⁹ *Goryeosa*, Book 23, *Annals* 23, Gojong 19th year, 12th month.

¹⁰ *Yuan Gaoli Jishi*, Taizhong 6th year, 1st day of the 5th month.

¹¹ *Yuanshi*, Book 154, *Biographies* 41, “Hong Bokwon.”

won curtailed his slanders on Goryeo as a result of Choi's appeasement,¹² indicating that the relations between the Hong and the Goryeo court possibly ameliorated a little.

Nevertheless, it is likely that their relationship remained more or less hostile because Hong Bokwon did not stop his service as a fugleman of the Mongol troops and collaborated in the invasion of Goryeo.¹³ In 1258, Hong Bokwon was terminated by Duke Yeongnyeong (永寧公) Wang Jun (王紘), a new emerging power in Liaodong.¹⁴ The Hong clan aggravated their antagonism toward the Goryeo royal house.

The new rival group emerged as the Goryeo royal house overthrew the military regime and established a peace agreement with the Mongols. Once the hostile relations were resolved due to the peace agreement, the Goryeo royal house and Liaodong Korean groups, including the Hong clan, all equally became the eastern part of the Mongol Empire and found themselves being competitors against one another. Geographically adjacent to the Korean Peninsula, Liaodong lay in the shortest path to the center of the empire from Goryeo, making it an attractive settlement for refugees from Goryeo since the onset of the Goryeo-Mongol War. To Liaodong Korean groups, not only the territory of Goryeo proper but also the people from Goryeo were valuable resources to expand their power base. To Goryeo, they were the resources to be protected or recovered.

Power groups existing in such parallel and adjacent locations were prone to overlapping interests. The surge and expansion of one power could lead to the wilting and waning of the other, naturally leading to competitions among Korean political entities in the region over territory and population. For instance, during the Goryeo-Mongol war, not a few Go-

¹² *Goryeosa*, Book 130, *Biographies* 43, "Hong Bokwon."

¹³ *Goryeosa*, Book 130, *Biographies* 42, "Hong Bokwon."

¹⁴ Wang Jun was in conflict with Hong Bokwon as he emerged as a new power in Liaodong by obtaining a fief in the region in order to contain the expansion of Hong's influence. Refer to the following paper for more details on their conflict and the purge of Hong Bokwon. See Oh (2016), "Mongjeguk ui dongbang gyeongyeong gwa yodong goryeoin seryeok" [A ruling tactics of Mongol empire in their eastern territory and Goryeo people group in Liaodong-especially in Liaoyang and Shenyang area], *Jungang saron* 43 (2016): 19-21.

ryeo people left their country and settled in Liaodong under the direction of Hong Bokwon. The Goryeo government demanded the return of runaways and attempted to repatriate them.¹⁵ This case illustrates the degree to which the two powers wangled over the control of the Korean inflows in Liaodong. Goryeo and Liaodong Korean power groups continued to compete against each other in order to expand their spheres of interest and seize the superior position within the Mongolian empire.

Under this power structure encompassing Goryeo, Liaodong Korean power groups and the Mongol empire altogether, the political target of the Liaodong Koreans became less Goryeo's military regime than the kingship after Goryeo's incorporation to the Mongolian world order. This trend continued with all other Liaodong Korean groups that rose to power after the Hong clan and the Goryeo royal house had to stand at the forefront of political clashes in order to secure and maintain its exclusive rule over Goryeo.

3. Development and Characteristics of the Rivalry between Liaodong Koreans and the Goryeo Royal House

1) Timeline of the Emergence of Major Liaodong Koreans and Transformation of Clashes

Since the completion of the Goryeo-Mongol War, the Hong Bokwon family, the King of Shen (瀋王) faction, and the Gi family headed by Gi Cheol (奇轍) attained prominence among Liaodong Korean groups through obtaining official positions within the empire's organization, establishing close ties with certain families of great khans, and provoking confrontations against the Goryeo royal house at different times.

Here, it should be noted that the word 'Koreans,' which is used to refer to the Liaodong Koreans, does not simply mean the people who be-

¹⁵ Lee Kang-hahn, "Goryeo hugi won dunjeong ui unyeong gwa byeonhwa" [Yuan-implemented Garrison farms in the 1270s, and the changes it went through], *Yoksa Hakbo* 196 (2007): 17.

longed to the country, Goryeo. Hong Bokwon, who led the first Liaodong Korean power group, voluntarily relinquished his ties to his homeland Goryeo. In addition, his son and successor, Hong Dagu (洪茶丘) could hardly be identified as a subject of Goryeo. As indicated from Kublai Khan's installation of a myriarchy commanding Koreans, Jurchen, and Chinese Han (高麗女直漢軍萬戶府) in 1292, the Mongol empire had already included Koreans as one of their ethnic stocks within itself. That is, it can be said that the Koreans within its imperial territory, including Liaodong, were considered one of its multi-ethnic constituents of the Mongolian empire.¹⁶

The Liaodong Korean group led by Hong Dagu was the first to launch strong attacks against the Goryeo royal house right after the Goryeo-Mongol war. Hong Dagu obtained Kublai Khan's favors through his military achievements, which enabled him to restore his father's once divested position of Directorate-General of Surrendered Goryeo Military and Civilian Populations (管領歸附高麗軍民總管) and inherit it through his personal connections.¹⁷ Having redeemed his predecessor's lost domain, Hong Dagu maligned Goryeo's Prince Wang Jun, directly involved in Hong Bokwon's death, and confiscated his troops and horses.¹⁸ Wang Jun's attempt to seek clemency for his relatives, including his elder brother Marquis Seunghwa Wang On (承化侯 王溫) and his nephew Wang Hwan (王桓), went unheeded. Hong Dagu even executed those Goryeo royalties while squelching the Sambyeolcho Rebellion.¹⁹

Apart from this case, Hong also clashed with Goryeo King Chungryeol 忠烈王 (r. 1274-98) over the preparation and process of helping Kublai's expedition to Japan, an attempt to permeate his influence into Goryeo. On the pretext of Yuan's expedition to Japan, Hong Dagu distressed

¹⁶ Oh (2017b), 80-81.

¹⁷ *Yuanshi*, Book 154, *Biographies* 41, "Hong Bokwon's son Hong Dagu."

¹⁸ *Goryeosa*, Book 18, Wonjong 4th year, 3rd month.

¹⁹ *Goryeosa*, Book 90, *Biographies* 3, "Wonjong 1." Duke Yeongnyeong Wang Jun and Marquis Seunghwa Wang On were brothers, both being sons of Duke Pyeongyang Wang Gyeong, who was a son of King Hyeonjong. Therefore, Wang Jun asked his sons (Wang Ong and Wang Hui), who joined in the forces to quash Sambyeolcho, to save Wang On, but Hong Dagu maneuvered to kill him to avenge his father.

Goryeo while working as the director of garrison farm installation on the peninsula. He utilized this position as his foothold to procure manpower and probably to expand his sphere of control into the northern and southern parts of Goryeo.²⁰

Heavily pressured, King Chungryeol went as far as to implore Kublai to replace Hong Dagu's forces with Mongol or Han troops instead on the grounds that Hong's domineering interferences in all domestic affairs, not just in military affairs, made it hard for the king to rule his kingdom.²¹ However, King Chungryeol could not contain Hong's tyranny until he attained the position of Grand Councilor of the Branch Secretariat for Eastern Expeditions (征東行省), a higher-ranking office within the imperial government than Hong Dagu's.²²

By the early 14th century, the Hong clan's influence in Liaodong had reached its peak. Hong Junghui (洪重喜), who had been dominating Liaodong as the successor of Hong Dagu, successfully entreated the Mongolian emperor to have Goryeo procure necessary supplies for the empress dowager's Buddhist service for immortality after King Chungseon 忠宣王 (r. 1298/1308-13)'s reinstatement.²³ In order to defeat King Chungseon, who was also holding the kingship of Shenyang as well as the kingship of Goryeo, Hong sued the king for his acts of being lawless, insolent, and violent²⁴ while attempting to install a direct Mongol-ruled branch secretariat in Goryeo for the first time.

This incident can be also interpreted as a preventive measure by the Hong clan to avert the expansion of Goryeo's royal power in Liaodong, as

²⁰ Lee Kang-hahn (2007), 18.

²¹ *Goryeosa*, Book 28, *Annals* 28, King Chungryeol, 4th year, 7th month.

²² There are different arguments regarding the main reason for Kublai's inability to restrain Hong Dagu, although King Chungryeol was his son-in-law. Choi Yoon-jung (2013, 49) finds the reason in King Chongryeol's clear limitation due to his lack of contributions to the empire, such as the Hong family's act of surrender ahead of all others. In a similar vein, Lee Myung-mi (2016, 124) argues that there was no undeniable definite hierarchy between the two to prevent Hong Dagu from challenging King Chungryeol.

²³ *Goryeosa*, 1st year of King Chungryeol's 2nd reign, the day of dragon in the 3rd month.

²⁴ *Goryeosa*, Book 122, *Biographies* 35.

had been the case with Wang Jun in the past. However, his attempt was thwarted by the eunuch Bang Sinwu (renamed Mang Gutai (忙古台) after transferring to the Yuan royal court) who reported to Empress Dowager Shouyuan (壽元皇太后) that Hong had lied to upset Goryeo. Consequently, Hong was flogged and exiled to Chaozhou (潮州).²⁵ Later, Hong was pardoned and called up again but he died in the following year. Since then, the Hong clan could never regain their former eminence over Liaodong.²⁶

With the demise of the Hong family, a new power group emerging from Liaodong in the late 1310s to contend against Goryeo's royal house was that of Wang Go (王鬲), the King of Shen who inherited King Chungseon's Shen kingship. As Wang Go tried to revive the kingship from its waning status, he came to be in conflict with the Goryeo royal family including King Chungsuk 忠肅王 (r. 1313-30 / 1332-39). The commandership that King Chungseon took over the troops and civilians in Liaodong as the King of Shen is likely to have all been transferred to branch secretariats by the time when Wang Go inherited the title. Chungseon's major assets, such as remaining properties in Liaodong—Haejeongojeompo (廨典庫店鋪), Yeongseongsori (營城掃里), Seonseongsori (宣城掃里) in Yizhou (懿州)—and land in the Jiangnan (江南) region, had been mostly inherited to King Chungsuk. That is why Wang Go received nothing more than a mansion with land in the grand capital of the Mongolian empire in addition to the titular title of King of Shen.²⁷ As a result, what had been left over to Wang Go was little power or assets although the one-syllable title offered to Wang presented a high-ranking peerage in the Mongolian empire.²⁸

Dissatisfied, Wang Go ignited friction with the Goryeo king.²⁹ He

²⁵ *Goryeosa*, Book 122, *Biographies* 35. *Yuanshi* records that he was exiled to Zhangzhou in the 2nd year of Kaishan Khan's reign, which slightly differs from the records in *Goryeosa*.

²⁶ They could not recover their power and declined further, and their defeat in the Yangdo Civil War in 1328 played a part in their demise. See Oh (2017b, PhD diss.), 87-88.

²⁷ *Goryeosa*, Book 35, *Annals* 35, the 15th reign of King Chungsuk, the day of snake in the 7th month.

²⁸ A one-syllable title such as Shen was ranked higher in Yuan than a two-syllable title such as Shenyang.

²⁹ Kim Hye-won (1999), 53.

launched political attacks on the Goryeo royal house, aiming to overthrow the king and usurp the throne for himself. In fact, his campaign worked to such an extent that King Chung Suk was detained in the Yuan for several years and his royal seal was confiscated. Although his scheme against Chung Suk eventually failed, his endeavors to usurp the Goryeo throne continued till his latter years. Wang and his followers were summoned as the group associated directly with the succession of the Goryeo throne even after the reign of King Chung Suk. While continuing their fight for the throne, the Wang group sought to ease the royal succession procedure, install direct Yuan-ruled branch secretariats, and undermine the authority of the Goryeo king.

After Wang Go's death in 1345, the campaign to enthrone the King of Shen as the Goryeo king withered away but the ascension of King Gongmin 恭愍王 (r. 1351-74) began with the emergence of a new rival group, the Gi clan. The group relied on the power of Empress Gi, a consort of the Mongol Emperor Shun (順帝), and her brother Gi Cheol (奇轍) was the central figure. Gi Cheol was appointed Temporary Acting Supervisor of the Branch Secretariat of Eastern Expedition (權征東省事) in Gaeseong, the capital of Goryeo, and took control of the secretariat.³⁰ After the death of King Chungmuk 忠穆王 (r. 1344-48), he expanded his power within Goryeo to act as a de facto ruler of the capital province of Goryeo by coercing the position of chancellor and the title of royal father-in-law³¹ on the one hand and by securing his influence in Liaodong through the position of Manager of Governmental Affairs (平章政事) on the other hand. Thus, the Gi clan competed with the Goryeo royal house at the far-reaching level; they fought with the Goryeo king over political supremacy within Goryeo while engaging in military clashes over the territory encompassing northern Goryeo and Liaodong.

King Gongmin eliminated successfully the Gi clan and their influence within Goryeo in 1356. But, Liaodong was a different story. Since it was

³⁰ Koh Myung-soo, "Jeongdong haengseong gineung ui byeoncheon" [Changes in the Functions of Cheng-Tung Hsing-Sheng – With Period Division], *Hanguksahakbo* 66 (2017): 106.

³¹ *Goryeosa*, Book 131, *Biographies* 44, "Gi Cheol."

not within Goryeo's sphere of authority either territorially or administratively, King Gongmin could not exert his influence directly on the remnant elements of the Gi clan in Liaodong. Thus, the king could do nothing to the remaining Gi family in Liaodong and later the conflict, caused by his purge of Gi Cheol, was about to explode into a full-blown military clash between the two powers. There were two military showdowns. The first one occurred when Empress Gi tried to seat Prince Deokheung (德興君) on the throne of Goryeo in 1364. The Mongols retrieved ten thousand troops from Liaodong and invaded Goryeo to replace King Gongmin with Deokheung on the throne. But, they were completely vanquished and the Mongols ended up losing their control over Goryeo's throne and domestic affairs.

When the Mongol empire lost and retreated from Mainland China, the Liaodong region was flooded with pro-Yuan cliques and temporarily fell into a state of fragmentation among numerous rivaling overlords before the advance of the Ming into the region. These overlords, including Nahachu, justified their authorities in their respective territories on the basis of their official positions warranted mostly by Yuan's Liaoyang Secretariat (遼陽行省) system so they all could be categorized as subjects of the Yuan. However, the Yuan could not provide any hierarchical order with a clearly designated central leadership; consequently, those overlords cohabited in a semi-autonomous manner.³²

In light of this, Gi Cheol's son Gi Sain Temur (奇賽因帖木兒) organized a coalition of overlords in various areas on and around Liaoyang Prefecture under the name of the Dongnyeong Commandery and attacked Goryeo. In response, King Gongmin opted for a strong military retaliation

³² According to Jung Dong-hun, although these overlords self-claimed official positions in Liaoyang branch secretariats under the secretariat system of the Yuan Empire, they did not use the official letter forms postulated by the imperial secretariat system in their communications with the Goryeo government but personal letter forms. Jung argues that this freedom indicates that Goryeo and Liaoyang overlords communicated without much concern of Northern Yuan, which had already lost much of its control in the region including Liaodong and the Korean Peninsula. This argument evinces that these Liaodong groups at that time were not actually under the direct hierarchical control of Northern Yuan but semi-autonomous fiefs, although they used the titles of Yuan's secretariat system. See Jung's PhD dissertation, "Goryeo sidae oegyū munseo yeongu" [A study on diplomatic documents in the Goryeo Dynasty] (Seoul National University, 2016): 456.

to the commandery and launched two military expeditions to Liaodong in 1370 to demolish the coalition.³³ It is since King Gongmin's elimination of Gi Sain Temur in the late 14th century that the only Korean-based polity throughout Liaodong and the Korean Peninsula was Goryeo.

2) Securing Superior Positions under the System of the Mongol Empire

After the peace settlement between the Mongols and Goryeo, the Goryeo royal house and Liaodong Korean powers shared some characteristics of fiefdoms that could exercise autonomous rule within the boundary of Qa'an Ulus of the Mongol empire.³⁴ Under these circumstances several power groups sought their own way of expanding their spheres of influence in the region composed of Liaodong and the Korean Peninsula. The power struggle induced frequent rivalries among these groups. In this vein, the primary objective of both Goryeo and other Korean power groups was identical—securing the superior position over the others within the system of Qa'an Ulus.

As previously mentioned, the Korean power groups in Liaodong could easily fall into conflict while competing to procure power-enhancing resources including people. They had a similar manpower base drawn mostly from Goryeo and their domains were territorially close to Goryeo. What is more, such rivalry among themselves was intensified by the Mongols for its advantage at times when its relationship with Goryeo was unstable. It was also spurred by the emergence of a political entity such as the

³³ For more details on the preparation and background of the expedition, refer to the following article: Oh K-S, "Gongminwang dae dongnyeongbu jeongyeok gochal" [A study on the Dongnyongbu campaign in the reign of King Kongmin], *Gunsa yeongu* 134 (2012).

³⁴ As will be discussed in later sections with more details, the territories and military and civilian populations that Liaodong Korean powers ruled were fundamentally enfeoffed demesnes in nature. Goryeo also shared some characteristics of a family fiefdom bestowed to the imperial son-in-law Goryeo king, while being a foreign state under the sovereignty of the Goryeo king. For more details, refer to: Kim Ho-dong (2007) and Morihira Masahiko 森平雅彦 (2013), "Mongoru hakenka no Kōrai" モンゴル覇権下の高麗, Nagoya daigaku shuppankai 名古屋大学出版会.

Gi family that could exert its influence in Goryeo without relying on the authority of the Goryeo royal house to weaken the royal family's power base. At other times, however, the clashes between the two Korean powers aggravated the relationship between Goryeo and the Mongols, as in the case of the Hong clan's attempt at installing direct Mongol-ruled secretariats in Goryeo during the reign of King Chungsuk. Also, conflict arose even when Goryeo-Mongol relations were stable as in the case of Hong Jung-hui's attempt to install direct Mongol-ruled secretariats against the Goryeo king during the second reign of King Chungseon.

Although the three Liaodong Korean power groups, discussed in the previous paragraphs, differed slightly in their main methods for containing and attacking the Goryeo royal house, they all tried to form close ties with some central figures of the Mongolian empire, attain the status of 'a person with a good root,' and obtain superior ranks within the imperial system. The same means were also employed by the Goryeo royal house in offsetting its rivals' political attacks.

In the early phase of conflict between the Liaodong Koreans and the Goryeo royal house, Hong Dagu was able to gain support from the Mongolian imperial house by joining the Mongols' military campaigns and obtaining Kublai's personal favor³⁵ as well as high-ranking jobs. In 1274, he was named Superintendent of the Shipbuilding Government-Military-Civilian Commandery (監督造船官軍民總管) and Deputy Marshal of the Eastern Expedition Force (東征副元帥) and deployed to Goryeo to represent the interests of the Mongol empire and enforce the procurement of supplies and shipbuilding assigned to Goryeo. In 1277, while preparing for the second expedition to Japan, Hong Dagu was promoted to Marshal of the Eastern Expedition Force (東征都元帥) and acted as a delegate of the empire. At that time, Hong Dagu was not simply a commander or myriarch (萬戶府) of Liaodong but a key agent able to materialize the empire's authority in proxy upon Goryeo. Under the Mongol system of branch secretariats, he held a higher status than the Goryeo government.

³⁵ *Yianshi*, Book 154, *Biographies* 41, "Hong Bokwon's son Hong Dagu."

At the same time, however, King Chungryeol became the first Goryeo king who received a dual royal status: Goryeo king and the emperor's son-in-law. By marrying Kublai Khan's daughter, King Chungryeol became a member of the Mongol imperial family, which was an important factor that gave him the edge over other Korean powerholders. Through King Chungryeol's marriage into the imperial family and his military contributions, Goryeo exalted its status and strengthened its ties with the central government of the empire.³⁶ He was also appointed Grand Councilor of the Branch Secretariat for Eastern Expeditions, which allowed him to wield his power over the imperial organization.

King Chungseon, the son of King Chungryeol, was not only married into the imperial house but also formed a close affinity with Emperor Wuzong (r. 1307-11) and Emperor Renzong (r. 1311-20), thereby expanding his influence further in the empire. Consequently, he enjoyed privilege from the dual kingship of Goryeo and Shenyang and appears to have successfully suppressed the Hong clan in Liaodong by exiling Hong Junghui. Similarly, after Chungseon's death, Wang Go, the King of Shen, could temporarily achieve desired results by calumniating King Chungsuk thanks to his connections to the imperial family. Wang was the husband of Princess Nullyun who was a niece of King Chungseon's consort, Princess Gyegukdaejang (or Princess Budashiri) so he was able to win Emperor Yingzong's favor. Prior to this, Wang Jun, married also to the imperial family, gained imperial support for the power struggle with Hong clan.³⁷

To be certain, kinship or an affinity to a particular bloodline and the degree of personal closeness to a powerful person from that particular bloodline were crucial factors in obtaining a political advantage. These personal connections played an important role in determining the superior side

³⁶ King Chungryeol's active display of willingness regarding the expeditions to Japan and the suppression of Qadan's revolt was construed as military 'contributions' to the Yuan Empire and facilitated close ties with Yuan. But his actions were not up to his official display, but passive, incurring criticisms from Mongol envoys. Choi (2013) discusses the links between improved relations between Goryeo and Yuan through contributions to the empire and the enhanced status of Goryeo kings.

³⁷ *Goryeosa*, Book 130, *Biographies* 43, Rebels 4, "Hong Bokwon."

between rival power groups. As the Gi family ascended to power, related directly to the imperial house, the Goryeo royal house came to lose its superior affinity to the imperial house to the rival Korean group.³⁸ Empress Gi, as indicated by her title, was married to the Mongol emperor and her status was far higher than that of a mere son-in-law.³⁹

Therefore, the rising power of Empress Gi and her family was an unprecedented threat to the Goryeo royal house. The Goryeo kings since King Chungryeol maintained more intimate relations with the Mongol imperial family than other Korean power groups, thereby securing a superior position in power struggle, but it all changed with the Gi family whose tyranny became severe in Liaodong as well as in Goryeo.⁴⁰ It was difficult for the Goryeo royal house to overcome its inferior position to the Gi clan within the system of the Mongolian empire, which led King Gongmin to adopt a drastic way of purging the Gi clan.

4. Factors for the Outcome of the Conflict in the Transition Period of the Yuan and the Ming

The conflict between the Goryeo royal house and Liaodong Korean powers came to an end in the late 14th century when the Ming emerged as a new power in Mainland China. The conflict that had lasted throughout the 13th century finally reached its conclusion wherein all competing Korean groups except Goryeo lost their status of polity and some of their fragments were absorbed into Goryeo. The fundamental reason for this consequence varied

³⁸ Lee Myung-mi (2016), 283.

³⁹ Empress Gi held enough political might to demand the abdication of the imperial throne in favor of the crown prince, although she failed. *Yuanshi* records that although the dethroning of King Gongmin for Prince Deokheung in 1363 was ordered in the name of the Mongolian emperor, all machinations from the dethronement to the invasion of Goryeo were conducted by Empress Gi, which suggests her strong political influence in the imperial court. *Yuanshi*, Book 46, *Basic Annals*.

⁴⁰ Lee Myung-mi, "Gongminwang dae choban gunjugwon jaeguchuk sidowa gissilga" [Trials to reconstruct the authority of Koryeo kingship early in King Gongmin's reign and the Ki family around the reforms in 1356], *Hanguk muhwa* 53 (2011).

in their political identities and external perceptions toward them.

A Goryeo king held a multi-layered political status under the Mongolian world order. This form of status was completed in the era of King Chungryeol, the successor of King Wonjong 元宗 (r. 1259-74), who finalized the peace treaty between Goryeo and the Mongols. King Chungryeol received 'the seal of the royal son-in-law and Goryeo king (駙馬高麗國王印)' from the Mongolian empire in 1281, which signified a Goryeo king as a lord of a fiefdom deemed to an imperial son-in-law within the empire and as a king of a foreign vassal state under the Mongolian hegemony. In addition, a Goryeo king headed a branch secretariat for military campaigns through the inheritable position of Left Grand Councilor of the Branch Secretariat for Eastern Expeditions (征東行中書省左丞相).

In other words, a Goryeo king's right to rule Goryeo's territory and people was guaranteed in the tri-layered authority. The first concerned a personal relationship as a member of the imperial family within the system of Qa'an Ulus. The second came from an autonomous authority as a king of a foreign state under the Mongolian hegemony. The third rested on an institutional status as a grand councilor within the system of branch secretariats under the organizational structure of the Mongolian empire. All Goryeo kings since King Chungryeol retained this tri-layered status until its relations with the Mongols were cut off in late Goryeo.

Once, the Mongols appointed Korguz (闊里吉思) Manager of the Secretariat for Eastern Expeditions and deployed him to Goryeo to get directly involved in the management of the secretariat with the intention of strengthening its grip over the organization. And, during the era of the Gi clan the control over this secretariat deviated from the Goryeo king once more. Gi Cheol ruled it as an independent bureau for twelve years and six months from November 1343 when he was appointed Temporary Acting Supervisor of the Branch Secretariat for Eastern Expeditions. Then, King Gongmin purged Gi Cheol and abolished all subordinate offices under the secretariat other than the Offices of the Left and Right in 1356.⁴¹

⁴¹ Ibid., 111-12.

Except for the two occasions as above, this branch secretariat was controlled by Goryeo kings whose grand councilor position was automatically and unchangeably inherited. The Mongols, then, could not intervene in the affairs of Goryeo's Eastern Expedition branch secretariat as much as it did with other expedition branch secretariats. This reveals that the Branch Secretariat for Eastern Expeditions was fundamentally under the direct authority of Goryeo kings.

The leaders of the Korean power groups in Liaodong, different from a Goryeo king who had a complex authority and status, were simply either a ruler of a fiefdom or an official within the empire's branch secretariat system.⁴² The Hong clan or the Wang family generally received or inherited the positions of directorate-general of military and civilians (軍民總管) and myriarch while holding the position of surveillance commissioner (按撫使) within the imperial administrative system. During their golden era, they also obtained high-ranking official positions such as right chancellor (右丞) or manager of governmental affairs (平章政事). Gi Cheol and Gi Sain Temur were also the managers of governmental affairs in Liaodong. Wang Go did inherit the kingship of Shen, thus having the status of a fief king (諸王), a distinguished status above other Liaodong leaders, albeit little practical power. Still, the kingship of Shen was an enfeoffed title within the territory directly governed by the empire whereas the Goryeo kingship, as a royal house of a foreign state, possessed itself of its own autonomous territory with its own borders. Hence, the two kingships were fundamentally different from each other in nature.

Once the system of branch secretariats was settled in Liaodong, the powerful in the region were appointed or self-appointed to high-ranking positions to justify their authority over their respective domain. Gi Cheol and his son Gi Sain Temur also followed this route: the father enjoyed his

⁴² Some of these powerholders held official positions in branch secretariats as well as were lords of fiefs, but their statuses were not equal to a Goryeo king, who was also a sovereign king of a foreign state. Their fief authorities were limited to a domestic scale under the central Yuan government, and it was virtually impossible for them to evolve to achieve a status as independent as the Goryeo kingship.

power as the manager of governmental affairs in the Liaodong branch secretariat while the son built his power on the pretext of the self-made organization, the Commandery of Dongnyeong. Although both of them were originally from Goryeo, their political identities belonged to the order of the Mongolian empire like other Liaodong Korean powerholders.

In comparison, as previously mentioned, a Goryeo king was ratified to rule the territory and people of Goryeo as the head of the kingdom through the two titles of Right Grand Councilor of the Branch Secretariat for Eastern Expeditions and Sovereign King of the Imperial Son-in-Law State Goryeo. These two titles constituted three orders: 1) the international order centered on the Mongol Empire, 2) the Ulus order centered on the imperial house, and 3) the order of the Mongolian branch secretariat system. With an essentially different political identity from that of the other Korean power groups, Goryeo kings were in a position to select and utilize the tri-layered authority to their interest.⁴³

This tri-layeredness of the Goryeo authority, however, did not always work to their advantage but sometimes undermined the regal ability to overpower the Liaodong Korean groups. Why? A Goryeo king was a king of a foreign state despite his higher status in terms of bloodline and administrative position. A Goryeo king, as a ruler of a foreign state, could not conduct or demand immediate control over Liaodong governed completely and directly under the sovereignty of the Mongol empire.⁴⁴

⁴³ This type of political maneuver was often seen in Goryeo when a Goryeo king tried to foster private guards (親衛勢力) in the process of seizing political control of the government. As a lord of a fiefdom, he was allowed to have kheshig, royal bodyguards (King Chungryeol and King Gongmin), and directly contain Goryeo bureaucrats through his authority to recommend people for the positions in secretariat offices and the hierarchy of the secretariat system (King Chungryeol). In addition, as a king of a foreign vassal state situated outside the empire, he could use the bureaucrats of Goryeo to contain interventions from Yuan through the secretariat system.

⁴⁴ Goryeo kings conducted their authority within the jurisdiction of the Liaoyang secretariat, although it was very limited. For instance, King Chungryeol installed irigan (伊里干), a village of refugees, and King Chungseon was invested as the King of Shenyang. However, it is hard to claim that they could fully exercise their authority over the Liaoyang population because the irigan was small in its scale and its residents were mainly drawn from mainland Goryeo. Also, the kingship of Shenyang was an enfeoffed position, and thus Goryeo kings' influence in Liaodong through this position was limited to King Chungryeol, the only Goryeo king who gained the title.

Even in the peace agreement between Goryeo and the Mongols, what was stipulated is that the official sovereignty of a Goryeo king extended only to Goryeo. The tri-tiered authority of the Goryeo king was inalienably and inherently vested to the Goryeo kingship. That is, although a Goryeo king was ranked higher than any political leaders of Liaodong Korean power groups, it was impossible for him to extend his control in order to enfeoff or usurp their estate. In this sense, his position as a foreign king whose sovereignty was confined to the territory of Goryeo could structurally minimize an influence on the Liaodong region.

Conversely, although their estate sizes and official ranks were inferior to Goryeo kings, the Liaodong Korean groups were able to protect their power thanks to the borderland demarcating the empire from that foreign state—Goryeo—. They could contain Goryeo by creating slanders and promoting direct Mongolian branch secretariats in Goryeo through connections to central figures inside the imperial court since their fiefs were more tightly affiliated to the Mongolian empire than Goryeo. These anti-Goryeo measures were in high demand on occasions when the Goryeo-Mongol relations went unstable or the Mongols tried to strengthen their control over Goryeo.

Likewise, the way Goryeo and the Liaodong Korea groups responded to their political adventure and challenge were different from each other. The former took advantage of the dualistic nature of a fiefdom under the Mongolian empire and a foreign state. What the latter resorted to for their political achievement as well as protection was their subordinate status under the government of the Mongolian empire. This stark disparity between Goryeo kings and Liaodong Korean leaders as opposed to their political legitimacy was largely maintained without much disturbance until the late 14th century when the Ming took over Mainland China and advanced into Liaodong. Their divergent *modus vivendi* turned out to be a crucial factor in determining the fates of Goryeo and the Liaodong Korean polities.

In its early days, the Ming issued two types of diplomatic documents:

As illustrated by these cases, the Goryeo kingship itself could not guarantee authority over the Liaoyang secretariat.

an edict that assumed a suzerain-vassal relationship and an epistle which did not. The former was sent to foreign states such as Vietnam, Japan, and Champa to form new diplomatic relations while the latter was sent to its rival groups in China, including remnant Mongolian powers such as Koko Temur and Nahachu. At first, Goryeo received an epistle like the latter groups⁴⁵ and replied in a diplomatic statement that demanded a diplomatic relationship as a foreign state while voluntarily pronouncing itself as a vassal state. The Ming accepted this attitude and officially granted King Gongmin the investiture of the kingship of Goryeo.⁴⁶ This diplomatic procedure defined the two countries to be in a tributary relationship, far from the complex one between the Ming and the remnant forces of the Mongolian regime. Goryeo's new form of diplomatic relations with the Ming indicates that the Ming accepted Goryeo's rationale of self-justification for a foreign state. What was also pronounced is that a Goryeo king was to be acknowledged for his status as a king of a foreign state and was to be treated differently from any other fief kings in the previous Mongolian empire.⁴⁷

The establishment of diplomatic ties and the recognition of Goryeo's sovereignty had already been in place⁴⁸ before the Ming began its advancement to Liaodong encouraged by Liu Yi's (劉益) surrender. Even after the Ming annexed Liaodong and came to border with Goryeo, their tributary relationship remained unchanged. Later, during the reign of King Wu 禡王 (r. 1374-88) of Goryeo, the Ming succeeded in occupying Liaodong and

⁴⁵ Jung Dong-hun (2016, 468-69) suggests that the reason for Ming sending an epistle to Goryeo stems from its knowledge of Goryeo's over a century-long close ties with Yuan.

⁴⁶ *Goryeosa*, Book 42, *Annals* 42, the 19th year of King Gongmin's reign, the day of tiger on the 5th month.

⁴⁷ This recognition of Goryeo as an independent foreign state could be interpreted as an extension of the pre-existing perception already formed in the Yuan period or as the restoration of the traditional view of Goryeo since Tang and Song. Either case would provide a rationale for Goryeo to proclaim, and for Ming to accept, that a Goryeo king was a king of a foreign state during Goryeo-Mongol relations.

⁴⁸ King Gongmin received the issue of his investiture in 1370, and Liu Yi surrendered to Ming in the following year.

began to pressure Goryeo which also attempted to take over Liaodong as a response to the Ming's aggressive *ostropolitik*. The two countries came to the brink of a military showdown over border disputes but their diplomatic relations, settled by King Gongmin, remained fundamentally unchanged.

Contrarily, as the Mongolian control over Mainland China was collapsing in the late 14th century, the Liaodong Korean polities could not secure their individual boundaries either territorially or conceptually. Thus, only left with identities as part of the Mongolian empire, they could only go down with the old empire.⁴⁹ This collateral demise was the fate of not just Liaodong Korean polities but of all other major overlords in Liaodong, such as Nahachu, Liu Yi, and Gao Jinan (高家奴) during that period. These overlords had to claim their positions of grand councilor of a branch secretariat or manager of government affairs in order to justify their control over the lands against the Ming that regarded the heritage of the Mongols rightfully as theirs.⁵⁰ When the Ming imperiously marched into Liaodong, all the overlords, affiliated directly and indirectly with the Mongolian empire, were considered as the anti-Ming elements. As a result, all the polities including Liaodong Korean groups ended up falling apart.

Goryeo, however, could maintain its identity as a foreign state even if the king lost the statuses of the empire's son-in-law and grand councilor of the branch secretariat. Diplomatic negotiations by King Gongmin and his successors also facilitated the ultimate acceptance of Goryeo as an autonomous foreign state by the Ming. Consequently, Goryeo could escape the fate of being absorbed into the Ming as was the case of the powerful Korean groups in Liaodong. Instead, on the grounds that it could choose its own diplomatic relations, Goryeo successfully justified its political identity as an autonomous state and formed diplomatic relations with the Ming under the tributary system.

⁴⁹ Oh (2017b), 173-74.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 101-2.

5. Conclusion

With the conclusion of the Goryeo-Mongol War, Goryeo became subordinated to the hegemony of the Mongol Empire. After that, the relationship between Liaodong Korean power groups and the Goryeo royal house ran unpredictable. Their similarities, based on comparable ethnic manpower and adjacent territories, incurred frequent confrontations between the two sides and both of them fought for leverage over the other by having the empire on their side. On occasions when the Goryeo-Mongol relations turned unstable, the empire even meddled in these disputes and aggravated the rivalry.

The major Liaodong Korean power groups that led the confrontation against the Goryeo royal house were the Hong clan, the King of Shen faction, and the Gi clan. The Hongs rose to power through military contributions on battle fields enough to threaten the Goryeo royal family but lost their might when King Chungryeol strengthened his position by marrying the Mongol imperial family and obtaining a superior rank (grand councilor of a branch secretariat). The King of Shen, who also vied for Goryeo's throne, attempted to install direct Mongol-ruled secretariats in Goryeo and undermine the multi-layered authorities of the Goryeo kingship. His aspiration failed, however, as King Chungsuk was released from exile. The Gi clan established an even closer affinity than Goryeo kings via marriage (to a Mongolian emperor) while securing their power in both Liaodong and Goryeo, viz. the most dangerous threat to the Goryeo royal house. However, this power group also collapsed as King Gongmin eradicated the Gi faction in Goryeo by a surprise attack and then severed diplomatic relations with the Mongol empire. The Gi group tried in vain to replace King Gongmin by Prince Deokheung and to conduct military operations under Gi Sain Temur's Dongnyeong Commandery. King Gongmin successfully protected the sovereignty of the Goryeo royal house and the territory of Goryeo.

During the course of all confrontations between the Goryeo royal house and Liaodong Korean power groups, familial affinity to the imperial court at Peking played a great part due to the empire's favoritism to its

family connections. Goryeo kings, unlike Liaodong Korean leaders, were able to maintain their multi-layered political identity that allowed them, as a king of a foreign state, to secure independent boundaries from the Mongol Empire even while marrying the imperial family and holding the position of grand councilor of a branch secretariat under the imperial system. This particular status of the Goryeo royal house was a key factor integral to the survival of Goryeo, and, even later, to the establishment of new diplomatic relations with the Ming as an autonomous foreign state despite their long and close ties with the Mongols.

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