

*Peaceful Frontier: Goryeo's Diplomacy with the Khitans
and Its Consequences**
[*Taepyeonghan byeonbang: Goryeo ui dae Georan
oegyo wa geu sosan*]

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I

A variety of academic conferences on the Goryeo dynasty (918-1392) took place in 2018 to celebrate the 1100 anniversary year of its founding. These conferences created an atmosphere to stimulate historical research on the dynasty and offer wider opportunities for researchers to communicate with each other. There were also multiple related publications as well, mostly in the form of popular topical books, which aim at making their research outcomes accessible to the general public. Amidst these, *Peaceful Frontier: Goryeo's Diplomacy with the Khitans and Its Consequences* (Gyeongin munhwasa, 2018), written by Mi-ji Lee stood out as one of the most meaningful projects.

This book is the extended version of the author's doctoral dissertation, "The Development and Characteristics of Goryeo Diplomacy with the

* The original title for this book is *Taepyeonghan byeonbang: Goryeo ui dae Georan oegyo wa geu sosan* (태평한 변방: 고려의 황거란 외교와 그 소산) published by Gyeongin Munhwasa (Paju) in 2018, and this review is translated from the Korean manuscript originally published in *The Journal of Korean Medieval History* (한국중세사연구), issue 57, May 2019: 311-24.

Khitan” [Goryeo sigi dae Georan oegyo ui jeongae wa teukjing] (February 2012). Her research on Goryeo-Khitan relations began from her master’s thesis concerning the issue of “border markets” near the Amnok River during the reign of King Seonjong (r. 1083-94) of Goryeo. She analyzes what caused the diplomatic and border issues between Goryeo and the Khitans and how Goryeo responded to them after the end of the Goryeo-Khitan War in the early eleventh century. Her doctoral thesis focuses on some major issues regarding the borderline during the reign of King Seongjong when Goryeo-Khitan relations unfolded in earnest. First, to capture a general territorial issue between the two states, she employs the expression of “border settlement” in which to treat an historical incidents usually referred to as the bargaining, negotiations, and talks between Goryeo diplomat Seo Hui (942-98) and Khitan general Xiao Sunning (d. 996). Second, to reveal the overall characteristics of Goryeo-Khitan relationship, she explores their relations from the reign of King Taejo (r. 918-943), the founder of Goryeo, onwards. Last, charting where Goryeo’s foreign policy was headed, she pays close attention to the changes in nomenclature of the Khitans in terms of an internal factor inseparable from external factors such as exchange of envoys, wars, and investiture.

As the author mentions in the introduction, a very distinctive foreign relationship appeared during the Goryeo period. In Northeast Asia, many nomadic forces founded non-Han Chinese dynasties and became hegemonic powers of the region since the end of the Tang, where Goryeo maintained its diplomatic relations with these empires. The relationship with Khitan was Goryeo’s first test of such foreign relations in its history. Given that the author explores the entire span of their relations by focusing on a self-referential invention of diplomatic tactics and orders by the Goryeo, the present book deserves to be evaluated as a work that does attain a higher level of research on Goryeo’s international relations.

II

The book consists of seven chapters, including the introduction and the conclusion, and a separate essay for additional discussion. The table of contents and a summary of each chapter go as follows.

I. Introduction

II. Goryeo's Relations with the Khitans Prior to the Establishment of Diplomatic Relationship

1. Goryeo-Kitan Relations during the King Taejo Period
2. Goryeo's Perception of the Khitans in Terms of Nomenclature and Calendar Systems

III. The Establishment of Tribute-Investiture Relations and Changes in the Perception of the Khitans

1. The Khitan Request for Diplomatic Relations during the Reign of King Seongjong and the Peace Agreement
2. Changes in the Perception of the Khitans after the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations

IV. Goryeo-Khitan Disputes on the Continuation of Tribute-Investiture Relations

1. The Goryeo-Khitan War after the Accession of King Hyeonjong and the Reestablishment of Tribute-Investiture Relations
2. Tribute-Investiture Relations during the Reign of King Hyeonjong in Terms of Nomenclature and Calendar Systems

V. Goryeo-Khitan Diplomatic Conflicts with Tribute-Investiture Relations in Place

1. Changes in the Diplomatic Stance on the Khitans in the Reigns of King Deokjong and Jeongjong
2. Goryeo's Relations with the Khitans: Diplomatic Documents from the Reign of King Munjong
3. The Issue of Border Market during the Reign of King Seonjong

VI. Diplomatic Relations between Goryeo and the Khitans and the Decline of the Khitans

1. King Sukjong's Investiture and *bukgyonamsa* (北交南寧)
2. Changes in International Relations and Investiture during the Reigns

of King Yejong and Injong

3. Changes in the Calendar System during the Reigns of King Yejong and Injong

VII. Conclusion: Characteristics of Goryeo's Diplomacy with the Khitans

Additional Discussion: The Investiture of King Sukjong and the Jurchen-Liao Relations

1. Introduction

2. The Investiture of King Sukjong

3. Goryeo's Strategy

4. The Investiture of King Sukjong and the Jurchen-Liao Relations

5. Conclusion

III

The book describes the development of the Goryeo-Khitans relations with a focus on how to contextualize Goryeo's response to the diplomatic issues between the two states. As a result, changes in Goryeo's diplomatic strategy, set to the progress of the two dynasties' relationship, have been examined in depth and the actual process of their tribute-investiture relations is explained in detail. By doing so, this book offers its readers an insight into how the Goryeo dynasty had established diplomatic conventions in which to resolve conflicts with its neighbors: dealing with the Khitans was the pathbreaking step for this diplomatic procedure. Furthermore, the book also makes a broad use of epitaphs to analyze how the Goryeo court named the Khitans and how the court actively utilized the calendar system to their interests. In the process, what is vividly found is that the hegemonic power of the Khitans had been not only reflected in the Goryeo-Khitans relation, but also acknowledged even by the Goryeo court. This argument challenges the common prejudice of the Khitan state as an uncivilized polity full of barbarism. Importantly, the author reproduces the past as a history in a specific and realistic manner from the perspective of historical actors who breathed that history. For all these reasons, the book is a meaningful work

that has widened the understanding of the way Goryeo built its external relations with the outer world through the Goryeo-Khitans diplomatic ties. That being said, to fulfill my responsibilities as a reviewer, I would like to present some criticism as follows:

The first question concerns the sequence of the investiture from the Khitans and the adoption of the Khitan reign name. In Section 2 of Chapter 3, the author takes notice of the fact that Goryeo introduced Khitan Shengzong's reign name, Tonghwa 統和 (983-1012), in February 994 when the first Goryeo-Khitans War came to an end with a peace treaty. On the grounds that the Goryeo court conventionally accepted the reign name of the Khitan court after the process of investiture, the author attributes Goryeo's prompt adoption of Tonghwa to its intention to eliminate potential sources of conflict as quick as possible (pp. 92-93). In Section 1 of Chapter 5, the author also states that King Jeongjong restored diplomatic relations, severed during the reign of King Deokjong, and adopted Khitan Xingzong's reign name of Junghui 重熙 (1032-55); as a result, Goryeo received an investiture from the Khitans in the next year (1039) and additional titles along with the continuous diplomatic exchange (p. 214). Was it unusual for Goryeo to adopt the reign name before receiving an investiture from the Khitans?

When it comes to the use of reign names and investiture by the Five Dynasties in early Goryeo, Goeyeo King Taejo adopted Later Tang's reign name, Jangheung (Changxing, 長興, 930-34), after receiving the investiture for the first time from Later Tang in 933. On the other hand, Later Jin's reign name of Chonbok (Tianfu, 天福, 936-43) was introduced in 938 prior to the investiture in 939. In the case of King Jeongjong (r. 945-49), he adopted the reign name of Later Han, Geonu (Qianyou, 乾祐, 948-51) in 948 without an investiture. King Gwangjong (r. 949-75) used his own reign name, Gwangdeok 光德 (r. 949-51), but switched to Gwangsun (Guangshun, 廣順, 951-55), the reign name designated by Later Zhou. Two years later, however, King Gwangjong was invested by Later Zhou in 953. After Song emerged as a unified dynasty, King Gwangjong received an investiture from Song and adopted Song's reign name, Geondeok (Qiande, 乾德, 963-68), in the same year. The Song dynasty's investiture was given to

Gyeongjong (r. 975-81) and Seongjong as well. Then, it is not always fair to say that the Goryeo court traditionally took the reign name of the Khitans or the Song only after being invested. Rather, it would be reasonable to see that the use of the Khitan reign names came in step with the complex change in the diplomatic relations between Goryeo and the Khitans.

The second question is related to the understanding of *gibok* 起復 (return to duty practice). According to Section 3 in Chapter 5, even though it took two years for the Khitans to proclaim Seonjong to the throne of Goryeo, the king maintained the stable working relationship with the Khitans (p. 255). King Seonjong received an investiture from the Khitans on the 23rd day of the eleventh month, 1085 (2nd year of King Seonjong). However, the record on the 16th day of the eleventh month, which was a week before the investiture, indicates that *nakgiboksa* 落起復使 (envoy with an order to end *gibok*) came to Goryeo. Here, *nakgibok* 落起復 means the end of *gibok*. So the arrival of *nakgiboksa* implies that there was *giboksa* 起復使 who had been sent earlier. *Gibok* indicates “rising up (起) from mourning for one’s parents and returning (復) to duty,” referring to a situation where one inevitably has to return to public duties before completing a three-year mourning period. This practice, originally intended for Khitan officials, was extended to foreign kings and a royal succession of the foreign state was approved via public notification delivered by *giboksa*. The Khitans dispatched *chijesa* 致祭使 (envoy for memorial service), *wimunsa* 慰問使 (envoy for condolences) and *giboksa* upon the arrival of *goesa* 告哀使 (envoy to inform a state funeral), who notified a national mourning from Goryeo, and later sent *nakgiboksa* and *chaekbongsa* 冊封使 (envoy for investiture) toward the end of a mourning period. Therefore, King Seonjong performed the mourning ceremony before the arrival of the investiture. It would be fair to say that the Khitans had already acknowledged his status as the King of Goryeo through *giboksa*.

Meanwhile, Section 1 of Chapter VI mentions that King Heonjong was quite rapidly recognized as King of Goryeo by the Khitans when he was installed to the throne as soon as an envoy for condolences arrived (p. 273). The envoy who visited Goryeo at that time was *giboksa*, not *chaekbongsa*, and what was delivered by the envoy was a public notifica-

tion. King Heonjong never received an investiture because he abdicated before the end of the mourning period. Therefore, the part where the book says King Heonjong was “invested” as King needs to be revised and there is no need to differentiate the case of King Seonjong and that of King Heonjong. The Khitans treated both of them equally in terms of royal succession.

Third, there are doubts over some views that seem to be excessive or ambiguous interpretations. In Section 2 in Chapter V, the author pays attention to the fact that in the commemorative ritual, held in the eleventh month of 1046 when King Munjong ascended to the throne, the Goryeo court used Song’s reign name, Daejungsangbu. The ritual was conducted in memory of Yang Gyu, Kim Suk-heung and Kang Min-cheom who made contributions at the war with the Khitans during the reign of King Hyeonjong. The years 1010 (1st year of King Hyeonjong) and 1018 (9th year of King Hyeonjong) were marked as the third and eleventh years of Daejungsangbu. However, in 1010, it was customary to use the Khitan reign name. Song’s reign name was used in 1018, but the Song dynasty had already changed the reign name from Daejungsangbu to Cheonhui (Tianxi, 天禧, 1017-21) in 1017. Therefore, it was incorrect to use either the third or the eleventh year of Daejungsangbu. In this regard, the author views that the use of the Song’s reign name, far from a simple error, contained a deliberate intention. That is, King Munjong assumed Song’s reign name in public to show that he would not be completely reliant on the relations with the Khitans for investiture. In fact, this strategy was successful when the Khitans raised some issues (pp. 241-45). However, as the author also mentions, in an earlier ritual, held in the seventh month of the year when King Munjong was crowned, the Goryeo court kept the Khitan reign name, Junghui, which contradicts the former case.

In Section 1 of Chapter VI, the author focuses on the phrase, “*bukgyo dae Yo namsa dae Song*” 北交大遼南事大宋 (exchanging with the Liao in the north and serving the Song in the south), written in King Sukjong’s decree of 1101 (6th year of King Sukjong). Specifically, she argues that after establishing the normal relations with the Khitans, Goryeo promoted a tribute-investiture relationship with a specific diplomatic order between the

two states while forming a subordinate relationship with the Song. In this context, Goryeo continued to use “gyo” (交) when referring to its relations with the Khitans, or the Liao persistently. But, the book concludes inversely that the division between “gyo” and “sa” (事) is only a rhetoric and the real suzerain of Goryeo was the Khitans (pp. 283-95). The author offers a table to explain that the term *sa* was used for the Song with a high stress on its relations with the Song, the economic and cultural hub of East Asia, and that Goryeo’s relations with the Khitans were frequently expressed as *gyo*, *rin* (隣), and *gyeolho* (結好), which connotes exchange, neighbor, and favorable relations respectively. Nonetheless, the book gives little evidence for the argument that Goryeo internally perceived its relations with the Song as “sa” or “*sadae* 事大 (serving the great).” The examples of the terms “gyo” or “gyorin” 交隣 (interacting with a neighbor) in the table are most pertinent to the Goryeo-Song relations during the reign of King Munjong. Therefore, the inference on “interacting with the north and serving the south” requires additional constructive research.

On a final note, I would like to share a trivial yet unignorable opinion regarding the book title. *Peaceful Frontier: Goryeo’s Diplomacy with the Khitans and Its Consequences* [*Taepyeonghan byeonbang: Goryeo ui dae Georan oegyo wa geu sosan*] sounds a new ambitious turn when compared with the author’s doctoral dissertation, “The Development and Characteristics of Goryeo’s Diplomacy with the Khitans” [*Goryeo sigi dae Georan oegyo ui jeongae wa teukjing*]. The author explains in the preface that the title has been changed to reveal more directly the achievements and actual impact of Goryeo’s diplomacy. Reading the book, however, I came to think that the title, “Peaceful Frontier” is not well matched to the theme of this book. Goryeo’s frontier went through three wars with the Khitans. Even after the wars, the frontier was always restless, by no means peaceful, due to Boju (Poju) and other military facilities established by the Khitans after forcibly occupying the eastern region of the Amnok River. As a matter of fact, the frontier finally became peaceful when the Khitans went into decline with the emergence of the Jin (1115-1234). Thus, it would be difficult to say that the peaceful frontier was neither a process of the Goryeo-Khitan rapprochement nor a consequence of the Goryeo-Khitan diplomacy.