Special Feature

From a Lord to a Bureaucrat: The Change of Koryŏ King's Status in the Korea-China Relations

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Two Standards to Divide People: Aristocratic System and Bureaucratic System

Nature of the pre-modern East Asian international order, in terms of its organization and operation, differed in times. Yet what did not change was the fact that China was at the center. Pre-modern Chinese who designed and established such order placed Son of Heaven=Emperor at the center, and believed that the world was created in the shape of a concentric circle based upon a monistic principle, and understood that it included not only China but also the surrounding local tribes and political entities. Furthermore, they were each supposed to be given appropriate responsibilities proportionate to their distance to the Son of Heaven. For instance, in the *Rites of Zhou* 周禮, it divides "the territory around the royal capital" 王畿 that is directly governed by the emperor, and the "Nine kinds of realms" 九服, dictated by its distance from the center ruled by the emperor. And in the *Classic of History* 尙書, it divided the territories into five levels and called it "Five kinds of realms" 五服. Such division did not originate simply from the physical distance to the Son of Heaven, but the degree of emperor's influence 王化 on each region, and according to the level of intimacy in terms of blood relations with the emperor.

The monistic principle, in which the Chinese used to understand the world, is directly connected to the standard with which one would divide and rank the people as well as the territory that he controls. With people as a subject, there could be simple standards such as age, height (physical size), or the number of teeth, something that could be quantified, or a more complex standard such as character or reputation, intelligence or valor, things that are difficult to quantify. Amongst all this, there were two standards that were mostly used in the pre-modern East Asia, one was the aristocratic hierarchy 爵制, a standard based on blood relation as well as birth, and the other was the bureaucratic hierarchy 官僚制, which was decided by the individual's abilities. If the former is understood as ascribed status, the latter is seen as achieved status. At the pinnacle of the order of aristocracy is the Son of Heaven 天子 and for the bureaucratic order there is the emperor 皇帝, the most powerful leader of governing bodies.

Lands could also be geologically categorized differently, through respective orders mentioned above. The aristocratic order is connected to feudalism 封建制 and the bureaucratic order connects to prefecture-country system 郡縣制. In other words, when a person's rights to rule particular regions and people are viewed as something innate according to its own family background, land issues would be dealt with according to feudalist principles. Feudal lords acquire a rank, or a title of nobility 爵位 based on their blood relations with the emperor, and as long as they do not make serious mistakes, they were guaranteed of that title for generations. Once an invested vassal receives fief 封地 when they are enfeoffed 封建 to a region, the land would be handed down to the descendants. In this process, people needed to be approved by the emperor. In other words people had to undergo the procedure of investiture 冊封, but this usually was done in the form of an after-the-fact recognition. Unless the feudal lord commits an unrecoverable sin, the emperor had to recognize the feudal lord's right to govern the fief as well as their rights to inheritance.

On the other hand, when the rights to a land are given to the local governor by the emperor according to their abilities, the lands are distinguished based on the principles of a prefecture-country system. The land must be divided into governing domains such as commanderies 郡 or counties 縣 based on the emperor's monistic standard, and each unit should be controlled by the local authority appointed by the emperor. Whether a bureaucrat is recommended to a post or goes through an exam and is assigned to a post, they gain a title when his abilities are recognized, and hence the rank is not inherited. He is temporarily entrusted with the emperor's rights and only performing the emperor's order within the provided land, and when the term ends, he must leave his post.

China already experienced both the feudal system and the prefecture-country system during the Zhou 周 and Qin 秦 periods. Regardless what the reality might have been, we can say that the two systems coexisted—with a tense relationship—throughout the Chinese history. It is common knowledge to say that the combined system of the two is the Dual District System of Commanderies and Kingdoms 郡國制 of the Han 漢 period. During the Han period, feudal elements were kept by distributing kingdoms 王國 and marquessates 侯國 to vassals who harbored the family name (Liu) of the emperor (which would make them members of the royal family) or with different last names, who were meritorious in the foundation of the dynasty. Meanwhile, appointed government officials were sent out to the other parts of the country, according to the prefecture-country system. In addition, in

the regions recognized as "foreign states," the land was allowed to be ruled by leaders of the local tribes himself, but underwent procedures to stipulate and confirm—through the form of installation—a master/subject relationship between the Emperor=Son of Heaven and local tribal leaders. Same principles and format were applied on domestic "kingdoms" or "marquessates" and even the external "foreign states." Thus, it provides the logical foundation to include foreign states into the Chinese land order. This is a method with which characteristics of pre-modern East Asian international order is explained, on the premise of the "theory of the Investiture System" (Nishijima 2002).

However, the aristocratic system and the bureaucratic system continued to shift positions, as time went by. The feudal system and the prefecture-country system emerged in different times, and whatever emerged was reflected in the China-centered international order. Chinese people's view of the outside, and their perception of the relationship formed between a foreign leader and a Chinese emperor, changed significantly. Also, such Chinese perception was reflected in diplomatic institutions as well.[1]

Hence, this paper aims to explore the stature of Koryŏ king in terms of the diplomatic institutions of the 10-14th century Korea-China relations. Koryŏ dealt with at least 11 Chinese kingdoms during this time. They were from Five Dynasties 五代 to Northern Song 北宋 and Southern Song 南宋, Khitan 契丹, and Jin 金 through Mongol Empire to the Ming 明. If we consider the fact that the king was not officially recognized from Later Liang 後梁, Later Han 後漢, and Southern Song 南宋, it can still be said that Koryŏ had official foreign relations with 8 kingdoms.

Since the status of a pre-modern nation was a matter directly connected to the stature of the king, the main subject of analysis here will be the systematic status of the king of Koryŏ. In other words, the paper will examine where Chinese-established system Koryŏ king was included and in what position (status) he was. Through this I will examine that the Chinese perception of Koryŏ king's position changed from a similar "royal" stature to a member of the Chinese national bureaucratic system, based on their formal titles bestowed from China. Moreover, I will examine that the ultimate turning point was when the Koryŏ king was ordered to serve both as the branch

1. For further researches on the way China adopted two different hierarchies in organizing external relations, refer to Danjo 2009.

secretariat of the Chŏngdong Haengsŏng 征東行省 provincial government, a local administrative body under Mongolian hegemony. Furthermore, I will delve into how this has influenced the Korea-China relationship, and how it connects to certain Koryŏ problems and later even the domestic problems of Chosŏn.

Of course, the Koryŏ king's status was not something that could only be revealed in terms of the system. It was so much more, while what is analyzed here is merely the Chinese perception of the Koryŏ king's status.

What Comes First, Position or Man?: The Structure of Investiture Titles

"Investiture as king" would refer to an act of a Central Kingdom's emperor investing the king of the Korean peninsula with a specific position. The stature given to the Koryŏ king would be revealed in his investiture title. During the Koryŏ period, 28 kings (out of 34) were invested with diverse investiture titles by 8 Chinese dynasties.[2] However, the structure of the titles that we can find from the early Koryŏ period, bestowed by dynasties from Later Tang 後唐 to Jin 金, significantly changed later, especially during the Yüan 元 and Ming 明 periods. Such difference seems to be coming from a philosophical choice, made between options through which one could either highlight the "king" status, or present the "individuality" of the person above all else.

In the early Koryŏ period, for instance, Munjong received the title of "Commander unequaled in honor 開府儀同三司, acting grand guardian 守太保, director of chancellery 侍中, supreme pillar of state 上柱國, King of Koryŏ 高麗國王" from Khitan.[3] Here we can observe that besides the noble title of "king" it includes various titles which would refer to the recipient's honorific qualities, civil official status, honorary position, meritorious service,

2. Six Koryŏ kings including Chŏngjong 定宗, Tŏkjong 德宗, Sunjong 順宗, Kojong 高宗, King Ch'ang 昌王, King Kong'yang 恭讓王 were not invested. Among them, Sunjong was not appointed due to his short reigning time of 3 months, and Chŏngjong wasn't because of the change of Chinese dynasty, and Tŏkjong wasn't because Koryŏ's relationship with Khitan had been strained, and Kojong failed to be appointed because the country was in the middle of the war, and King Ch'ang and King Kong'yang weren't because they hadn't built a good relationship with Ming.
3. For this, please see *Koryŏsa* 7 (King Munjong 1 [1047], September 11 壬午).

and how he was compensated with lands granted. In other words, a variety of titles were involved in order to decorate the position of Koryŏ king who was an "individual." And additional titles were also bestowed 加冊. For example, when investing Munjong with a title for the first time, Khitan invested him with the above title, but raised his title 5 more times, "promoting" him to be "acting grand preceptor 守太師, secretariat director 中書令, director of the department of state affairs 尙書令, supreme pillar of state 上柱國, King of Koryŏ 高麗國王."[4] 8 more words were added to the meritorious title, promoting him from the acting grand guardian to acting grand preceptor, and to a secretariat director and (concurrently) a department of state affairs. Both the notional and practical enfeoffment 食邑·食實封 increased from 7,000 *ho* to 23,000 *ho*, and from 700 *ho* to 2,300 *ho*. For the same reason, individual kings' investiture titles were all different from each other, even when they were invested by the same Chinese kingdom. For example, unlike the enfeoffment Munjong earlier received, Yejong 睿宗 received an notional enfeoffment of 1,000 *ho* and the practical enfeoffment of 100 *ho*,[5] and compared to Chŏngjong 靖宗 who received a meritorious title composed of total of 6 words,[6] Hŏnjong's title lacked a meritorious title.[7] We can see that, between the Koryŏ king's individual aspect and its position as the Koryŏ leader, the former quality was addressed at least from the Chinese point of view. The king already earned to be occupying the seat, so these investiture titles served to describe the king's individual status.

Then, during the Yüan period, an important change took place in Koryŏ king's investiture titles, which had a rather practical meaning newly inserted, as we can see from letters that say "Minister of the Chŏngdong (Eastern Campaign) Haengsŏng provincial government." The Mongol Yüan empire inherited the traditional Chinese format of investing titles, and therefore distributed honorific and meritorious titles. For example, the empire invested King Ch'ung'ryŏl with the title "Commander unequaled in honor 開府儀同三司 grand councilor of the secretariat 中書左丞相," and

4. For this, please see *Koryŏsa* 8 (King Munjong 19 [1065], April 4 癸巳).
5. For this, please see *Koryŏsa* 11 (King Sukjong 2 [1097], December 13 癸巳).
6. For this, please see *Koryŏsa* 6 (King Chŏngjong 5 [1039], April).
7. For this, please see *Koryŏsa* 10 (King Hŏnjong 1, December 19 丙戌).

then "minister of the branch secretariat 行中書省事."[8] However, once the Koryŏ realm was indeed recognized as that local administrative body, and the Koryŏ king was formally assigned to the "minister" status, the invested title was no longer referring to an honorary position. It was now a practical governmental seat, hence the "minister of the branch secretariat" 行中書省事 title was added. Necessary tools needed to perform the minister's position, such as gold tallies 金牌 or seals 印信 were presented along with the appointed titles.[9] Eventually, Yüan began to practice its rights to appoint a candidate to the Koryŏ throne. The title of "Koryŏ King" was already in place, and they discussed and decided whom it would appoint to the throne. The Koryŏ king was no longer an individual leader in the eyes of those in China. According to the perspective of the Mongols, the Koryŏ throne was to be acknowledged as the seat itself, with the occupants remaining expendable.

And during the Ming period an even bigger change ensued. In this period, the investiture title bestowed from China only simply said, "the Koryŏ King." And Koryŏ was not alone, as other regions like Annam 安南, Champa 占城, Rukyu 琉球, and Japan 日本 were treated similarly. All the kings of the tributary states were given the title of "〇〇 King," while the other "usual" elements, such as honorific or meritorious titles were not used at all in the title. It seems like an intentional move to create a monistic order with the emperor at its peak, who would bestow titles to tributary states only in a universal manner. Ming's such observation of the "unified foreign states" 無外 can also be described as Ming assuming a hegemonistic posture through ritual rites and protocols 禮制覇權主義, as named so by previous researches (Iwai 2005). After all, Ming was trying to succeed the monistic international order of East Asia that the Mongols had achieved.

An investiture title like "the Koryŏ King," without other elements, looks more like a reference to a fixed position than a title. Investiture titles that came from Song, Khitan, and Jin—in the early periods of Koryŏ—strongly connoted the appointer's recognition of the authority of the Koryŏ individual who happened to be sitting in the throne. Yet the investiture titles that came from the Ming dynasty was different, as they clearly referred to the office or post itself, which would have to be filled by a worthy appointee 被封者.

8. For this, please see *Koryŏsa* 29 (King Ch'ung'ryŏl 6 [1280], December 辛卯).
9. Ibid.

What Were the Documents of Investiture: Tablet 冊 and Certificate 誥命

The act of investiture is an act of a Chinese emperor giving a tablet 冊 and recognizing the feudal lord's fief and his related rights. The leaders of foreign states were also subjects of this system. Regardless of the period they were in, records show that when they were delivering the news of appointing the kings on the Korean peninsula, they named them "Invested King" 冊王. Chinese kingdoms' investiture of Korean Kings had lasted for more than 1,500 years, since the Period of the Three Kingdoms, up until the days of the Korean "Taehan" Empire. However, specific procedures or formalities, as well as their significance, changed from time to time.

When appointing an appointee 受封者, many ritual gifts 儀物 were delivered to the invested king as an act of recognizing the authority of the king, and items among them included a tablet 冊, a certificate 誥命, seal 印章, and an imperial edict 詔書 or proclamation 制書, which were diplomatic documents issued by the emperor. Amongst them was a tablet or certificate that signified the authority of the king with the very title of the appointee inscribed 位號. This was called the investiture documents. However, for the certificate of appointments which were to be given out to foreign kings, the Chinese kingdoms used one of the document formats used in appointing domestic officials. This can be understood as an attempt to apply a system which was domestic in nature, to the management of relationships with the foreign states, and therefore identify its lands with the China-based monistic principle. Yet, the document format changed over time, and in this section, I will explore the significance and types of investiture documents which were used by many Chinese kingdoms when they were investing kings of Koryŏ.

In the Chinese kingdoms, the documents given when the Chinese emperor appointed a member of the imperial family or a subject (vassal) to a particular position, included tablets 冊, proclamation 制書, and certificates 誥命, 宣命. Among these documents, the one with the most authority was the tablet 冊. Originally, a tablet would refer to a document created with bamboo sticks 竹簡 during a time when there was no paper. Such a document later came to be used as a certificate of the highest authority, obtaining the name of "investiture tablet" 封冊. The word, investiture 冊封, itself meant "bestowing a tablet to invest" 授冊封建, which would also "providing a tablet 冊 to determine the fief 封土." The range of subjects which were given the tablet 冊 as an investiture document changed over time. During the Tang period, the tablet was used not only to appoint imperial family members such as the empress, or the crown prince, or the princes 諸王, but also to appoint high ranking officials of rank 3 and higher. As time passed, it became more limited, and by the Ming period, it was limited to the empress, the crown prince, and the princes with investiture ranks. In brief, tablets 冊 can be understood as documents endowing the appointee with a title of nobility 爵位.

On the other hand, certificate of appointment 誥命, 宣命, 勅命 was a document appointing all official positions. In the Song period, proclamation 制書 was given to the highest ranking official of Civil and Military Courtiers, and for everyone else, they were appointed with the certificate of appointments 誥命. During the Yüan period, the certificate of appointment was called "Xuanming" 宣命 and in Ming and Qing, the document was called "Gaoming" 誥命, and were given out to officials of rank 5 and higher. For officials of rank 6 and below, another certificate "Chiming" 勅命 was issued. As members of the bureaucratic system, and as subjects with a bureaucratic position, they did not receive tablets.

For the Koryŏ kings, the tablet 冊 was always used as the document of investiture, by Chinese dynasties from the Five Dynasties period 五代 through Song 宋, Khitan 契丹, and Jin 金代 eras. Different materials seem to have been used in producing the tablets 冊. For instance, King Hyejong 惠宗 received a bamboo tablet 竹冊 from the Late Tang 後唐 dynasty,[10] while the tablets received from Khitan or Jin were made of jade 玉.[11] Meanwhile during the Yüan dynasty period, the Koryŏ king was invested as both the imperial son-in-law and the King of Koryŏ 駙馬高麗國王, while also being appointed to the seat of minister 丞相 of the branch secretariat for the Eastern campaign 征東行中書省. It should be noted that a document called 宣命, which was different from previous investiture documents, was used for the occasion.[12] Then in the early 14th century, when King Ch'ungsŏn was reinstated in 1308, tablets 冊 were used for the sitting king's appointment process or bestowal

10. For this, please see *Koryŏsa* 2 (King Hyejong 2 [945]).
11. For this, please see *Koryŏsa* 11 (King Sukjong 2 [1097], December 癸巳); *Koryŏsa* 17 (King Injong 20 [1142], May 戊午).
12. For this, please see *Koryŏsa* 29 (King Ch'ung'ryŏl 7 [1281], March 乙卯).

of posthumous titles (for the predecessor kings).[13] And in the Ming dynasty, tablets were no longer used and only certificates of appointment 誥命 were bestowed. The investiture documents that King Kongmin and King Wu received were the same certificates of appointment given to the officials inside the Ming kingdom.[14]

The reason that tablets were used as appointment documents for the kings of Koryŏ was because their position was recognized as a noble one (being the imperial son-in-law), just like those of the members of the Chinese imperial family. But at the same time, the Koryŏ kings were also recognized as a bureaucratic member of the Yüan government, as a minister of a branch secretariat, so they received corresponding appointment certificates 宣命 as well. And during the Ming period, only one of their dual positions (the latter) was recognized. As a result, only the bureaucratic title, the 誥命 certificate of appointment, was bestowed to Koryŏ kings.

What Clothing and Seal were Presented to the Kings: Court Dress 冕服 and Official Costume 朝服

Besides ordinary gifts, the ritual gifts 儀物 which also reflected the status of the Koryŏ kings were given by the Chinese emperors. The most noteworthy ones would be the dress 冠服 and the seal 圖章. These two gifts both reflected the invested, aristocratic status and the bureaucratic status of the recipient, and expressed the rank of recipient in various fashions.

First, among the dresses 冠服 were Court Dress 冕服 and Official Costume 朝服, which represented the aristocratic order and bureaucratic order respectively. The Court Dress 冕服 was worn for ceremonies for the sky, or other highest level ceremonies like the one which was held at the dynastic shrine. It was worn only by the emperor, the crown prince and other members of the imperial family, revealing its own aristocratic nature. On the contrary,

13. For this, please see *Koryŏsa chŏryo* (*Abridged History of the Koryŏ Dynasty* 高麗史節要) 23 (King Ch'ungsŏn's restoration [1308], October 辛亥); *Koryŏsa* 33 (King Ch'ungsŏn's restoration [1308], October 辛亥).

14. *The Annals of Emperor Hóngwŭ of Míng* 明太祖實錄 44 (Hóngwŭ 2 [1369], August 丙子); *Koryŏsa* 42 (King Kongmin 19 [1370], May 甲寅); *Koryŏsa* 135 (King Wu 11 [1385], September).

the official costume 朝服 was worn in ordinary events like court gatherings 朝會, and since they were worn by civil and military officials, the costume reflected their bureaucratic positions.

During the early Koryŏ period, the official costumes given by the emperors of Song, Khitan, and Jin were all court dresses 冕服 consisted of a crown with nine tassels 九旒冠 and a nine-patterned court robe 九章服. This was a recognition of the Koryŏ king's title of investiture, while no bureaucratic title was given to him. Then, during the Yüan imperial period, regulations for the imperial family dresses as well as those of the officials were different from earlier Chinese models, so it is difficult to figure out what costumes were granted and what rank it represented. Entering the Ming dynasty period, the Ming emperor presented the Koryŏ king with a court dress 冕服 with a crown with nine tassels 九旒冠 and nine-patterned court robe 九章服, but also with official costumes 朝服, consisted of hats 遠遊冠 and silk clothing 絳紗袍. In other words, the Koryŏ king was given a bureaucratic rank, a phenomenon which actually started when the Koryŏ king was appointed to the minister seat of a branch secretariat.

Let's examine in details how their costumes correlated to their ranks. In Koryŏ, the court dress 冕服 with a crown with nine tassels 九旒冠 and a nine-patterned court robe 九章服 given to Koryŏ king, was of the same level as the emperors' son, the imperial prince 親王.[15] On the contrary, the first official costume bestowed to Koryŏ from Ming included a hat with seven corrugation 七梁冠, which was the same with costumes for Chinese officials who harbored rank 1. This practice also seems to have come from the Yüan period.

The seal 圖章 was also one of the more important ritual gifts 儀物, that was used at the end of the document to demonstrate the authority of the person who owns it. Seals 圖章 can be divided into public seals 印章 and private seals 圖書, and when the former represents a certain status, the latter is usually related to a certain person. For example, the mayor of Seoul can own his own private seal as a free person, but the "seal of the Seoul mayor" must be used only during his time in office and should be passed on to the next mayor in office.

Khitan and Jin granted new seals whenever a new king was invested. The

15. Referred contents on official costumes and "Notes on Official Costumes" 輿服志 were from *Koryŏsa* 72.

seals of this time is recorded as In 印 or Injang 印章 in *Koryŏsa*.[16] These seals were rather given to the Koryŏ kings as individuals, and not to the seat of "King of Koryŏ."

The Mongol Yüan empire had detailed regulations for seals, in terms of material, size, the amount of metal used, the knob 鈕 (Kataoka 2008), which were all different for different rank owners. It seems there were two types of seals granted to the Koryŏ king: the "seal of the imperial son-in-law and Koryŏ King 駙馬高麗國王之印," and the "seal of the branch secretariat 征東行中書省印." The former had originally been split, as the seal of the imperial son in law 駙馬印 and the seal of the king 國王印 were initially separately bestowed. Then they were merged and bestowed as one in the 8th year of King Ch'ung'ryŏl's reign. It represented the invested status of the king.[17] The latter was a seal 職印 given to the one holding the official position as minister of the branch secretariat of a provincial government. And unlike the way they were bestowed in earlier times, seals of this function were kept by the provincial governmental office, and were never newly bestowed again, even when the owner of the office was changed. Therefore, it was called the "heirloom seal" 傳國印 and receiving this seal was even considered as completing the appointment or the enthronement procedure.[18]

The seal given to the king by the Ming dynasty was just the "Seal of the Koryŏ King('s office) 高麗國王之印." It was first given to King Kongmin when he was appointed, and was still in use in 1392 when Koryŏ fell. There were three other Koryŏ kings since Kongmin's demise, but the seal itself was never changed or replaced. It was only replaced when the Ming government had to change its title: from Koryŏ to Chosŏn 朝鮮.[19] However, unlike how

16. For examples of the cases that Jīn dynasty bestowed the seal to Koryŏ king, please see *Koryŏsa* 17 (King Injong 20 [1142], May 戊午); *Koryŏsa* 19 (King Myŏngjong 2 [1172], May 壬午); *Koryŏsa* 21 (King Shinjong 2 [1199], May 辛丑); *Koryŏsa* 21 (King Kangjong 1 [1212], July 壬申), etc.
17. For this, please see *Koryŏsa* 29 (King Ch'ung'ryŏl 8 [1282], September 甲子). This seal of Koryŏ king as the Yüan court's son-in-law 駙馬高麗國王 is made of gold, and cast in the shape of animals, which was given to the kings in the highest rank among the seals for Yüan dynasty's imperial family members, according to the table of imperial family members from *Yüanshi* (*Official History of the Yüan Dynasty* 元史) 108. To see further studies that regard the merge of the both as the confirmation of the status of "Koryŏ king as the Yüan court's son-in-law," refer to Morihira 2013.
18. For this, please see *Koryŏsa* 34 (King Ch'ungsuk 1 [1313], May 丙午); *Koryŏsa* 36 (King Ch'ung'hye's restoration [1339], November 丙辰).
19. For this, please see *Koryŏsa* 42 (King Kongmin 19 [1370], July 甲辰); *The Annuls of the Taejo* 8 (Taejo 4 [1395], November 辛未).

Yüan did, Ming only used "one" seal, so a single seal had to express the nature of the recipients' dual status at the same time. The material or the "shape of the knob" 鈕 showed the invested or aristocratic nature of the recipient, while the size or length of individual sides reflected the recipient's bureaucratic nature. The seal given by Ming was the so-called "golden seal capped with a tortoise knob" 金印龜鈕 of which the material (gold) and the tortoise-shaped knob expressed that the user of the seal had a rank same as the Ming royal prince, while the length (3 *chon* 寸 units) expressed that the owner was harboring the status of a rank 2 official.[20]

This kind of dual nature of the Koryŏ kings (inside the Ming order), as recognized as an equivalent to the Ming royal prince through its investiture title while acknowledged as an equivalent to a rank 1-2 official by its bureaucratic title, was also a result of the Mongol Yüan legacy. During that time, the Koryŏ kings had the investiture title describing them as the imperial sons-in-law, and a bureaucratic title which depicted them as a minister figure for a branch secretariat of a provincial government (as well as an entity equivalent to a rank 1 official in Yüan). That kind of dual status which had formed in the Yüan imperial period manifested itself again in the Koryŏ king's status, even after Yüan was gone and replaced by Ming (Jung 2012).

What was Used for Diplomatic Documents?: Vassal Letter 表文 and Official Dispatch 咨文

Diplomacy of pre-modern East Asia was done mostly through dispatching envoys and exchanging diplomatic documents. For the exchange of envoys, there were regulations concerning rituals in greeting dynastic guests 賓禮, which also reflected the general dynamic between the countries exchanging guests. Diplomatic documents also required specific forms 書式, as they let diplomatic representatives meet albeit indirectly.

From Song, Khitan, and Jin, Koryŏ received the Chinese emperor's imperial edicts 詔書 and sent his own royal appeals 表文. They were the two most frequently used forms. And inside these documents, there were subtle

20. For this, please see *Mingshi* (*Official History of the Ming Dynasty* 明史) 68 (Official Costumes 輿服, 4 Seals 印信).

methods or terms designed to address the opponent properly. However, they both made it clear that the relationship between them was an emperor-subject relationship. Meanwhile, the Koryŏ king rarely exchanged correspondence with individual governmental offices or officials in China. Although sometimes the Koryŏ king communicated with a Song government official in Mingzhou 明州, or with either Khitan or Jin officials stationed in their dynasties' Eastern capital 東京, those communiques were exchanged in emergency situations and only circumstantially. Exchange of documents between government officials of Koryŏ and China was even rarer, and happened only in a limited number of occasions. This means that in the early Koryŏ-China relationship, subjects of diplomatic actions were the rulers 君主 who represented each dynasty. In other words, the business was between the "Chinese emperor" 皇帝 and "the invested Koryŏ king" (王). In this order, Koryŏ only held the status as an independent foreign country 外國.

However, during the Yüan dynasty period, there were even more frequent contacts made between Koryŏ and Yüan, to an unprecedented amount. For the first time, aside from edicts 詔 and appeals 表 that were usually exchanged between the king and the emperor, another form of document called "official dispatch" 咨文 began to be exchanged between the Koryŏ king and the Yüan Main Secretariat 中書省, of which the latter (in previous dynasties) never received a communique by a Koryŏ king directly before. In Yüan, this "official dispatch" was usually exchanged between offices above rank 2, and the Koryŏ kings exchanged this because they held the minister seat of a Branch secretariat, inferior to the Main secretariat but part of the Yüan governmental structure. And Koryŏ offices at the highest level, such as the state council 都僉議使司, received orders 箚附 at times from a "superior office in Koryŏ," which was the aforementioned Yüan branch secretariat (Chŏngdong Haengsŏng provincial government).

Furthermore, Koryŏ King exchanged informal letters 書翰 with Yüan government's officials as well as other influential men such as the imperial princes. Informal letters were documents that were private in nature, usually reflected equal status of both sides. Especially, since the 1350s when the Yüan central government was severely weakened, informal letters were actively exchanged between the military factions in Liaodung and Jiangnan regions, seeking for an independent diplomacy free from the control of Yüan.

Once a diplomatic relationship was established with Ming, both dynasties

(Koryŏ and Ming) still used edicts 詔 and appeals 表 as diplomatic documents. However, the Ming emperor considered the correspondence of informal letters to be in violation of the "vassals not allowed to conduct diplomacy of their own" 人臣無外交 principle, and therefore strictly forbade it, and hence all documents to connect with the outer world were to be only officially generated and exchanged. The Koryŏ king exchanged official dispatches 咨文 with Ming's rank 1 or 2 officials, such as the Main Secretariat 中書省, the Ministry of Rites 禮部 or the Liaodung regional military commission 遼東都指揮使司. Also, the highest governmental office in Koryŏ, the State Council 都評議使司 sent "ascending" documents of "report" 申 or "dedication" 呈 to Ming's officials of rank 1 or 2, and then received "descending" documents that were called "dispatch" 照會.[21] These documents were the same documents that were processed and exchanged inside Ming as well.[22] The Koryŏ king exchanged documents with his equal counterparts, which were the Ming's officials of rank 1 or 2, and the fact that Koryŏ's rank 1 official was recognized as an equivalent to the rank 3 officials in Ming demonstrates that the bureaucratic system of Koryŏ was linked with the Ming system, as an inferior (roughly two ranks below) branch (Jung 2016).

How Were the Envoys Greeted: The Principle in the Ceremony 賓禮

In the pre-modern East Asia, royal ceremonies were centered around the ruler, and there were five main categories for those rituals 五禮: Auspicious rituals 吉, Mourning rituals 凶, Military rituals 軍, Guest-greeting rituals 賓, and Congratulatory rituals 嘉. Most of these rituals were observed primarily domestically, and the only exception guest-greeting ones 賓禮, as in those cases the subject was a representative from a foreign state. The tributary ceremony was established for situations in which foreign kings 蕃王 or their envoys 蕃使 visited the country. However, in case of China, there were no Chinese regulations or principles addressing the issue of how they (Chinese envoys)

21. The cases of exchanging documents described above is referred from *Yimoon* 2.
22. For further details in the style of official documents in the early days of Ming, refer to *System of Rites of Hongwu* 洪武禮制 (Correspondence 行移體式).

should be greeted upon their arrival in foreign countries, as those foreign countries were considered to be realms outside China, and therefore China did not see the needs to establish protocols necessary for such situation.

Song, Khitan, and Jin had detailed regulations for situations in which envoys dispatched from the central government should be properly greeted by local authorities. But they never believed that Koryŏ should do the same, in occasion of greeting Song, Khitan, and Jin emissaries. They regarded Koryŏ as a foreign country, and they only believed that the kind of protocols to be observed by the Koryŏ government in greeting emissaries—carrying royal edicts—from Song, Khitan, and Jin leaders "should be discussed," between the two governments.

For example, when envoys of Khitan were dispatched to Koryŏ to deliver an edict, a ceremony was performed in which the Khitan envoy faced south and the Koryŏ king faced west. In this situation we cannot be sure which side (Khitan or Koryŏ) was acknowledged as the superior party and which one was as inferior. Apparently it was a standoff without a consensus. Clearly the Khitan considered North as the direction that should be revered, while Koryŏ regarded East as such, and they just did what they saw fit. We can feel some tension in their postures, practically competing with each other over the issue of who is superior or inferior. Same situations used to occur in the Koryŏ government's greeting of Song and Jin emissaries as well. Koryŏ did recognize that it was the "vassal state" of China, but did its best to avoid the appearance of the Koryŏ king paying a "vassal-type" respect 臣禮 to the leader of China (Okumura 1984).

On the other hand, during the Yüan imperial period, Koryŏ king greeted the Yüan envoy in the fashion of a Yüan local prefect greeting a Yüan central official. In other words, domestic practices of Yüan were adopted in a ceremony in which the Koryŏ king was greeting a Yüan envoy. The king himself went out of the castle walls to greet the envoy, and the emperor's orders were announced there.[23] Apparently the Yüan envoy sent to Koryŏ was not an envoy sent to a "foreign state," but an envoy sent to the Chŏngdong Haengsŏng branch secretariat, which was part of the Yüan imperial government. Koryŏ was now

23. For this, please see *Daewŏnsŏngjŏng'gukjojŏnjang* 大元聖政國朝典章 28 (Chapter on Manners 禮部 1, Manners of Ceremonies 禮制 1, Welcoming & Farewell 迎送, "Oeroyŏngbaejosa" 外路迎拜詔赦 in "Yŏngjŏp'hap'haeng'yesu" 迎接合行禮數).

urged to observe domestic practices of the empire, as part of the empire itself, at least in terms of guest-greeting ceremonies, but for a long time to come.

When Ming succeeded Yüan, it recognized Koryŏ as a foreign state, but also dictated regulations that should be observed by Koryŏ in greeting Ming representatives. Ming was the first dynasty in China ever to do so. The king was to exit the castle gate and greet the envoy, where the edict should be read, and while the envoy should face south, the Koryŏ king was to face "north," as well as on his knees. These directives were exactly the same with those which were being observed in Ming local areas or crown princes' 親王 realms 王國 when they were to greet the emissary sent by the Ming emperor.[24] Ming perceived Koryŏ as a domestic territory, which should observe domestic protocols—including ceremonial regulations—of Ming. This was another example of Ming inheriting Yüan's legacy. And Koryŏ, which came to embrace its own status as a vassal state through its relationship with Yüan, accepted Ming's initiative as well (Jung 2015).

A Shift from an Aristocratic System to a Bureaucratic System

To sum up what has been examined, in the early Koryŏ periods, an aristocratic system was applied to define the status of the Koryŏ king, yet during the Yüan imperial period both aristocratic and bureaucratic systems were used to define its status, and finally in the Ming period, only the bureaucratic system was left to do the job. Now, let's examine the issue of how China understood Koryŏ as a country.

In the 10-12th centuries, and in Chinese eyes, Koryŏ was considered as a member of the Heavenly order but also as a "foreign state" 外國 ruled by a "king" 國王. But this kind of view was reversed with the advent of the Mongol empire. Koryŏ was indeed an independent state run by an independent king, but at the same time it was also one of Yüan's provincial governments entitled "Chŏngdong Haengsŏng." Then when Ming came into power, the idea that had distinguished "foreign states" from "China" continued to

24. For this, please see *Koryŏsa* 65 (Yeji 7, Binrye, Yŏngdaemyŏngjosaŭi 迎大明詔使儀); *Daemyŏngjip'rye* 大明集禮 32 ("Welcoming" 迎接 and "Bŏn'gukjŏpjoeŭi'ju" 蕃國接詔儀注 in Binrye 3).

disappear, resulting in a new view which regarded Koryŏ as a territory where Chinese domestic system is applied. This sudden shift in Koryŏ's status may be attributed to the change in the world order itself, which was plural in the 10-12th centuries, then became monistic in the 13th and 14th centuries.

I believe that we can take a step forward and make a connection with the bigger changes in the Chinese society. It seems like the aristocratic nature of the hierarchical system, which regulated the Chinese society since the ancient times, was starting to fade and the whole society was gradually turning into a bureaucratic system. In other words, the prior trend to define an individual's status by bloodlines was seemingly being replaced by a new trend to define such individual's status by his or her abilities. Going through the so-called "Tang-Song transitional period," it is now commonly accepted that the Chinese society was moving from the aristocratic society to a bureaucratic society. Though there were many people in important positions who "inherited" their status, but later more and more people underwent procedures to prove their abilities. And things that are examined in this article seem to be corroborating that as well.

It was at the end of the 14th century and especially in the early Ming years that this tendency reached its height. The founders of Ming recognized the ending days of Yüan as a time of turmoil, and hoped to rebuild the political and social order. It has been suggested by researches that they also tried to establish a strictly monistic bureaucratic system.[25] Such efforts can be clearly observed in the Ming government's early reforms of ritual, legal, governmental systems. In other words, from top to bottom, emperor to officials, capital to villages, whatever official duty and obligation 職役 a person had, everyone was lined up—with ranks 位階—under one standard, and that standard was the bureaucratic order.[26]

Ming also wanted to round up the "foreign states" 外國 as well, in that monistic world order they devised. But in reality, it should have been impossible for Ming to exact such authority on all foreign people. According

25. For further details of this matter, please see Farmer 1995.
26. However, there was only one group of people who were free from the standard, the imperial family members. The relatives of the emperor were conferred the noble title of "Princes" 親王 or "Minor Princes" 郡王 in accordance with their relative degree of intimacy in blood line with the emperor, and were allowed to pass on their powers to their descendants. But, their titles were treated same with the ones of officials ranked in the highest position in various areas by convention.

to the idea of "regarding everyone equally and impartially" 一視同仁, which Ming itself put forth, Ming too should have acted as such, yet it was simply not possible. So Ming only chose to include the foreign rulers (kings) in that bureaucratic hierarchy it established.

How is it Connected to Domestic Problems?

The last thing I would like to comment on is the relationship between these changes in the international order and the Koryŏ dynasty's domestic system. In the past when aristocratic order was the only system applied to define the king of Koryŏ, Koryŏ was able to operate as a foreign state, with a separate hierarchical system from the Chinese kingdom. Even the phenomenon of the so-called "king for foreign affairs, emperor for domestic affairs" 外王內帝 and "system of an empire" 皇帝國體制 was possible in the international atmosphere of the time. However, during the Yüan and Ming periods, when a bureaucratic hierarchy (that engulfed both Koryŏ and China) was used in defining the status of the Koryŏ king, with same principles applied not only in Chinese cases but in Koryŏ cases too, Koryŏ's internal system and culture couldn't help but undergo a process of being linked or become similar to that of Ming's. If degradation of the national system 國制 earlier was due to the coercion of Yüan, in times of the Ming dynasty, adjustment in the domestic system was inevitable.

Fortunately, the issues that the founders of Chosŏn raised coincided with these aspects. Chŏng Do-Jŏn and others who founded Chosŏn, perceived situations of the ending days of Koryŏ to have been chaotic, and in order to set things straight in the early days of Chosŏn, they employed a principle of reorganizing national systems with a sequential hierarchy. Such perception of reality and counter measures they came up with shared many similarities with the Jinhua schools' 金華學派 political thoughts, which is known to have provided a founding philosophy for the new national system in the early days of Ming.[27] Such sharing of thoughts may have come from both parties' universal experience of already having a taste of the monistic order developed

27. To see further researches on the political·social ideas of early Ming Jinhua schools, refer to Dardess 1983.

by Yüan.

In fact the contents and the system in the chapter of office 吏典 and the chapter of rite 禮典 in the *Great Code for Governing the State* 經國大典 were composed of many provisions brought from *Collected Statutes of the Ming Dynasty* 大明會典. Yet it should be noted that many institutions on the Chosŏn part seem to have been demoted from the levels and ranks they used to feature in Ming. The king of Chosŏn was placed inside the Ming dynasty's bureaucratic order of rites, and we can see that the same principle was embraced in the early Chosŏn reformation of the system.

And then, Chosŏn began to exhibit intentions to treat nearby countries such as Japan and the Jurchen just as China was treating Chosŏn. It was Chosŏn's efforts to extend a China-oriented bureaucratic order to them, with itself already firmly inside it. Chosŏn did so by demanding certain protocols, in terms of document exchanges or identification methods for the envoys, to be observed by Japan and Jurchen (Jung 2013). We can see that while Chosŏn was part of a larger bureaucratic hierarchy as a subordinate to the Chinese center, it was trying to form another arena with itself at the center. Copies of the center were apparently appearing everywhere, in an overlapping fashion, in an environment which may also be described as a structure that resembles a fractal system.

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Abstract

This article examines the status of the Koryŏ king in the 10-14th centuries, in terms of the Korea-China relations, through a number of diplomatic systems and elements such as investiture titles, investiture documents, king's clothing, seals, the tributary ceremony, etc. Through this, I tried to explain that Korea-China relations as well as international principles have changed from an aristocratic order to a bureaucratic order, and for the Koryŏ kings the critical point was when they were ordered to serve not only as Koryŏ kings but also as ministers of the branch secretariat in a Yüan provincial government. The changes that ensued can be felt in many other areas. In the early Koryŏ periods, diplomatic contacts were made between China's emperor and the Koryŏ king, and Koryŏ king was invested, according to an aristocratic order. Yet during the Yüan imperial period, Koryŏ kings began to assume actual imperial posts, which added a layer upon their existing title of nobility. Koryŏ kings came to exchange diplomatic documents not only with the Yüan emperor, but also with imperial offices. And the following Koryŏ-Ming relations show the existing aristocratic order that had served as a defining factor for the Koryŏ king has disappeared, with only the bureaucratic system left to define the Koryŏ king in a new way. Ming emperor treated the Koryŏ and Chosŏn kings just as if they were part of the Ming order and realm. These changes are also reflective of the one which was going on inside China. The aristocratic order that had been the controlling hierarchy since the ancient times, changed gradually to a bureaucratic order. Such trend reached its height at the end of the 14th century, which was the early years of Ming.

Keywords: Koryŏ king, aristocracy, bureaucracy, investiture, Korea-China relations, ministers of the branch secretariat, diplomatic document

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