

# Policies of the Conquest Dynasties toward Koryŏ

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## 정복왕조의 대 고려 정책

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### Abstract

The Koryŏ dynasty (918-1392) generally adopted a very hostile foreign policy toward the Manchurian states of the Khitan, Jin, and later the Mongol empire. It has been asserted that such a policy may be explained by Koryŏ's acceptance of the ideological validity of the Han Chinese concept of tribute system. However, this ignores the geopolitical reality of the time in which the Manchurian states represented a serious military threat to both the Chinese and Korean states, and this in turn pushed them toward friendly relations. Each state sought to maintain their autonomy and preserve the balance of power in East Asia by preventing the rise of a hegemonic power. Koryŏ's policy was to maintain peaceful relations with Khitan and Jin in the guise of the "tribute system," and to distance itself from Song China politically.

Unlike the numerous studies of foreign relations of Koryŏ and Song China, but few studies have focused on the policies of the Northern Asiatic states toward Koryŏ. Manchurian states did not approach Koryŏ as they did Song China. The conquest dynasties of Khitan and Jin faced strong adversaries on all sides, and their main objective was to ensure the stability and security of the border region. In the end, they were content with nominal

acknowledgement of “superiority” and submission of token amounts of “tributes” from Koryŏ. On the other hand, the Mongol’s policy toward Koryŏ was entirely different. The “Chinese World Order” during the Mongol period was not a continuation of the “tribute system” of the earlier Koryŏ period but represented a new world order imposed by the Mongol empire.

- Key words : Koryŏ, Khitan, Song China, Jurchen Jin, Mongol, Tribute System, East Asian World Order.

## 초록

고려왕조(918-1392)는 한족왕조 송과 우호적인 관계를 유지하였지만 이와는 대조적으로 북방민족이 세운 거란, 금, 그리고 몽골제국 초기에는 적대적인 관계가 지속되었다. 기존의 ‘조공체제’ 이론은 이러한 고려의 정책을 당시 동아시아의 지정학적 현실보다는 한족중심적 이념과 연결하여 해석하고자 하였다. 실제 만주에서 흥기한 강력한 제국인 거란과 금은 중원(송)과 한반도(고려)의 중간에 위치하면서 양국에 심각한 군사적 위협이었기에 고려와 송은 동일한 적국에 대응하여 친밀한 관계를 추구할 수 있었다. 고려는 정치적 독립과 국경의 안정의 보장을 위해 정복왕조와 타협을 하면서 송과의 공식관계를 수십 년간 단절하기도 하였다. 송과 고려의 관계에 대해서는 적지 않은 연구가 있었지만, 정복왕조의 대 고려 정책에 관한 연구는 상대적으로 소홀하였다. 거란과 금의 대 고려 정책은 국경지대의 안정을 목표로 하면서 송과의 동맹을 차단하고 ‘책봉국’의 우월성을 인정받는 것이었다. 하지만 중원은 물론 동아시아 대부분 지역을 모두 통치한 몽골제국의 고려정책은 매우 달랐다. 몽골제국 시기의 ‘동아시아 세계 질서’는 고려전기의 ‘조공체제’와는 전혀 다른 몽골의 세계관에 의거하여 새롭게 구성된 것이었다.

- 주제어 : 고려, 거란, 송, 금, 몽골, 조공체제, 동아시아 국제질서

## I . Introduction

Whereas the Koryŏ dynasty (918-1392) maintained generally peaceful and friendly relations with Song China, its relations with its northern neighbors of the so-called conquest dynasties (Khitan, Jin and Mongol empires) were marked by hostility and occasional military conflicts. It has

been suggested that this difference was a natural consequence of Koryŏ's cultural features based on rice cultivation similar to those of China but radically different from those of the Manchurian powers who were nomadic or semi-nomadic. Koryŏ supposedly accepted the ideological validity of the Chinese concept of tribute system, admired Chinese culture and felt a common bond with Song China.<sup>1)</sup> Indeed, the Song Taizong's edict to Koryŏ in the late tenth century appealed to the idea of the "defense of their common culture" against the Khitan.<sup>2)</sup> However, such arguments are based on simplified and superficial comparison of the "mode of production, and a closer examination of political and military situation reveals crucial geopolitical factors.

In the premodern East Asian history, the Khitan and the Jin are simply considered as "Chinese dynasties," and even the Mongol world empire has been equated as the Yuan period in Chinese history. Indeed, one of the major problems in understanding the traditional Korean-Chinese relations is the ambiguity of the terms "China" and "Chinese." The English word "Chinese" can stand for either the ethnic "Han Chinese" or the even harder to define term *zhongguo* 中國 (Central Kingdom). Some core Han Chinese values can be traced back many centuries, but political, cultural, and territorial shape of "China" has differed greatly throughout history.<sup>3)</sup> China of today is a very recent creation, and the term *zhongguo* must be taken as a subjective and geopolitical term in history.

Were the empires of Khitan, Jin and Mongol merely the "Liao," "Jin," and "Yuan" in continuous and unbroken Chinese dynastic history? The Khitan and the Jin ruled parts of the traditionally Han Chinese territory and population, and the entire China came under the control of the Mongols but it was still only a part of many regions under the rule of the Mongols. While these alien regimes did avail themselves of some aspects of Chinese institutions, they rejected many Chinese cultural ways. In the end, a large proportion of Khitans, Jurchens, and Mongols had never been sinicized and never came under direct Han Chinese rule. They remained ethnically, culturally, and linguistically different from the seden-

1) Kawachi Yoshihiro, *Mindai Joshin shi no kenkyu*, 9.

2) Wang Gungwu, "The Rhetoric of a Lesser Empire," 53.

3) John W. Dardess, "Did the Mongols Matter?," 112-22.

tary Han Chinese.

There is an urgent need for reconsideration of the framework of the tribute system, especially in our study of relations between Koryŏ and its northern neighbors in the 10th-14th centuries. The tribute system, closely tied to the Han Chinese Confucian ideological perspective, is inadequate for an understanding of the inner workings of traditional Northeast Asian interstate relations. It cannot account for the fundamental break in the Northeast Asian geopolitical configuration that took place during the thirteenth century, when the Mongol destruction of an independent Manchurian power ended earlier patterns of the multistate interstate relations. In an effort to look for alternative approaches, this presentation examines how these conquest dynasties approached the Koryŏ state, and important changes in the East Asian world order brought about by the Mongol empire.

## II . Policy of the Khitan and the Jin: Preventing the Koryŏ-Song Alliance

The conquest dynasties of the Khitan and Jin generally possessed superior military power, but they also faced large and powerful Chinese states and often surrounded by unfriendly neighbors. According to the *Liaoshi*,

The territory of Liao in the east adjoined Korea. In the south it valiantly rivaled the six dynasties of Liang, Tang, Jin, Han, Zhou, and Song. In the north it was close to about ten important states, such as Tsu-pu and Chu-pu-ku. In the west it controlled about a hundred strong states, such as Hsi Hsia [Xi Xia], Tang-hsiang, T'u-hun, Uighur, and others... Surrounded on the four sides by militant peoples, [Liao] crouched in their midst like a tiger whom no one dared to challenge.<sup>4)</sup>

As the Khitan was in a fierce rivalry with Song China, it initially sought to maintain friendly relations with Koryŏ, taking initiatives to establish

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4) Wittfogel, *Liao*, 554; *Liaoshi*, 46.742.

and maintain friendly relations with Koryŏ. It was the Khitan that sent envoys bearing presents of the steppe products of camels and woolen fabrics to Koryŏ in 922, when the peninsula had not yet been unified.<sup>5)</sup> There is little evidence of open hostility between the two states at the time.

In 942, twenty years after the first embassy, the Khitan dispatched another embassy. However, this time Koryŏ responded with a hostile and drastic action of banishing the thirty members of the Khitan embassy and left the Khitan gift of fifty camels to starve to death under a bridge in the capital city.<sup>6)</sup> What was behind this outright animosity against the Khitans? Some has suggested that Koryŏ's prejudice against the Khitan to be as a "nation of savage beasts" of untrustworthy nature. Others suggested that this enmity against the Khitan derived from the Khitan attack and destruction of Parhae, with which the Koryŏ court allegedly had marriage ties according to the *Zizhi tongjian*.<sup>7)</sup> On the other hand, there is no evidence that Koryŏ and Parhae ever maintained friendly relations, and the Koryŏ court had dispatched an embassy to the Khitan court only a month after the Khitan conquest of Parhae in 926.<sup>8)</sup>

In order to understand the complex interstate relations in the early tenth century East Asia, one needs to focus on issues of border security concerns and the competition over former territory and historical memory of Koguryŏ. The Khitan proclaimed itself the legitimate successor to the historical tradition of the great state of Koguryŏ in Manchuria, and it had conquered Parhae, another state that considered itself as the true successor of Koguryŏ. While the fall of Parhae did not immediately make Koryŏ and the Khitan immediate neighbors due to a buffer region occupied by Jurchen tribes, the Khitan must have been troubled by the Koryŏ's northern push. There was a possibility that Koryŏ might promote endemic dis-

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5) *Koryŏsa*, 1:16b2.

6) *Koryŏsa*, 2:14a9-b1.

7) *Zizhi tongjian*, 285.9298-9. There is in fact no record of a royal marriage between Koryŏ and Parhae. The later Koryŏ officials Yi Chehyŏn expressed strong doubts about the record (*Yŏgong p'aesŏl*, chŏn, 1:5a8-6b1). See also Yi Yongbŏm, *Hanman kyoryusa yŏm'gu*, 209-228.

8) *Liaoshi*, 2.21-22.

affection among the large population of Parhae people in Liaodong.<sup>9)</sup> On the other hand, rapidly growing Khitan influence near its northern border must have worried Koryŏ, and both realized that they would have to confront the each other.

The paucity of historical records does not tell us much about the relations between Koryŏ and the Khitan during the mid- to late-10<sup>th</sup> century, but it is clear that there were much tension in the border region. The Khitan army launched two major expeditions in the 980s against the Jurchen tribes and the two small states of the Later Parhae 後渤海 and Chŏngan'guk 定安國 situated in the Amnok River region.<sup>10)</sup> The Khitan court had been prompted to move against these states set up by the former people of Parhae who professed themselves to be the legitimate successors to the fallen Parhae and actively sought to form an anti-Khitan alliance with the Song.

When the second Khitan embassy came in 942, north China was under the rule of the Later Jin whose first ruler Shi Jingtang had been a mere puppet of the Khitan. His successor, Shi Chonggui's (r. 942-946), however, repudiated the previous agreements with the Khitan, and this led to open hostilities.<sup>11)</sup> From a geopolitical perspective in 942.10, King T'aejo's harsh treatment of the Khitan envoys may have been a demonstration of his alliance with the Later Jin against the Khitan. T'aejo declared that Koryŏ was a successor to Koguryŏ and openly welcomed Parhae refugees and even bestowed the royal surname of Wang to the Parhae crown prince. He designated P'yŏngyang as Koryŏ's Western capital 西京 and publicly proclaimed his desire to recover the ancient territories of Koguryŏ. T'aejo emphasized that he had unified the legacies of all Three Kingdoms, and that the people of Koryŏ were one nation physically and spiritually.<sup>12)</sup>

Just before the second military showdown of 986 between the Song and Khitan, both states dispatched envoys to Koryŏ. Whereas the Song

9) *Liaoshi*, 17.203-4. See also Han Kyuch'ŏl, *Parhae ŭi taecae kwan'gyesa*, pp. 260-267.

10) *Liaoshi*, 10.112, 115; *Songshi*, 491.14128-9. See also Wada Sei, "Teian koku ni tsuite," in *Toa shi kenkyu: Manshu hen*, 161-89.

11) Twitchett and Tietze, "The Liao," *CHC*, 6, 70-73.

12) Remco Breuker, *Establishing a Pluralist Society in Medieval Korea*, 59-110.

embassy of 985.5 wanted an active military alliance with Koryŏ, the Khitan embassy of 986.1 merely tried to secure Koryŏ's neutrality.<sup>13)</sup> Koryŏ was said to have ignored the Khitan overture and agreed to help the Song.<sup>14)</sup> Ultimately, Koryŏ kept itself out of the Khitan-Song conflict of 986, but the Khitan must have realized that Koryŏ represented a serious potential threat to its eastern border.

The first major invasion came in 993, when the Khitan force supposedly numbering 800,000 crossed the Amnok River.<sup>15)</sup> During the early years of the dynasty, Koryŏ was keenly aware of the threat from the north and took measures to maintain strong army. King Chŏngjong had organized the 300,000 strong Resplendent Army (Kwanggun 光軍). The next king, Kwangjong (949-975), continued the push toward the Amnok River and established several garrison forts across the Ch'ŏngch'ŏn River.<sup>16)</sup> However, by the time of King Sŏngjong (981-997), it appears that Koryŏ's northern expansion had lost its momentum. Perhaps several decades of peace have also fostered a false sense of security, and Koryŏ was clearly not prepared even though the Jurchens had informed the court of the impending Khitan invasion.<sup>17)</sup> The Khitan army was victorious in its first battle north of the Ch'ŏngch'ŏn River, but rather than pressing south toward the capital, it stopped the advance and sent several communications demanding surrender. It was said that many officials at the Koryŏ court were in favor of surrender and some even advocated ceding the territory north of P'yŏngyang,<sup>18)</sup> but two officials, Sŏ Hŭi and Yi Chibaek, vehemently voiced their opposition. From the Khitan communications, Sŏ Hŭi had concluded that the invaders were not looking for a full scale military engagement against Koryŏ, and he volunteered to go to the Khitan camp in person to negotiate. When they met, the Khitan general Xiao Sunning claimed that the Khitan was the true successor to Koguryŏ.

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13) *Koryŏsa*, 3:10a3.

14) *Koryŏsa*, 3:8b9-9a2.

15) *Liaoshi*, 13.143; *Koryŏsa*, 94:2a4.

16) *KS*, 94:2b8.

17) *Koryŏsa*, 3:26a5-6.

18) *Koryŏsa*, 94:2a7-b1.

Your state (Koryŏ) originated from the territory of Silla. The [former] territories of Koguryŏ [now] belong to us, but you have encroached [upon our land]. Moreover, your state shares a common border with us but serve [instead] the Song across the sea. These are the reasons for today's military action. If you cede the land [in dispute] and restore relations [with us], there will not be any [more] trouble.<sup>19)</sup>

Sŏ Hŭi replied that Koryŏ was the legitimate successor of Koguryŏ and that it was the Khitan that encroached on Koryŏ's territory. Sŏ also blamed the Jurchen tribes for cessation of normal diplomatic relations between the two states. Sŏ Hŭi then successfully persuaded the Khitan to withdraw, and obtained an explicit Khitan consent to incorporate the land between the Ch'ŏngch'ŏn and Amnok Rivers, ostensibly for the purpose of securing safe diplomatic passages to the Khitan.<sup>20)</sup> The Khitan was willing to accept this arrangement as it sought to assure Koryŏ's neutrality in the looming Khitan-Song conflict. Securing its border with Koryŏ could enable the Khitan to commit most of its troops and resources in its military campaigns against the Song.

Under the terms of agreement, Koryŏ recognized the Khitan as the suzerain state and broke off its diplomatic ties with Song. The Song calendar in use in Koryŏ since 963 was discarded and the Khitan calendar was adopted in 994.<sup>21)</sup> The Song was not able or willing to provide help, and Koryŏ broke off its official relations with the Song. The Khitan also agreed to enter into a marriage alliance proposed by King Sŏngjong who was said to have been granted a daughter of Xiao Hengde and Princess Yueguo, the third daughter of the emperor Jingzong (r. 969-82).<sup>22)</sup>

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19) *Koryŏsa*, 94:4b1-3.

20) *Koryŏsa*, 3:26b4-27a6, 94:4b4-5a2. Michael Rogers remains skeptical about this account of Sŏ Hŭi's exploits as recorded in the *Koryŏsa* (Rogers, "National Consciousness in Medieval Korea," 154-156).

21) *Koryŏsa*, 3:27a6-7.

22) Whereas the Korean source *Koryŏsa* wrote that the Liao "approved marriage" 許嫁, the Khitan history *Liaoshi* recorded that the princess was "married down" 下嫁. Because we have no record of any Khitan princess coming to Koryŏ and the list of King Sŏngjong's queens and consorts in the *Koryŏsa* does not contain any Khitan consort, it is doubtful that the royal marriage between Koryŏ king and Khitan princess actually



However, once the Khitan-Song relations stabilized after the Treaty of Shanyuan 澶淵之盟, the Khitan turned their attention to the border with Koryŏ. It appears that the Khitan may have regretted its decision to let Koryŏ to take control of the area southeast of the Amnok River, as the region may be a security risk to its border. The Khitan court was given a convenient pretext in 1009, when Kang Cho, a military commander of the Western Capital, killed King Mokchong and installed Hyŏnjong (1009-31).<sup>23)</sup> In the following year, the Khitan Shengzong (983-1030) personally led an army of 400,000, ostensibly to punish Kang Cho's crime of regicide.<sup>24)</sup> The Koryŏ force numbering 300,000 confronted the invading Khitan army near the Amnok River and initially scored several easy victories. However, Kang's overconfidence led to military disasters and he was captured and killed in 1010.11.<sup>25)</sup> The Khitan army pushed south and entered the Koryŏ capital of Kaegyŏng on the first day of lunar year 1011, and King Hyŏnjong's court was forced to flee south.<sup>26)</sup>

While it had taken the capital of Koryŏ, the Khitan did not have a plan for the long-term occupation. Only after ten days, the Khitan began a hasty retreat after having looted and burned much of the Koryŏ capital. They left the Koryŏ capital on the eleventh day and crossed the Amnok River back to Manchuria on the twenty-eighth day, even as it suffered a great loss of men and materials to Koryŏ counterattacks.<sup>27)</sup> Its supply lines were exposed to the attacks by the regrouping Koryŏ military and the Khitan turned back before it had obtained any real concession from Koryŏ.<sup>28)</sup> In the fourth month of 1012, the Khitan notified Koryŏ of the

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took place (*Koryŏsa*, 3:28b7-8; *Liaoshi*, 13.147, 65.1002, 88.1342-43). Xiao Hengde had married Princess Yüeguo in 983, and this would make any offspring of that union at most about twelve years old in 995 (*Liaoshi*, 88.1342), and it is most likely that the marriage was indeed arranged but never consummated. In any case, when the Khitan Princess Yueguo died in 996, the Koryŏ court dispatched a special condolence embassy to pay respect, and Koryŏ really had no reason or obligation to dispatch such an envoy unless the princess was indeed King Sŏngjong's mother-in-law [to be].

23) *Koryŏsa*, 3:37b5-38a7, 4:1b9-2a3.

24) *Liaoshi*, 15.168; *Koryŏsa*, 4:5a2-3.

25) *Koryŏsa*, 4:6a3-4, 127:8a9-9a7, 9a9-10a7.

26) *Liaoshi*, 15.168; *Koryŏsa*, 4:6b5-6.

27) *Koryŏsa*, 4:7a1-5; XCB, 74.1695; *Liaoshi*, 15.169.

conditions for peaceful relations between the two states.<sup>29)</sup> It demanded that the Koryŏ king to appear in person at the Khitan court to pay respect,<sup>30)</sup> an unprecedented demand as no reigning Korean king had ever traveled to a Chinese court.<sup>31)</sup> However, the Khitan did not demand from Koryŏ any territorial concession or material tributes comparable to the massive annual subsidy [or “tributes”] forced on Song China.

The Khitan continued to try to recover the Six Amnok River Fortresses from 1012 to 1017. In 1018 the Khitan launched its third major expedition, but its army of 100,000 was unable to take the well-defended Koryŏ fortresses in the North. As in the 1011 invasion, the Khitan army again headed directly south to take the Koryŏ capital,<sup>32)</sup> but it faced a stiff resistance from the strong Koryŏ defense around capital and soon retreated toward the Amnok River. Before they reached the border, however, Khitans were encircled and trapped at Kuju on the first day of the second month of 1019. The Koryŏ force led by Kang Kamch’an annihilated the Khitan army that reportedly lost all but a few thousand of the original 100,000 that had crossed the Amnok.<sup>33)</sup> After this victory, Koryŏ’s international standing in Northeast Asia rose, and many Jurchen tribes in Manchuria “came and submitted” to the Koryŏ court. A mid-11<sup>th</sup> century report by a Khitan official demonstrate security problems faced by the Khitan state,

In my humble opinion, in recent years Korea has not submitted... Furthermore the Po-hai, Nü-chih [Jurchen], and Koreans form alliances. Punitive expeditions are always taking place.<sup>34)</sup>

28) *Liaoshi*, 88.1339.

29) *Koryŏsa*, 4:10a8, 10b9-11a1, 11a2-3.

30) *Liaoshi*, 15.170; *Koryŏsa*, 4:12a4.

31) Kim Ch’unch’u (r. 654-661, also known as King T’aejong [temple name] Muyŏl [posthumous epithet]), the twenty-ninth king of Silla, visited Tang China several times, but they were before Kim had come to the throne. As King of Silla, Kim never left his state (*Samguk sagi*, chapter 5, passim).

32) *Koryŏsa*, 4:28b8-29a3; *Liaoshi*, 16.185.

33) *Koryŏsa*, 4:29b1-3.

34) *Liaoshi*, 103.1446. The translation is taken from Wittfogel, *Liao: History of Chinese Society*, 557.

The military disaster of 1018 did not dissuade the Khitan from assembling another expeditionary force in the late summer of 1019,<sup>35)</sup> but it was also becoming clear that neither side could expect a decisive victory. In early 1020 Koryŏ returned the Khitan envoys who had been detained for six years, and soon official state contacts were reestablished with the Khitan investiture of King Hyŏnjong as the “King of Koryŏ” in 1022 and Koryŏ’s re-adoption of the Khitan calendar.<sup>36)</sup> In 1023.7, the Khitan court also dispatched the Birthday Felicitation Embassy 生辰使 for Koryŏ king and this embassy continued to arrive at the Koryŏ capital without exception until 1116. The peaceful relations between the two states under the guise of the tribute system signified Koryŏ’s pledge to not to enter into alliance with Song China.

The triangular geopolitical configuration that maintained balance of power in Northeast Asia was briefly but severely shaken in the early decades of the twelfth century. When the Jurchen uprisings that began in 1114 exposed military weakness of the Khitan empire, the Song entered into alliance with the Jurchens but failed to entice Koryŏ as it tried to “recover” the lost sixteen prefectures. The Jurchen cavalry was vastly superior to the Song Chinese troops in North China, but as the campaigns moved into the South China, Jurchen forces were overstretched and faced the difficulties of local guerilla warfare in a strange land. The Song also began to put up a stiff resistance, and the wet geography of the South China denied Jurchens of the advantages of cavalry. Moreover, the establishment in 1124 of the Kara Khitai (or Western Liao [Xi Liao 西遼]) to the northwest of Xia changed the geopolitical situation. Yelu Dashi, the founder of Kara Khitai, was a member of the imperial family, and he publicly proclaimed his intention to destroy the Jurchen Jin. Thus, even as the Jin was in a much stronger position as compared to Khitan, it still did not possess the power to overwhelm the region and had to accept the multistate system. A Jin official commented that “although the territory of our dynasty is great, there are four rulers under the Heaven.

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35) *Liaoshi*, 16.186.

36) *Koryŏsa*, 4: 32b8-33a1, 38a1-4; *Liaoshi*, 16.187.

[Along with the Jin emperor], there is the Song in the South, the Koryŏ in the East, the Xia in the West 本朝疆土雖大, 而天下有四主, 南有宋, 東有高麗, 西有夏.”<sup>37)</sup> The earlier system of the triangular interstate relations in the Northeast had been restored among Koryŏ, the Jurchen Jin, and the Southern Song.

The Jurchen policy toward Koryŏ was one of conciliation and concession. The Jin did not show any territorial ambition toward Koryŏ. In fact, it was Koryŏ that seized the Khitan fortresses of Laiyuan 來遠城 and Baozhou 保州 located on the east bank of the Amnok River in 1116.<sup>38)</sup> Instead of demanding the return of the former Khitan territory, the Jin actually confirmed Koryŏ possession of the fortresses on the condition that Koryŏ formally recognize the Jin superiority in place of the Khitan.<sup>39)</sup> Direct military confrontations along the border between Koryŏ and the Jin were very rare.<sup>40)</sup> One serious issue in the early Koryŏ-Jin relations was the question of Jurchen refugees who had settled in Koryŏ as it appears that some of the Jurchen refugees in Koryŏ were those who had previously resisted the imperial Wanyan clan of the Jin dynasty.<sup>41)</sup> In 1127.3 and again in 1130.3, the Jin court threatened to revoke its ceding of Baozhou for Koryŏ's refusal to provide an accurate account of the Jurchen refugees.<sup>42)</sup> The Jin court may have been quite serious about this as it directly concerned the ruling dynasty, and it may have also believed that Koryŏ forcefully detained some Jurchens to undermine its authority in the region.<sup>43)</sup> However, after Koryŏ sent a memorial expressing its compliance, the Jurchen court did not press the issue.

As early as 1117, the Jin demanded that Koryŏ accept fraternal rela-

37) *Jinshi*, 129.2782.

38) *Koryŏsa*, 14:21a1-4.

39) *Koryŏsa*, 15:21a1-2; *Jinshi*, 135.2884. The Jin Taizong later instructed that the area should be returned to Koryŏ if Koryŏ comply with the Jin demands (*KS*, 15:19b2-4).

40) The only serious incident took place in 1164 when Koryŏ attacked and burned down the Jin fortification. The Jurchens retaliated the following year by sending a small force to Inju and Chŏngju and kidnapping some sixteen Koryŏ soldiers (*Jinshi*, 135.2886, *Koryŏsa*, 18:26a1-3.).

41) Pak Hannam, “Koryŏ Injongdae tae Kŭm chŏngch'aek ūi sŏnggyŏk,” 55-56, 60.

42) *Koryŏsa*, 16:7a1-8a3.

43) *Koryŏsa*, 16:8b1-2.

tions in which Koryŏ was to be the “younger brother,”<sup>44)</sup> and after the demise of the Khitan in 1125, it then claimed the suzerain status that the Khitan had enjoyed vis-à-vis Koryŏ.<sup>45)</sup> At first, the Koryŏ court flatly refused even the Jurchen demand of fraternal ties. The Jurchens had regarded Koryŏ its “parent state” because the ancestor of the ruling Wanyen clan supposedly came from Korea.<sup>46)</sup> Various Jurchen tribes had also been Koryŏ’s tributaries, and the Koryŏ court officials considered it humiliating to accede to the reversed relations the Jurchens were demanding. Perhaps it was not entirely unintentional that Koryŏ failed to adhere to the strict rules of memorials to be observed by a supposed tributary state in its early correspondences to the Jin. Koryŏ’s letter to the Jin in 1125.5 was rejected because Koryŏ did not use the proper memorial style and it did not refer to itself as a subject of the Jurchen emperor.<sup>47)</sup> There were several similar examples of “oversights” by the Koryŏ court. Derogatory terms for the Jurchens were also found in official state letters, and in the memorial of 1148.2 Koryŏ also omitted the king’s personal name, and the king did not call himself a subject of the Jin.<sup>48)</sup> Koryŏ was also accused of not according the Jin embassies with the same respect and treatment it had previously extended to the Khitan envoys.<sup>49)</sup>

After the death of King Yejong, the court of young King Injong came under the domination of Yi Chagyŏm who was both the maternal grandfather and father-in-law of the king. Yi, who had his own ambition on the throne, seemed to have calculated that maintaining peaceful relations with the Jurchens was advantageous for his design on usurping the throne. During the debate on Koryŏ’s policy toward the Jin, it was said that only Yi Chagyŏm and his protégé, Ch’ŏk Chun’gyŏng advocated acceptance of the Jin demand.<sup>50)</sup> However, Yi was able to sway the court and the decision to recognize Jin suzerainty was reached in 1126.3,<sup>51)</sup> and

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44) *Koryŏ ŏsa*, 14:21b3-22a1.

45) *Koryŏ ŏsa*, 15:10a4-6.

46) *Koryŏ ŏsa ch’ŏryo*, 7:35b8-10.

47) *Koryŏ ŏsa*, 15:10a4-6.

48) *Koryŏ ŏsa*, 17: 18a2-3, 24a2-4.

49) *Jinshi*, 135.2885.

50) *Koryŏ ŏsa*, 15:11b1-6.

the court dispatched an embassy with a letter that acknowledged its “vassal status.”<sup>52)</sup> The Jin was content with this demonstration of Koryŏ’s nominal submission, which in turn formally declared Koryŏ’s refusal to form any alliance with the Song. Unlike the previous Khitan period, there was no Jurchen invasion and peaceful relations prevailed between the two states.

### III . Mongol Domination and Unilaterality toward Koryŏ

Koryŏ was the only state in Northeast Asia [other than Japan] that maintained some semblance of independence in the aftermath of the Mongol conquest in the 13th century. However, the Mongol view of Koryŏ was very different from the previous Han Chinese and Manchurian dynasties. The Mongols did take a direct control over the Cheju Island and northeastern area of Koryŏ around P’yŏngyang, but the customary Mongol policy toward the surrendered states was to keep and rule through the local rulers.<sup>53)</sup> The Mongol court did not force major overhaul of Koryŏ political institutions or purged the Koryŏ royal family and aristocracy. In Mongol politics, personal relations were often as important as official state relations, and they would try to control the Koryŏ state indirectly through personal connection with Koryŏ kings, who unlike the previous period, occupied complex concurrent political positions such as the imperial son-in-law and the head official of the Eastern Expedition Field Headquarters 征東行省.<sup>54)</sup>

Unlike the Khitan, Song, and Jin in the earlier period, the Mongol empire considered Koryŏ more as an integral part of the empire. There were even several attempts to abolish the kingdom of Koryŏ and set up a regular provincial government. In 1302 a proposal was put forward to combine the state of Koryŏ and the Liaoyang province into a new larger prov-

51) This decision was still put to a divination in the Ancestral Hall whether to submit or to prepare for a military confrontation (*Koryŏsa*, 15:11b7-12a1).

52) *Koryŏsa*, 15:12a4-5.

53) Thomas T. Allsen, *Mongol Imperialism*, 63-65.

54) Masahiko Morihira, *Mongoru Teikoku no haken to ‘Chosen Hanto’*, 49-55.

ince with the capital located in Manchuria.<sup>55)</sup> The descendants of Hong Pogwŏn, who wielded powerful influence over the Koryŏ people of the Liaoyang region, were probably behind this move as Koryŏ king's influence in Manchuria expanded, especially after King Ch'ungnyŏl's marriage to the Cheguk Princess.<sup>56)</sup> In 1312, Hong Chunghŭi, a grandson of Hong Pogwŏn, again petitioned unsuccessfully the court to abolish the kingdom of Koryŏ.<sup>57)</sup> A most serious attempt came in 1323, when some Koryŏ officials joined the effort to abolish the kingdom. Although the proposal was ultimately rejected, the deliberation at the Mongol court came dangerously close.<sup>58)</sup> There would be two more attempts to destroy Koryŏ as a separate political entity in 1330 and in 1343.<sup>59)</sup> Although Koryŏ was able to maintain veneer of an independent kingdom, these attempts and discussion at the Mongol court clearly illustrate that Koryŏ was now a dependent state that owed its existence on the grace of the Mongol Khan. The Mongol court exiled several members of the Mongol imperial family, often the losers of court power struggles, to islands off the coast of Koryŏ, and one of the many members of the Mongol royal family exiled to Koryŏ was the future Khan Toghon Temür (Shundi) in 1330.<sup>7,60)</sup> This use of Koryŏ as a place of exile by the foreign state was unprecedented.

Prior to the Mongol empire, Koryŏ had faced powerful empires based in Manchuria (the Khitan and the Jin) and in China proper (Song). The Han Chinese and Manchurian states often clashed, and peace was established only with Chinese concessions such as those spelled out in the Treaty of Shanyuan.<sup>61)</sup> While Khitan or the Jin may have possessed suffi-

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55) *Koryŏsa*, 32:13a6-7.

56) Kim Kujin, "Wŏndae Yodong chibang ūi Koryŏ kunmin," pp. 471-473; David M. Robinson, *Empire's Twilight*, 29-32.

57) *Yuanshi*, 154:3627-3634, *Koryŏsa*, 34:4b1-3. See also Kim Kwangch'ŏl, "14 segi ch'ŏ Wŏn ūi chŏngguk tonghyang kwa Ch'ungsŏn wang ūi T'obŏn yubae," pp. 290-343.

58) *Koryŏsa*, 35:10b3-4.

59) *Koryŏsa*, 36:4a7-6b2, 36:28a5-6.

60) *Koryŏsa*, 29:14a4-5, 30:14b5-6, 30b8, 31a2-4, 36:4a5-6.

61) See David C. Wright, *From War to Diplomatic Parity in Eleventh-Century China* and Christian Schwarz-Schilling, *Der Friede von Shan-yuan (1005 n. Chr.): Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Chinesischen Diplomatie*.

cient military capability to pressure and defeat either the Song or Koryŏ, they were not strong enough to overcome them both simultaneously. Neither the Khitan nor the Jin ever launched simultaneous military campaigns against both the Song and Koryŏ. The Mongols also would find it necessary to subdue Koryŏ before they could complete their conquest of China. Koryŏ was regarded as the “vassal state” by both Chinese and Manchurian states, but in reality it had enjoyed complete autonomy. However, the Mongol control of Koryŏ was real, unprecedented and comprehensive. The degree of the Mongol domination over Koryŏ can be seen most clearly in the deposition and installation of Koryŏ kings. Everyone was clearly aware of the absolute power of the Mongol empire within Koryŏ.

After the Koryŏ's surrender, the official relations between Koryŏ and the Mongol Empire became unilateral. Koryŏ's relations with the Khitan, Song, and Jin had been based on reciprocity, but the Mongol court never sent formal embassies comparable to the Birthday Felicitation Embassies 生辰使 or the *Hengxuan*[*ci*]*shi* 橫宣[賜]使 from the Khitan and Jin.<sup>62)</sup> Koryŏ continued to send envoys on the occasions of the New Year, and birthdays of emperor, and it also required to send embassies on the occasion of the birthday of the imperial heir-apparent from 1308.1 and separate embassies for the birthday of Mongol empress from 1353.5.<sup>63)</sup>

The Mongol tribute demand was a drastic departure from the earlier period. Instead of one mostly symbolic tribute mission per year, the Mongol court demanded several tribute missions throughout the year as needed. The Mongols requisitioned from Koryŏ great quantities of gold, silver, silk, furs, paper, ginseng, and hawks and falcons that put the Koryŏ court in severe fiscal strain.<sup>64)</sup> Koryŏ was also forced to make military contributions including construction of warships and provision of supplies in the Mongol expeditions against Japan in 1274 and 1281.<sup>65)</sup>

62) Pak Hannam, “Koryŏ chŏn'gi 'Hoengsŏnsa' sogo,” 501-24.

63) *Koryŏ ŏsa*, 18:16b2-5, 32:33a7-8.

64) *Koryŏ ŏsa*, 27:39b3-4, 28:16b2-4, 24b1-5, 29a7-b2, 30:16b4-5, 18a8-9.

65) Morris Rossabi, “The Reign of Khubilai Khan,” *Cambridge History of China*, 6, 437-442. Kubilai may have been concerned by Japan's close maritime connections with Song China, against which the Mongols had been engaged in protracted warfare



While the records of the *Koryŏsa* are by no means complete, we can get some sense of the significant change in the nature and frequency of official embassies dispatched by the Koryŏ court. One of the most striking developments during the Mongol period is that the frequency of tribute missions increased almost eight-fold compared to the Khitan and Jin times (see the table below).

**TABLE: Frequency of Koryŏ Embassies to the Liao, Jin, and Mongol Empires [based on the *Koryŏsa*]**

To	Period (Total number of years)	Number of all missions	Per Year	Number of tribute missions	Per year
Khitan	907-1125 (210)	152	.72	26	.17
Jin	1115-1234 (120)	245	2.04	38	.16
Mongol	1260-1368 (109)	345	3.17	137	1.26

The Mongol court also regularly demanded human tribute of young women and eunuchs. Korean states' offering of the human tributes was not unprecedented.<sup>66)</sup> However, in those earlier cases in those cases, the tributes were not demanded by foreign states and had ultimately been declined. However, the human tributes during the Mongol period were exceptional. For the period of eighty years beginning in 1274, when the Mongol court first demanded 140 Koryŏ women for marriages to the surrendered Chinese troops, there are more than fifty records of the Mongol embassies that specifically concerned with the tribute of young woman in the *Koryŏsa*. Moreover, these records do not include individual cases of high Mongol officials separately requesting young women from the Koryŏ court.

Another striking example of the changed nature of the Mongol tribute system was personal attendance of Koryŏ kings at the Mongol court. In

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(Kawazoe Shoji, "Japan and East Asia," 396-411).

66) Both Silla in 631 and Koguryŏ in 646 had offered "beautiful women" to the Tang (*Samguk sagi*, 4:45, 21:197), and Koryŏ also sent "singing girls" to the Khitan in 995 (*Liaoshi*, 115:1520).

the late tenth and early eleventh centuries, the Khitan had demanded that the Koryŏ kings pay homage in person as one of the conditions for peaceful relations, but Kings Sŏngjong and Hyŏnjong both refused to comply even as such refusal invited renewed Khitan attacks. However, King Wŏnjong and his successors were forced to make frequent trips to the Mongol capital of Khanbaliq (Dadu), where they often stayed for several years at times. As a crown prince, the future King Wŏnjong was in China when King Kojong died in 1259.6, and he returned to assume the throne until 1260.3. The Mongols summoned the king to Shangdu in 1264, and King Wŏnjong became the first reigning king of Korea who presented himself at the foreign court.<sup>67)</sup> When Wŏnjong died in 1274.6, the crown prince and the future King Ch'ungnyŏl was serving as a hostage in Dadu. After returning to Koryŏ in 1274.8 to assume the throne, Ch'ungnyŏl made trips to Mongol capital in 1278.12 (1279.2) and 1280.8 (9). He made seven additional shorter trips to Mongol from 1285.4 to 1302.12, and the king often stayed away from his kingdom for more than a year at times.

King Ch'ungsŏn spent almost the entirety of his second reign (1308-1313) away from Koryŏ. The king had ascended to the throne in the eighth month of 1308, but he left for the Khanbaliq only three months later and never returned to his kingdom. The king had been keen to strengthen his personal ties with the Mongol imperial family and the best way to achieve such a goal was to stay close to the political center of the empire. After repeated requests by Koryŏ officials and the Mongol Khan's suggestion to return to Koryŏ, Ch'ungsŏn would rather abdicate the Koryŏ throne in favor of his son in 1313 than to return to Koryŏ. The next king, Ch'ungsuk also spent a great deal of time in the Mongol capital, and he was absent from Koryŏ for more than four years from the third month of 1321 to the fifth month of 1325. These examples of personal attendance by Koryŏ kings at the Mongol court dramatically illustrate the changed political situation in which the power of the Mongol court was almost absolute.

The power of the Mongol court within Koryŏ was also demonstrated

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67) *Koryŏsa*, 26:2a4-7.

symbolically in the practice of imperial bestowal of posthumous epithets for deceased Korean kings that began in 1310. The Koryŏ court could no longer present posthumous “temple name” for its deceased king using the characters “progenitor” 祖 and “ancestor” 宗. Instead, the title was bestowed by the Mongol court that used the character for “king” 王 with the character “loyal” 忠 added as a prefix to give expression to the spirit of loyalty with which the Koryŏ kings were to serve the Mongol court. The *Koryŏsa* explained the Mongol court’s bestowal of posthumous epithets,

In the beginning, even though we adopted the regnal titles of the Song, Liao, and Jin dynasties, we still used the character “chong 宗” (“ancestor”) in posthumous epithets of all our [deceased] kings. [However], [after] our [state] began serving the Yuan, moral obligations became stricter. As in the past when the feudal lords received posthumous epithets from the Chinese Han court, King Ch’ungsŏn sent a memorial [to the Mongol court] requesting an honorific title for the deceased king (King Ch’ungnyŏl) and posthumous epithets for Kings Kojong and Wŏnjong. [The Mongol court] sent a rescript granting [our request].<sup>68)</sup>

Kings Kojong and Wŏnjong had also been bestowed by the Mongol court the posthumous epithets,<sup>69)</sup> but they are recorded in the *Koryŏsa* by their temple names presented by the Koryŏ court. On the other hand, from King Ch’ungnyŏl on, no king was ever given a temple name from the Koryŏ court.<sup>70)</sup>

Likewise, terms relating to the king and his actions were also downgraded, including the royal first person pronoun, the mode of addressing the king, the term designating the crown prince, and the name for a royal decree. In 1276, King Ch’ungnyŏl was criticized by a Mongol daruhachi for the court’s presumptuous use of such terms as *sŏnji* 宣旨 [imperial decree], *Chim* 朕 (the term used by an emperor to refer to himself), and *sa* 赦 [imperial amnesty]. The term *sŏnji* had been changed only a year

68) *Koryŏsa*, 33:37a1-4.

69) *Koryŏsa*, 33:31a4-34b4.

70) Kings Kongmin and Kongyang both received posthumous titles from the Ming court.

earlier from the even more exalted term *sŏngji* 聖旨 in 1275.<sup>71)</sup> Under the Mongol court's pressure, King Ch'ungnyŏl had to make immediate changes. Apparently this issue had not been resolved, and in 1301.4 the Mongol court again warned Koryŏ regarding its "presumptuous" ritual s.<sup>72)</sup> In short, Koryŏ was required to demonstrate its symbolic subordination to the Mongol court by making changes in official language, rites, and institutions. The Three Chancelleries, Royal Secretariat, and the Six Boards were restructured, and their appellations were changed accordingly to reflect the lower status of the Koryŏ government vis-à-vis the Mongol court.<sup>73)</sup> These were all unprecedented developments in Koryŏ's relations with its neighboring states.

The incorporation of Koryŏ into the Mongol empire was formalized by the intermarriages between the two courts that established Koryŏ as the "son-in-law state" 駙馬國. While intermarriages between royal courts in premodern East Asia are not unprecedented and at times quite frequent, Koryŏ had never previously entered into intermarriages with foreign states.<sup>74)</sup> The royal intermarriages began when King Wŏnjong proposed marriage between his son (later King Ch'ungnyŏl) and the Cheguk Princess 齊國公主, daughter of the Great Khan Kubilai in 1270.<sup>75)</sup> The king was probably trying to strengthen the power of the throne by borrowing the power and prestige of the Mongol Khan. The reality of his weak royal position had been made painfully clear when the king himself had been dethroned in the previous year (1269) and restored to the throne only through Mongol intervention. The Kubilai Khan may have accepted the marriage proposal to fortify his control over the Koryŏ and to enlist active assistance from Koryŏ for the planned expedition against Japan.

King Ch'ungnyŏl married the Cheguk Princess in 1274.5,<sup>76)</sup> and a succession of Koryŏ kings subsequently took "princesses" of the Mongol im-

71) *Koryŏ ŏsa*, 28:11a4-5.

72) *Koryŏ ŏsa*, 32:3a8-9, b5-8.

73) *Koryŏ ŏsa*, 32:5a1-2.

74) One possible exception may have been the case of King Sŏngjong's marriage proposal to the Khitan court in 995.

75) *Koryŏ ŏsa*, 26:30a5-6.

76) *Koryŏ ŏsa*, 27:47b9-48a1.

perial house as their primary consorts. The princes born to Mongol queens would enjoy the rights of precedence in the succession to the throne. The Koryŏ king was no longer the independent ruler of his kingdom, and the royal lineage of Koryŏ kings as the successors of the dynastic founder no longer carried much political weight. The royal authority of Koryŏ kings now derived mostly from their personal relation to the Mongol imperial family, and King Ch'ungnyŏl himself would declare as much in 1301 that Koryŏ's existence depended on his marriage to the Mongol princess.<sup>77)</sup>

King Ch'ungnyŏl exploited his status as an imperial son-in-law to strengthen his power and prestige. The king appealed to the Mongol court specifically to include the characters “imperial son-in-law” 駙馬 in the official seal, and when the king's request was finally granted, the Mongol envoys, who heretofore had not shown much respect to the king, no longer dared to treat the king as their equal.<sup>78)</sup> In 1274 when a *daruhachi* in Kaegyŏng was reproached by a Mongol envoy for not showing proper respects to King Ch'ungnyŏl as an imperial son-in-law, he answered, “the [Mongol] princess is not present [here at the moment], and this has been the propriety followed during the reign of previous king (Wŏnjong).”<sup>79)</sup> Koryŏ kings acquired more political and social prestige and exercised more power as members of the Mongol imperial family than as the occupiers of the Koryŏ throne. Koryŏ kings grew up and spent many years at Dadu or Khanbaliq. They were at ease with the Mongol customs, and their behaviors show cultural preference of Mongol elites. This acceptance and popularity of the Mongol culture was also a new development in Koryŏ as the nomadic customs had previously been specifically rejected by King Taejo, the founder of the dynasty, who had admonished his successors not to copy foreign clothing and institutions including the Chinese and Khitans.<sup>80)</sup> However, during the Mongol period, hunting and falconry, favorite sports of the Mongols, became very popular activity at the Koryŏ court, and kings and high officials were also said to have been fond of

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77) *Koryŏ ŏsa*, 32:5a5.

78) *Koryŏ ŏsa*, 29:33a2-7.

79) *Koryŏ ŏsa*, 28:2a6-b2

80) *Koryŏ ŏsa*, 2:15b4-7.

both the Mongol music and dance.<sup>81)</sup> For Koryŏ kings, the power and prestige bestowed by the Mongol court was a double-edged sword. They could not control their Mongol consorts, who were effectively the Mongol representative at the court.<sup>82)</sup> It was said that Princess Cheguk was known to have behaved insolently and even a trifle inner palace incident caused by jealousy of a Mongol princess, as in the case of King Ch'ungsŏn's private troubles with the Princess Kyeguk, developed into a serious problem and ultimately led to his deposition.

King Ch'ungsŏn, who held concurrently the titles of the king of Koryŏ and the King of Shenyang 瀋陽王 in addition to other official posts at the Mongol court, was indeed a scion of the Mongol imperial family who had been granted a kingship of outlying lands of the Empire due to his personal connection to the Mongol imperial family. The nature of the Koryŏ throne had changed fundamentally after the surrender and submission to the Mongols. Koryŏ kings were able to sustain and strengthen their power and prestige only by becoming the new members of the Mongol imperial family. The royal families of Koryŏ and the Mongol were tied so closely together that any attempt to overthrow the Mongol domination could not have been expected. It may not be a coincidence that King Kongmin, who was not born of a Mongol mother, was the one who finally broke away from the Mongol rule.

In many aspects, the Koryŏ-Mongol relations show that they differed fundamentally from the earlier patterns of the "tribute relations" in East Asia. The drastic change in official relations after Koryŏ's surrender to the Mongols was clearly perceived by the late Koryŏ officials. Yi Chehyŏn, a famous scholar and leading figure of late Koryŏ, wrote that the policy of "serving the great 事大" really began with the Mongol court.<sup>83)</sup> The imperial authority or the power of the suzerain had mostly been symbolic and nominal prior to the Mongol period, but the power of the Mongol Khan reigned supreme within Koryŏ. Koryŏ kings had to take on additional titles and duties as the member of the imperial family [imperial "son-in-law"] and the formal head of the Eastern Expedition Field

81) *Koryŏ ŏsa*, 43:23a3-4, 134:19a9, 137:11b1, 12a2-3.

82) Louis Hambis, "Notes sur l'histoire de Corée à l'époque Mongole," 178-212.

83) *Tongmunŏn*, 62:11a3-5; *Yŏgyong p'aesŏl*, chŏn, 1:10a6, 15b7-8.

Headquarters. The political legacy of the Mongol Empire in Koryŏ was likely much stronger and more comprehensive what is reflected in historical sources or appreciated by historians. Even the deposition of the last Koryŏ king, while nicely couched in Confucian rhetoric, was probably related more to the experience from the period of Mongol domination.

#### IV. Conclusion

The Han Chinese tradition perceived the world hierarchically, and this hierarchy was built on ethnocentric, cultural and spatial thinking. However, this worldview underwent several major changes throughout history. The Chinese frontier policy was shaped largely from a defensive and culturalist approach based on Confucian ideals. Moreover, the so-called Chinese culture was an amalgam of many cultural tradition that included elements from other non-Chinese cultures. In fact, many and diverse options taken by the Chinese dynasties in designing their relation with neighboring states and peoples clearly show the fluidity and indeterminacy of the Han Chinese worldview.

When the Han Chinese came under the rule of alien regimes, they sought their identity in cultural superiority as manifested in the sinicization of conquerors. However, in the later periods, the spatial dimension of the Chinese worldview also became increasingly important, especially when non-Chinese peoples ruled China. Chinese could accept the foreign conquest dynasties as legitimate successors of Chinese civilization only by downplaying the ethnic element in Chinese culture. The Mongols had placed the Han Chinese at the bottom of its social stratum, and this must have stifled any remaining sense of Chinese ethnocentrism. By the mid-fourteenth century, when the Han Chinese people overthrew the Mongol empire in China, it was expected that there was a strong urge for the Chinese to return to their ethnocentrism. Indeed, the Ming dynasty once again used the term “barbarian” to refer to foreigners. However, the Ming official historians accepted the Yuan dynasty as a legitimate power in Chinese history, and the non-Chinese people were placed in the linear development of Chinese polity and culture in China.

Before the Mongol Yuan period, Northeast Asian interstate relations were based on multi-centered geopolitical configurations among the states in China, Manchuria, and the Korean Peninsula. Each state sought to maintain their autonomy and prevent the rise of a hegemonic power. Frequent shifts in political and military alliances illustrate that realism and pragmatism dictated foreign policies of each state. The main policy objective of the Khitan and the Jin toward Koryŏ appears to have been the security of the border region, and they sought to maintain peaceful relations with Koryŏ. They only required Koryŏ to acknowledge the nominal acceptance of their superior status confirmed by presentation of token amounts of “tributes.”

The framework of geopolitical triangular interstate relations in Northeast Asia involving Manchurian, Korean and Chinese centers allows us to view the “typical” Ming-Qing tribute system and the modern interactions with the West in a more comprehensive useful perspective. Scholars have often underestimated the capacity of East Asian states to adapt to new and changed international setting, and instead they have pointed to the supposed rigidity of the system as responsible for China and Korea’s failure in the face of Western imperialism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The pattern of East Asian interstate relations did not remain constant or rigid, and the “tribute system” evolved and signified different patterns in different periods. Even as they seemed to have followed the ritualized form of the tribute system, the Khitan, Jurchen, and Mongol empires had different priorities and their policies toward Koryŏ were different.

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