Transition under Ambiguity: Koryŏ-Mongol Relations around 1260

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Introduction

The rise and expansion of the Mongol empire in the first half of the thirteenth century¹ created a serious crisis in the tributary (冊封-朝貢) system, which had been providing a feasible framework for five hundred years for exchange between the mainland regimes like the Tang, Song, Khitan Liao and Jurchen Jin, and those on the Korean Peninsula including the Silla and Koryŏ, which allowed the latter *de facto* independence while ritually recognizing the suzerainty of the former.²

Despite the Koryŏ's efforts for continuing the tributary system, the Mongols, imposing its own policies on the newly subjected countries, kept requiring the Koryŏ to fulfill a set of demands, or the "Six Obligations"

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- 1 For convenience, this article uses the Gregorian calendar for year, avoiding the complicated reign titles or posthumous titles in the traditional way of numbering years used in China and Korea, and the lunar calendar for month and day. This may be inaccurate at the turn of the year, but will not cause true misunderstanding.
- 2 Han Sheng, *Dongya Shijie Xingcheng Shilun (Studies on the Formation of the East Asian World)* (Shanghai: Fudan University Press, 2009), 273-74, 280-2. Wei Zhijiang, *Zhong Han Guanxi Shi Yanjiu (Studies on the Sino-Korean Relations)* (Guangzhou: Sun Yat-sen University Press, 2006), 28-32, 47-50, 91-100.

(六事).³ This confrontation led to more than forty years of war until the enthronement of Qubilai in 1260, the fifth Qahan of the Mongol empire, when the terms, symbols, ideas and other elements of the tributary system were reintroduced into the relations between the Mongols and Koryŏ, and therefore the tenor of the bilateral relationship changed from war to diplomacy.⁴

How could this transition have happened? So far, historians have attributed this to Qubilai's personal preference to *Han*(漢)-Chinese culture and/or his private friendship with the Koryŏ king Wŏnjong (元宗).⁵

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- 3 The "Six Obligations" is a symbolic statement containing usually six but sometimes five or seven items of which the specific contents may vary partially in different situations. Cf. Matsui Dai, "Mongoru Jidai Uigurisutan no Zeiyaku Seido to Chōzei Shisutemu (Taxation and Tax-collecting Systems in Uiguristan under Mongol Rule)," in *Hikoku tō Shiryō no Sōgō teki Bunseki niyoru Mongoru Teikoku-Genchō no Seiji Keizai Shisutemu no Kiso teki Kenkyū* (Research on Political and Economic Systems under Mongol Rule), ed. Matsuda Kōichi (Report of the Scientific Research Project Grant-in-Aid JSPS, Basic Research (B)(1), 2002), 87-8. As for the Koryŏ, the Six Obligations usually means to accept *daruqaci* (達魯花赤, Mongol supervisor), establish *jams* (站, postal and logistic stations), supply troops, provide provisions, submit household registers, and send a hostage-prince. Cf. Yi Kaesŏk, "Yŏ-Mong Hyŏngje Maengyak kwa Ch'ogi Yŏ-Mong Kwangye ūi Sŏnggyŏk (The Koryŏ-Mongol Brotherhood Covenant and the Nature of the Early Koryŏ-Mongol Relationship)," *Taegu Sahak* 101 (November 2010): 81-132.
 - 4 Chen Dezhi, "Hubilie de Gaoli Zhengce yu Yuan-Li Guanxi de Zhuanzhe Dian (Qubilai's Policies toward the Koryŏ and the Turning Point of the Yuan-Koryŏ Relationship)," *Yuanshi ji Minzu yu Bianjiang Yanjiu Jikan* 24 (2012): 72-7. Wuyun Gaowa, *Yuanchao yu Gaoli Guanxi Yanjiu* (Studies on the Yuan-Koryŏ Relationship) (Lanzhou: Lanzhou University Press, 2011), 62-7.
 - 5 Chen, "Hubilie de Gaoli Zhengce yu Yuan-Li Guanxi de Zhuanzhe Dian," 72-3. Wuyun Gaowa, "Hubilie yu Gaoli Shizi Tian de Huijian ji Gaoli Huan Jiudu (The Meeting of Qubilai and the Crown Prince Jŏn of the Koryŏ and the Koryŏ's Return to the Old Capital)," *Ouya Xuekan* 9 (2009): 299-300. No Kyehyŏn, *Koryŏ Oegyo Sa* (A History of the Diplomacy of Koryŏ), trans. Zi Jing and Jin Rongguo (Yanji: Yanbian University Press, 2002), 319. Morris Rossabi, *Khubilai Khan: His Life and Times* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press,

However, this explanation cannot answer the following questions: How and why did Qubilai accept ideas that were completely alien to his native nomadic tradition? And why were the Mongol's policies toward the Koryŏ highly unstable and inconsistent during and after the 1260s?⁶ Was Qubilai's preference or character really so changeable?

I would propose that a methodological change is in need. Present narratives of this transition have been based on the records of official histories including the *Yuan Shi* (元史) and the *KoryŏSa* (高麗史), especially the annals (本紀/世家) that as a genre tend to bring about images of emperors or kings as omnipotent. Thus, a de-Qubilai-centered analysis is necessary here, which further requires us to pay more attention to sources other than official histories.

It's commonly known that Qubilai was the first Mongol Qahan to recruit Confucian scholars on a large scale from North China for his think tank.⁷ They had extensively influenced many aspects of policy in the early period of Qubilai's reign.⁸ But scarce attention has been paid to

1988), 96-7.

- 6 Cf. Jiang Feifei and Wang Xiaofu, *Zhong Han Guanxi Shi: Gudai Juan (A History of the Sino-Korean Relations: Ancient Times)* (Beijing: Sheke Wenxian Press, 1998), 231-3; Yi Yigju, "Koryŏ-Monggol Kwangye yesŏ Poinŭn Ch'aegbong-Chogong Kwangye Yoso ūi T'amsaek (Explorations of the Tributary Elements in the Koryŏ-Mongol Relations)," in *13-14 Segi Koryŏ-Monggol Kwangye T'amgu (Studies on the Koryŏ-Mongol Relations in 13-14 centuries)*, ed. Northeast Asian History Foundation and Institute for Studies on Korea-China Exchanges of Kyungpook University (Seoul: Northeast Asian History Foundation, 2011), 53-91.
- 7 Xiao Qiqing, "Hubilie Qiandi Jiulü Kao (Notes on the Old Companions in Qubilai's Latent Court)," in *Nei Beiguo er Wai Zhongguo: Mengyuan-shi Yanjiu (Northern Country as Internal and Central Country as External: Studies on the Mongol-Yuan History)* (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 2007), 113-43.
- 8 Their influence was so significant that in or some time around 1268, some Mongol kings in inner Asia sent envoys to Qubilai questioning that, "our dynasty has a tradition different from the way of the Han people. Why do you stay in their land, establish a new capital with walls, and adopt the etiquette and institutions of their way (本朝舊俗與漢法異, 今留漢地, 建都邑城郭, 儀文制度遵用漢法, 其故何

how they were involved in Mongol-Koryŏ interactions. A letter written by a Koryŏ minister Kim Ku (金圻) has connected Koryŏ with this political group in Qubilai's court, thus providing us with a new standpoint for observing the transition mentioned above. Thus, we begin our discussions from this letter and see how they interacted and shaped the history of Northeast Asia around 1260.

Kim Ku and the Letter to Scholar Zhang

Kim Ku (1211-1278) was born in Puryŏng (扶寧) county and started his political career at the age of twenty-two by passing the civil service examination. In 1240, he travelled as a member of a Koryŏ mission to visit the Mongols. During the Koryŏ king Wŏnjong's reign, Kim Ku served as the Affair Managing Vice-director of the Secretariat (中書侍郎平章事) until his retirement. Because of his political experience and great talent for writing in Chinese, Kim Ku had been in charge of composing diplomatic documents,⁹ including the Letter to Scholar Zhang (hereafter the Letter) discussed here.¹⁰

The Letter was written on behalf of the Koryŏ king Wŏnjong (元宗),

如)?" YS.125.3073. However, from the middle of Qubilai's reign, the scholar-ministers' prominence was gradually taken over by specialists of especially finance. Yao Dali, *Meng-Yuan Zhidu yu Zhengzhi Wenhua* (*The Institutions and Political Culture in the Mongol-Yuan Period*) (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2012), 400-401.

9 KRS 106.12a-14a. "Kim Ku Myoji (金圻墓誌, The Epitaph of Kim Ku)," in *Koryŏ Myojimiyŏng Chibŏsŏng* (高麗墓誌銘集成, *A Complete Collection of the Epitaphs of the Koryŏ Times*), ed. Kim Yongsŏn (金龍善) (Ch'unch'ŏn: Hallym University Press 翰林大學校出版部, 1993), 395-6. Yun Yonghyŏk, "Chip'o Kim Ku ŭi Oegyo Hwardong kwa Tae-Mong Yinsik (The Diplomatic Activities of Kim Ku, the Scholar Chip'o, and His Knowledges of the Mongol)," *Chŏnbuk Sahak* 40 (April 2012): 5-31.

10 For the full texts of this letter, see Kim Ku (金圻), "Yŏ Chang Haksa Sŏ (與張學士

named Wang Chǒn (王僊). Leaving out the greeting words at the beginning, the texts could be divided into three parts. The first part commends the merits and achievements of the addressee Scholar Zhang, comparing him with the noted Confucian scholar Shusun Tong (叔孫通), who had established the court etiquette for the emperor Gaozu (高祖) of the newly founded Han dynasty in 200 BC. The second part of the Letter appreciates Scholar Zhang for his help during Wang Chǒn's "audience with the emperor (親朝)" in North China, and his contributions to the Mongol's cherishing policies toward the Koryŏ after Wang Chǒn's "return to his own country (還國)".

This indicates that Scholar Zhang was undoubtedly a Chinese Confucian scholar who was very close to Qubilai and to the center of power in the Mongol empire. In extant sources, two of Qubilai's scholar-ministers could fit the descriptions, namely Zhang Yi (張易) and Zhang Wenqian (張文謙), both of whom served as secretaries (*bicigci* in Mongolian) for Qubilai before his enthronement. Zhang Yi was appointed the Executive Official Participant of the Secretariat (參知政事) when the new Qahan ascended the throne in 1260,¹¹ and Zhang Wenqian the Left Executive Assistant of the Secretariat (中書左丞).¹² Evidence suggests that Zhang Wenqian had been dispatched for some military task, thus had no chance to meet Wang Chǒn during his sojourn in North China.¹³ So, Zhang Yi

書, The Letter to Scholar Zhang)," in *Chip'o Sŏnsaeng Munjip* (止浦先生文集, *The Collected Works of the Scholar Chip'o*), vol.11, Hanguk Yŏgdae Munjip Ch'onggan (韓國歷代文集叢刊)(Seoul: Kyŏngin Munhwa Sa 景仁文化社, 1993), 371-3.

11 Mao Haiming and Zhang Fan, "Yuan Zhongyi ji Zhang Yi Kao (Yuan Zhongyi is Zhang Yi)," *Wen Shi* 1 (2015): 199-217.

12 Li Qian (李謙), "Zhongshu Zuocheng Zhang-gong Shendao-bei (中書左丞張公神道碑, The Holy Way Inscription of the Left Executive Assistant of the Secretariat Zhang)," in *Guochao Wenlei* (國朝文類, *The Compilation of Our Dynasty's Literary Works*), ed. Su Tianjue (蘇天爵), vol.58, Sibu Congkan Chubian (四部叢刊初編), Shanghai: Commercial Press (商務印書館), 1920, 9a-11b. YS157.3695-6.

13 YS 159.3739. YS 4.63. Yang Liang (楊亮) and Zhong Yanfei (鐘彥飛), ed.,

was more likely to be Scholar Zhang. In fact, he had an even higher status in Qubilai's court.¹⁴

The third part is the main concern of this letter and it says,

“People of the *Samhan* (三韓) are extremely grateful, hoping for a new life. Following the edicts [from Qubilai], they have started moving back to the old capital and building houses. But the old capital has been abandoned for nearly thirty years. Trees and weeds have to be removed before new palaces and houses can be constructed. This takes time, so it's still desolate there. How will the [Mongol] envoys report after seeing this? It is very worrying. We hope your Excellency will understand the true situation, grant us your compassion, and thus enable our little state to serve [the great] forever.”¹⁵

Facing the intrusions of the Mongol troops, the Koryŏ court together with the people in the old capital Kaegyŏng (開京) all moved onto the Kanghwa (江華) island off the eastern coast of the peninsula in 1232. For the next forty years, the Mongols kept requiring the Koryŏ court to move back. This was the so called “return-to-mainland (出陸)” issue.¹⁶

Although evidence indicates that Wang Chŏn had promised returning to the mainland before his return from North China,¹⁷ he certainly would not like to do it at that point. On the twenty-ninth day of the fourth lunar month of 1260, Wang Chŏn sent another mission led by the Duke Yŏng-

Wangyun Quanji Huijiao (王惲全集匯校, *The Complete Works of Wang Yun*) (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju 中華書局, 2013), 3616-7, 3486-7.

14 Mao and Zhang, “Yuan Zhongyi ji Zhang Yi Kao,” 214-5.

15 “三韓百姓悉深感戴，有望于更生，一依詔旨，已于古京營葺出居。但古京之荒廢垂三十年，殿宇家戶，須芟刈草木而新之，故不可立就，諒為蕭條。其比來諸官之見，將謂何以往奏耶。徒增閔望耳。伏望閣下，的知情實，益軫矜慈，使小邦永永供職。” Kim, “Yŏ Chang Haksa Sŏ,” 372-3.

16 KRS 23.27a.

17 KRS 25.17a.

an (永安公) named Wang Hǔi (王僖) whose ritual task was to attend a ceremony for Qubilai's enthronement, while the real task was to seek the Mongol's allowance for postponement of return-to-the-mainland. It was precisely for the latter purpose that the Letter, together with a petition to Qubilai, had been carried by Wang Hǔi to Kaiping (開平), the vice-capital of the Yuan dynasty.¹⁸ It's quite clear that Wang Chǒn believed Scholar Zhang to be the one willing and capable to lend a hand based on his experience with this person before. Therefore, we should firstly have a look at Wang Chǒn's journey to North China.

Wang Chǒn's Journey to North China

To have an audience with Qahan was one of the Mongol's conventional requirements of the leaders of all the newly subjected forces or states. The Koryŏ had declined this for many years, but after a coup in 1258 successfully toppled the military clan of Ch'oe (崔氏), which was the real controller of the state for more than half a century and was obstinately hostile to the Mongols,¹⁹ the "crown prince (世子)" named Wang Chǒn was finally sent to the Mongols to seek peace.²⁰

The mission set out in the fourth lunar month of 1259, went by way of Yanjing (燕京) and Tongguan (潼關) toward today's Sichuan province in

18 The Letter quotes from two Mongol edicts, which helps us confirm its date. One of the Mongol edicts was delivered on the ninth day of the fourth lunar month of 1260, the other fifteen days later. KRS 25.11a, 12a. YS 208.4610-4612. KRS 25.13a-13b. The editor of *Chip'o Sŏnsaeng Munjip* has already suggested the connection between the Letter and the Wang Hǔi mission but gives no evidence. For the petition to Qubilai, see KRS25.15b.

19 About the clan of Ch'oe and its collapse, see Kang Chaegwang, "Ch'oe Ŭi Chŏnggwŏn ŭi Taemong Hwaŭinon Suyong kwa Ch'oessi Chŏnggwŏn ŭi Punggoe (The Collapse of Ch'oe Clan's Political Power due to Acceptation of Peace Negotiations with Mongol)," *Hanguk Chungse Sa Yongu* 28 (April 2010): 521-56.

20 KRS 24.41b.

Southwest China where Möngke Qahan was commanding a massive attack on the Southern Song (Map 1). When they had just arrived at the Liupan Mountain (六盤山), Möngke died at the battlefield. His two younger brothers, Qubilai and Ariqbökö, both started mobilizing troops and fighting over the throne. Liupan had soon fallen into control of pro-Ariqbökö forces. However, the Koryŏ mission made an extraordinary decision. They moved eastwards, met with Qubilai at Bianliang (汴梁), a midway city of Qubilai's northward march from the Mongol-Song battlefield near Ezhou (鄂州), and followed him to Yanjing. At that point, the Koryŏ king Kojong (高宗)'s death was heard. Wang Chŏn was then escorted back by the Mongol troops and assumed the throne.

Map 1. Wang Chŏn's Journey and the Political Situation in North China, 1259-1260

One of the key reasons that the Koryŏ mission turned to Qubilai so quickly and firmly was their contacts with pro-Qubilai forces, especially the Confucian scholars in North China. In Yanjing, one of the core scholar-staffs of Qubilai named Hao Jing (郝經) wrote down his observations on the mission:

“(They) walked through the market (of slaves from the Koryŏ), all covering their faces and crying; the cries, so loud and miserable, pierced the ears of the Yenjing people.”²¹

In Jingzhao (京兆), Wang Chǒn was invited by a “land governor (守土者)” to bathe in a hot spring at the Huaqing Palace (華清宮). But Wang Chǒn said it had been the bathing spot of the Emperor Ming (明皇) of the Tang dynasty and as a prince of a vassal state he could not cross over. Therefore, he was admired as “knowing the rites (知禮).”²² The land governor here was no doubt pro-Qubilai because Jingzhao had been bestowed to Qubilai since 1253 as part of his share (*qubi*) of the Mongol empire. And the audience who could understand the reference to the Emperor Ming and comment to others about “knowing rites” surely had an educational background in Confucianism.

During Möngke’s reign, the Liupan Mountain was an important base for the Mongol’s military actions in Southwest China. Qubilai had stayed here for about three years in all before and after his conquering Dali (大理) in 1253.²³ Consequently, pro-Qubilai forces existed in this area. Yelü Zhu (耶律鑄), a prominent scholar-minister in the Mongol court, aban-

21 “掩面過市眾皆哭，哭聲痛入燕人耳。” Hao Jing (郝經), “Gaoli Tan (高麗歎, A Sigh for the Koryŏ),” in *Hao Wenzhong-gong Lingchuan Wenji* (郝文忠公陵川文集, *The Collected Works of Hao of Lingchuan with the Posthumous Title Wenzhong*), Beijing Tushuguan Guji Zhenben Congkan (北京圖書館古籍珍本叢刊), no.91 (Beijing: Shumu Wenxian Press 書目文獻出版社, 1998), 566.

22 KRS 25.8b.

23 Yao Sui (姚燧), “Yanli-si Bei (延釐寺碑, The Inscription of the Yanli Temple),” *Guochao Wenlei*, vol.22, 8a.

doned his wives and sons and escaped from Liupan to Qubilai upon arrival of the pro-Ariqbökö troops.²⁴ The Koryŏ mission was also among those promptly evacuating Liupan.

Wang Chŏn had not stayed with Qubilai for a very long time. Extant records on the relevant dates are somewhat confusing,²⁵ so some discussion is necessary here. Qubilai set out from the battlefield at Ezhou on the second day of the leap eleventh lunar month of 1259 and arrived at Yanjing on the twentieth day of the same month.²⁶ According to the distance, his first meeting with Wang Chŏn at Bianliang must have occurred at some time around the tenth day of that month. On the other side, Wang Chŏn arrived at Kaegyŏng on the seventeenth day of the third lunar month of 1260, and Kanghwa three days later. Before that, he had stayed at Sŏgyŏng (西京) for eight or nine days.²⁷ If these records are reliable, Wang Chŏn had to leave Yanjing no later than the beginning of the second lunar month of 1260.²⁸ So the total duration for him accompanying

24 Sun Meng, "Beijing Chutu Yelü Zhu Muzhi Jiqi Shixi Jiazuo Chengyuan Kaolue (The Epitaph of Yelü Zhu Unearthed in Beijing and the Lineage and Members of His Family)", *Zhongguo Guojia Bowuguan Guankan* 3 (2012): 49-55.

25 Chen, "Hubilie de Gaoli Zhengce yu Yuan-Li Guanxi de Zhuanzhe Dian," 73.

26 YS 4.63.

27 KRS 25.7a-8a.

28 In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the journey from Kanghwa to Yanjing usually took at least one month. The Wang Hŭi mission in 1260, the Wang Sim mission in 1261, and the Yi Sŭnghyu mission in 1273 all took more than 40 days. KRS 25.13b, 21b. YS 4.67. Wang Yun (王惲), "Zhongtang Shiji (中堂事記, The Work Diary in the Central Secretariat Office)," in *Wangyun Quanji Huijiao*, vol. 8, 3401. Yi Sŭnghyu (李承休), "Pinwangnok Pyŏng Sŏ (賓王錄並序, The Records of Visiting the Emperor with a Preface)," in *Hanguo Wenji Zhong de Mengyuan Shiliao* (韓國文集中的蒙元史料, *The Sources for the Mongol-Yuan History from the Korean Literatures*), ed. Du Honggang (杜宏剛), Qiu Ruizhong (邱瑞中) and Cui Changyuan (崔昌源) (Guilin: Guangxi Normal University Press 廣西師範大學出版社, 2004), 98-101. The record in KRS (25.9a) saying that Wang Jŏn followed Qubilai to Kaiping is unreliable. Qubilai arrived at Kaiping on the first day of the third lunar month of 1260 (YS 4.63). But according to the discussions above,

Qubilai was about three months, namely from the middle of the leap eleventh lunar month of 1259 to the beginning of the second lunar month of 1260.

Three months were not long enough for establishing any true friendship between Wang Chǒn and Qubilai, especially when the two could not even communicate directly. Fortunately, the Mongol empire at that point was undergoing fundamental changes. After more than fifty years of war and slaughter, the Confucian scholars in North China had finally found a potential Mongol ruler willing to learn and adopt some Confucian ideologies and practices. Most of the scholar-ministers in Qubilai's court shared a political agenda of "acquiring the emperor and going the way (得君行道)," which means to educate the ruler with Confucianism, and enthrone him, thus creating a world of peace.²⁹ Now Qubilai was prevailing in the contest for the throne and things could not be more encouraging. Certainly, Wang Chǒn had a sense of this political atmosphere, so the Letter says that, "[now is] the moment that occurs only once in a thousand years for ceasing war and cultivating civilization."³⁰

In fact, Qubilai at first didn't realize the value of Wang Chǒn. But one of his scholar-staffs named Zhao Liangbi (趙良弼) suggested the following:

Wang Jǒn had to depart from Yanjing no later than the beginning of the second lunar month of that year or it will be impossible for him to arrive at Kaghwa on the time recorded in KRS.

29 Xiao, "Hubilie Qiandi Jiulü Kao," 113-43.YS 157.3688-92. Xu Heng (許衡), "Shiwu Wu Shi (時務五事, Five Notes on Current Affairs)," in *Xuheng Ji (許衡集, The Collected Works of Xu Heng)*, ed. Wang Chengru (王成儒) (Shanghai: Dongfang Press 東方出版社, 2007), 171-9. YS 163.3824-5.

30 "千載一時偃武修文之際。" Kim, "Yǒ Chang Haksa Sǒ," 372. For a frank expression on the political environment at that point by a Confucian scholar in North China, see Hao Jing (郝經), "Zai Yu Songguo Chengxiang Shu (再與宋國丞相書, The Second Letter to the Prime Minister of the Song)," in *Hao Wenzhong-gong Lingchuan Wenji*, 828. Cf. YS 157.3688.

“[The crown prince of Koryŏ] has stayed here for two years. The treatment is not good enough to cherish his heart. Once going back, he will never come again. [We] could provide him with a good house and food, and treat him like a real vassal king. His father is said to be dead. If we invest him with the kingship [of Koryŏ] and escort him back, he must be grateful and willing to perform the duties of a vassal. This is to acquire a state without using any soldiers.”³¹

Another scholar-staff named Lian Xixian (廉希憲) had made a similar suggestion.³² The Letter tells that Scholar Zhang also made contributions on this issue, so Qubilai promptly, “resettled (Wang Chŏn) in splendid houses and comforted (him) with elegant music.”³³ Besides, the Letter says that Scholar Zhang, “exhaustively reported our situations and facts [to Qubilai],”³⁴ which indicates that it was the scholar-ministers who had mediated the communication between the Koryŏ mission and Qubilai.

The Letter further tells that it was Scholar Zhang’s protection that “suppressed all slanderous words.”³⁵ Two cases of “slanderous words” are recorded in the *KoryŏSa*. In Yanjing, a son of a former high official of Koryŏ named Hong Pogwŏn (洪福源) who had defected to the Mongols about forty years before accused the Koryŏ in 1259 of cheating the Qahan.³⁶ Later in the first lunar month of 1260 another Koryŏ official defected to the Mongols and again accused Koryŏ of the same offence.³⁷ Besides, in Qubilai’s court there were still opinions insisting on military

31 “(高麗世子)留滯者二年矣。供張疎薄，無以懷輯其心，一旦得歸，將不復來。宜厚其館穀，待以藩王之禮。今聞其父已死，誠能立僂為王，遣送還國，必感恩戴德，願修臣職。是不勞一卒而得一國也。” KRS 25.9a-9b.

32 YS 4.63. YS 126.3087. KRS 25.9b.

33 “館我以華邸，慰我以雅樂。” Kim, “Yŏ Chang Haksa Sŏ,” 372.

34 “以吾情實委悉敷奏。” Kim, “Yŏ Chang Haksa Sŏ,” 372.

35 “讒說一皆禁沮。” Kim, “Yŏ Chang Haksa Sŏ,” 372.

36 YS 154.3627-8. KRS 23.27a. KRS 90.8b-9a. KRS 130.3b-5b.

37 KRS 25.5b. KRS 130.32b-33a.

conquest. It was the scholar-ministers including Scholar Zhang who had refuted those accusations and opinions before the Qahan.

Therefore, Wang Chǒn's being escorted back should be understood as a policy proposed by the scholar-ministers rather than any personal preference of Qubilai himself.³⁸ In an important memorial, Hao Jing once advised Qubilai that, "peace of civilization (文致太平)" not only was good for the people and state but also could "unify all under heaven (天下可一)." ³⁹ To acquire Koryŏ by investing Wang Chǒn was exactly an application of this theory.

The Wang Hŭi mission and the return-to-mainland issue

The Koryŏ court expecting to continue at least semi-independence insisted on withdrawal of Mongol troops as a precondition for returning-to-the-mainland,⁴⁰ even after the power of the Ch'oe clan was overturned. In the twelfth lunar month of 1258, a small mission led by Pak Hŭisil (朴希實) was sent to the Mongols to notify them of the death of Ch'oe Ŭi and the coming visit of Wang Chǒn and also to petition to Möngke that, "although we would like to obey the Great's orders, the troops of heaven (天兵) are suppressing the land, so we dare not move out, like a mouse in the

38 Koryŏ sources of a later time tend to exaggerate the value of Wang Jǒn's visit for Qubilai's contest for the throne. Cf. Yi Chehyŏn (李齊賢), "Sang Chǒngdongsŏng Sŏ (上征東省書, The Memorial to the Province of Eastern Expedition)," "Tong Ch'oe Songp'a Chŭng Wŏn Nangjung Sŏ (同崔松坡贈元郎中書, The Letter to the Councilor Won with Ch'oe Songp'a)," in *Yigjae Sŏnsaeng Munjip* (益齋先生文集, *The Collected Works of the Scholar Yigjae*), vol.13, Hanguk Yŏgdæ Munjip Ch'onggan, 34 and 314. But earlier sources like KRS has no such appraisal. See KRS 25.9a.

39 Hao Jing (郝經), "Si Zhi Lun (思治論, A Memorial on the Popular Longings for Peace)," in *Hao Wenzhong-gong Lingchuan Wenji*, 642. Cf. Wang, "Zhongtang Shiji", 3401.

40 KRS 24.39b. Cf. KRS 24.11b.

hole watched by a cat outside.”⁴¹ But Möngke’s reply revealed his uncompromising stance for having a military stationed on the peninsula and for full submission of Koryŏ.

If you are truly on our side, why are you afraid of our troops? Moreover, the land to the north of Sŏgyŏng had been garrisoned by our troops before. If you move out of the island quickly, I will at the most order them not to intrude. The crown prince can go back with you if he is still in your territory. Let him come to me alone if he is already on our land.⁴²

For Möngke, it was a matter of course that the Mongol troops should garrison in Koryŏ. Otherwise, the visit of the crown prince would be of no use and thus unnecessary. The military arrangement had not been agreed upon yet, so to move out of Kanghwa island or not would still be a secondary issue.

However, things changed after Wang Chŏn’s assumption of the throne. For whatever reason, two new edicts from the Mongols made big concessions declaring that (1) the Koryŏ could have its territory restored, provided it promised to “be an eastern *fan* (藩, vassal, literally fence) forever”; (2) the Mongol troops would be gathered and later withdrawn; (3) all the anti-Mongol forces in Koryŏ would be amnestied; and (4) all the Koryŏ captives would be released.⁴³ These policies were indeed much more friendly compared to those under previous Qahans and thus ended the military tension, at least ostensibly, which immediately brought the return-to-mainland issue to the top of the political agenda.

41 “即欲出水就陸以聽上國之命，而天兵壓境，譬之穴鼠為貓所守，不敢出耳。” KRS24.39b.

42 “爾等既欲與我同心，何憚我兵駐爾境。且西京以外嘗為我兵駐處，爾國若速出島，第勿令侵擾耳。世子之行，不出爾國，則可與俱還。如入吾地，其以單騎來朝。” KRS 25.2b.

43 KRS 25.10b-13b.

Both sides understood that the stationing of the Koryŏ court on Kanghwa island was not only a result of pressure but also a symbol of hostility and resistance. In response to the accusation from the Mongols of “unyielding (未臣服)”, Koryŏ said that they always served the Mongols and “nothing seems violating but that we, fearing the might of the Great, moved onto this island some days ago.”⁴⁴ An edict delivered in the fourth lunar month of 1260 from the Mongols euphemistically urged that “[return-to-mainland] is what I am glad to see. Now is the time for cultivation. Do not delay or miss the start of a year’s work.”⁴⁵ At the same time, Saridai (東里大), the general commander in charge of escorting Wang Chŏn back, was still on Kanghwa island and kept urging and threatening him. At least three relevant conversations in 1260 are recorded in the *KoryŏSa*.

“(On the twenty-eighth day of the third lunar month, Saridai met Wang Chŏn and said:) ‘I really appreciate your hospitality. But it is not for eating and drinking on this island that King Qubilai has sent me. What will you do?’ The king had nothing to reply.”⁴⁶

“(On the fourteenth day of the sixth lunar month, Saridai met a Koryŏ official named Kim Pojŏng 金寶鼎 and said:) ‘On the eve of your king’s return, he told the Qahan that he would move back to Songgyŏng (= Kaegyŏng) upon arriving at Kanghwa island. Now several months have passed, why has he not done anything? How many heads do you have? I have only one, so I’m very worried. There is nothing I can do here. I am returning.’ Bojeong had noth-

44 “唯前日畏威而徙處，似有違斯。” KRS 25.15a.

45 “出水就陸以便民居事。此朕所喜也，今時方長育，不可因循自誤歲計。” KRS 25.13a.

46 “‘馆待日厚，感则感矣，然忽必烈大王所以遣我者，非为在島中徒哺啜也。如之何？’王无以对。” KRS 25.9b.

ing to reply.”⁴⁷

“(On the eighth day of eighth lunar month, Saridai delivered what he claimed to be an oral instruction from Qubilai:) ‘Those who sit on the island, it is your decision! Those choosing to sit there, it is your decision! Is the king happy with this? Are the ministers and generals happy with this?’”⁴⁸

Under this pressure, the Koryŏ on one side divided all its court officials into three groups to station at Kaegyŏng by turns, pretending to be preparing for return-to-the -mainland.⁴⁹ On the other side, it tried to seize the opportunity of the Wang Hŭi mission to seek for a diplomatic settlement on this issue.

The Wang Hŭi mission set out on the twenty-ninth day of the fourth lunar month of 1260, arrived at Kaiping in the sixth lunar month, and returned to Kanghwa on the seventeenth day of the eighth lunar month.⁵⁰ It brought back three edicts from the Mongols. Two of them mainly concerned ritual issues and thus are not crucial. The third one was the real achievement of this mission and it says,

“Dress of the Koryŏ will follow its tradition and shall not be changed. Only envoys from the Qahan will be sent, others shall be banned. When to return to the old capital is up to your own considerations. The troops will be withdrawn not later than the next autumn. The *daruqaci* Bolaqdai Ba’atur and others shall all be ordered to return. ...I universally cherish all under heaven, and sin-

47 “爾王之東還也，奏帝曰：臣之國即還都松京。今已踰數月，何其恬不為慮？爾等有幾頭乎？吾惟一頭，是以為恐。留欲何待，吾其還矣。”實鼎無以對。” KRS 25.17a.

48 “島子裡坐底，你識者！揀那裡坐底，你識者！王喜耶不？文武群臣亦喜耶不？” KRS 25.18a.

49 KRS 25.9b-10a.

50 YS 4.67.

cerely do things. Please appreciate my heart, and do not hesitate and fear.”⁵¹

It formally allowed the Koryŏ to postpone return-to-the-mainland, and moreover, specified many other cherishing policies that had not been proposed before. Nine days later, the aggressive Mongol general Saridai departed westwards.⁵²

From this point the new Koryŏ-Mongol relationship established a firm foothold. The Koryŏ did have expectations for this Wang Hŭi mission, just as shown by the humble letter to the Scholar Zhang requesting his help. Then, what had happened during Wang Hŭi's stay with the Mongols?

Scholar-ministers and Koryŏ-Mongol negotiations

The *KoryŏSa* tells us that in Kaiping, Wang Hŭi attended first a banquet hosted by the Central Secretariat (中書省) of the Mongols, then another banquet hosted by Qubilai who at that time said to Wang Hŭi that,

“your state has served the Great for forty years. Now there are deputies from more than eighty states attending this assembly, can you find any treated as favorably as yours?”⁵³

No more direct records can be found in extant sources. Fortunately, however, a clerk in the Central Secretariat named Wang Yun (王惲) had

51 “衣冠從本國之俗，皆不改易。行人惟朝廷所遣，（予）[餘]悉禁絕。古京之遷，遲速量力。屯戍之撤，秋以為期。元設達魯花赤字魯合（反）[歹]兒拔都魯一行人等，俱敕西還。……朕以天下為度，事在推誠。其體朕懷，毋自疑懼。” KRS 25.19a.

52 KRS 25.19b.

53 “爾國事大國四十年，今茲朝會者八十余國，汝等見其禮待之厚如爾國者乎？” KRS 25.18a-18b.

written in his work diary about other missions from Koryŏ in the next year, which allows us to explore how negotiations between Koryŏ and the Mongols were carried out in Qubilai's court.

On the tenth day of the sixth lunar month of 1261, Wang Sim (王愷), the new crown prince of Koryŏ, arrived at Kaiping to celebrate Qubilai's victory over Ariqbökö. The next day, following an order from Qubilai, a banquet was held at the Central Secretariat Office (都堂). Seven of the Mongol's ministers were in attendance, among whom five were noted Chinese Confucian scholars, namely Wang Wentong (王文統), Zhang Yi (張易), Zhang Wenqian (張文謙), Yang Guo (楊果) and Yao Shu (姚樞). The other two were Shi Tianze (史天澤), a Chinese military commander, and Qurubuq (忽魯不花), a Mongolian imperial guard (怯薛, *kesig* in Mongolian). During the banquet, they had "written talks (筆談)" respectively with the Assistant Chancellor (參政) of Koryŏ named Yi Changyong (李藏用) on the numbers of Koryŏ troops and military commanders, crop harvests, the calendar system, civil service examinations and so on. On the twelfth day, "the ministers entered [the palace] to meet [Qubilai]. The Emperor heard that negotiations went very well, so sent [Wang Sim] back bestowing an edict and a jade belt."⁵⁴

This record shows clearly that negotiations on specific issues were carried out between the Koryŏ mission and the ministers of the Mongols which consisted mainly of the Confucian scholar-ministers.⁵⁵ Qubilai would not negotiate with the mission in person, but obtained information through his ministers, especially the scholar-ministers. The elegant sentences with classical Chinese allusions in the bestowed edict were obviously written by some Confucian scholar as well.⁵⁶

54 "諸相入見，上聞燕語甚歡，遂以手詔玉帶遣還。" Wang, "Zhongtang Shiji," 3401-3.

55 Although Shi Tianze originated from the army, he was considered as one of the main supporters of the Confucian scholar-ministers. See Yang and Zhong, ed., *Wangyun Quanji Huijiao*, 2278 and 2280. About the associations between Qurubuqa and the ministers, see Wang, "Zhongtang Shiji," 3381 and 3374.

56 Wang, "Zhongtang Shiji," 3403.

In fact, there was another Koryŏ mission that arrived nearly three months earlier on the fifteenth day of the third lunar month of the same year. The reply edict for this mission was also composed by the leading scholar-minister Wang Wentong. And even some days before, a Koryŏ minister had sent a letter greeting the Central Secretariat of the Mongols. Wang Wentong had also intended to write a reply letter but had given up because of Wang Yun's advice that private connections with ministers from foreign countries was inappropriate.⁵⁷ Despite incomplete information, Qubilai probably also followed the suggestions from his scholar-ministers such as Wang Wentong for dealing with this Koryŏ mission.

Additionally, "the ministers (诸相)" were in charge of an inquiry into a dispute between Wang Sun (王淳) and one of the above mentioned Hong Pogwŏn's sons on the twenty-fifth day of the fourth lunar month of 1261.⁵⁸ Wang Sun was sent from Koryŏ to the Mongols as a hostage twenty years earlier and had married a Mongol princess. In 1258, his wife accused Hong Pogwŏn of disrespecting her husband, so Möngke put Hong Pogwŏn to death. In 1261, his son Hong Dagu (洪茶丘) appealed to Qubilai.⁵⁹ Wang Yun tells us that the scholar-ministers were appointed to conduct the inquiry.

Based on these records, it's most likely that the negotiation on the return-to-the-mainland issue in 1260 was also carried out between the Wang Hŭi mission and the Mongol ministers at the banquet hosted by the Central Secretariat. The whole process must be very similar to that of the Wang Sim mission in 1261. Although Wang Hŭi did attend a banquet hosted by Qubilai, it was impossible for him to negotiate with the Qahan directly. The mediation of the scholar-ministers in Qubilai's court were indispensable to the success of the Wang Hŭi mission.

Historians have already pointed out that the Mongol's edict delivered by Jing Jie (荆节) on the ninth day of the fourth lunar month of 1260

57 Wang, "Zhongtang Shiji," 3348.

58 Wang, "Zhongtang Shiji," 3365.

59 YS 154.3628-9.

(hereafter the Jingjie edict) was part of the corner stone for Koryŏ-Mongol relations in the next one hundred years.⁶⁰ However, a further analysis on its texts is still revealing and necessary here.

“My emperor Taizu established the foundation of the great empire, and holy and wise emperors succeeded one another. ... All the affiliated states and marquises, granted with land inheritable for their off-spring and dispersed over the range of 10,000 *li*(里), are all former strong enemies. This seen, the principles of my forefathers are very clear without need to be expressed in words. ... (I) escort the crown prince back restoring the old territory. ... The ministers in power will not be misled by runaways, and the covenant will not be wrecked by slanderous words. ... Upon arrival of this edict, those who once rebelled at home and resisted the emperor’s army, or revolted again after submission, ... will all be given amnesty. The crown prince, please be dressed, be on carriage, return to your state and assume the throne. ... My troops will not cross the border any more, for which the order has been issued and I will keep my words. Anyone who revolts and insubordinates will not just affect your king but also violate my codes, thus can be killed by anyone who follows the clear laws of mine. The Crown Prince, please be the king. Please respectfully follow my orders, be an eastern *fan* (藩, vassal) forever, and carry forward my instructions.”⁶¹

60 Cf. Chen, “Hubilie de Gaoli Zhengce yu Yuan-Li Guanxi de Zhuanzhe Dian,” 74.

61 “我太祖皇帝肇基大業，聖聖相承。……凡屬國列侯，分茅錫土、傳祚子孫者，不啻萬里，孰非向之勁敵哉。觀乎此，則祖宗之法不待言而彰彰矣。……故遣[世子]歸國，完復舊疆……無以逋逃間執政，無以飛語亂定盟。……令旨到日，已前或有首謀內亂、旅拒王師，已降附而還叛，……鹹赦除之。世子其趣裝命駕，歸國立政。……我師不復踰限矣。大號一出，予不食言。復有敢踵亂犯上者，非幹爾主，乃亂我典刑，國有常憲，人得誅之。于戲，世子其王矣，往欽哉。恭承丕訓，永為東藩，以揚我休命。” KRS 25.10a-12a.Cf. YS 208.4610-3.

Firstly, this edict claims that according to “the principles of my forefathers,” the Mongol empire had allowed many subjected vassals to be “granted with land inheritable for off-spring.” Indeed, leaders of submitted states, tribes or any other forces had always been granted titles of *noyan* of different ranks such as *Tumen* and *Mingyan* that were usually hereditary. However, these *noyans* were only administrative and military officials within the Mongol empire rather than monarchs of highly independent tributary vassals. They were directly subject to Qahans or other members of the Golden Lineage,⁶² just as the common people under their administration.⁶³ In fact, the Mongol empire before Qubilai had never recognized any bilateral relationship under the tributary pattern, neither had it accepted the existence of any *de facto* tributary vassal.⁶⁴

Secondly, the word *fan* used to refer to Koryŏ at the end of this Jingjie edict is also ambiguous. In the Mongol-Yuan period, the character *fan* was used to refer mostly to other *uluses* (people, states) of the Golden Lineage apart from the *ulus* of Qahan. It occurs 149 times in all in the *Yuan Shi* which was compiled at the beginning of the Ming dynasty based on archives, biographies and other sources produced during the Mongol-Yuan period. Among them, 99 times refer to non-Qahan *uluses* of the Golden Lineage, and only 14 times refer to non-golden-lineage vassals. An often-used compound word *Zong fan* (宗藩, suzerain-vassal or vassal of suzerain) occurs 10 times in the *Yuan Shi*, all meaning non-Qahan *uluses* of the Golden Lineage. Koryŏ was actually the first non-golden-

62 The Golden Lineage (*altan uruq*) was the lineage of Cingis Qan, as well as his brothers in some contexts, and their descendants. “Membership in this lineage, or association with it, conferred rights to enjoy the profits of Mongol empire as a co-owner.” Paul D. Buell, *Historical Dictionary of the Mongol World Empire* (Lanham and Oxford: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2003), 105.

63 Yao Dali, *Meng-Yuan Zhidu yu Zhengzhi Wenhua*, 31 and 37.

64 Thomas Allsen, “The Rise of the Mongolian Empire and Mongolian Rule in North China,” in *The Cambridge History of China: Alien Regimes and Border States, 907-1368*, ed. Herbert Franke and Denis Twitchett (N.Y.: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 347-8.

lineage vassal to be called a *fan* and the edict discussed here was exactly the first case. From the perspective of the tradition of the Mongols, to call Koryŏ a *fan* and promise it hereditary kingship and land was extremely abnormal. Although the edict claims to follow “the principles of my forefathers”, its real ideological basis was still the tributary system familiar to the scholar-ministers.⁶⁵

According to the *KoryŏSa*, this edict was a response to the suspicion that some “unforeseen events (變故)” might have happened since Wang Chŏn had lingered on at Sŏgyŏng for quite a long time on his way back to Kanghwa island.⁶⁶ So, it on one side reaffirmed the promise of “restoring the old territory” and amnesty for all. On the other side it threatened that anyone violating “my codes” in the future would be destroyed without mercy. This was an endorsement for both Wang Chŏn and the scholar-ministers supportive of gambling on Wang Chŏn. Certainly, Qubilai would not compose this edict himself but appoint someone from his scholar-ministers instead. So again, this edict should be understood as an embodiment of policies elaborated by the scholar-ministers rather than Qubilai’s own preference.

It’s very likely that Koryŏ had understood the hidden story behind this edict. So, while the petition to Qubilai flattered this Qahan as the “most benevolent (至仁),”⁶⁷ the Letter to Scholar Zhang disjunctively questioned that “would there be such edicts of great virtue of cherishing life without your excellency’s sincere facilitation and ingenious induction.”⁶⁸ In this context, it is not surprising that Wang Chŏn would write a letter to Scholar Zhang requesting his assistance.

Hao Jing, who had written a poem on the Wang Chŏn mission at Yan-

65 Considering the origin of the Confucian scholars in Qubilai’s court, the history of the Jurchen Jin-Koryŏ relationship was probably the actual specific frame of reference for them. Cf. JS 135.2885. JS 125.2714.

66 KRS 25.12a.

67 KRS 25.15a and 16a.

68 “宣諭如此需以好生之德者，豈閣下推誠佐理導宣恩宥之所致也。”Kim, “Yŏ Chang Haksa Sŏ,” 372.

jing in 1259, was sent for negotiation with the Song on the tenth day of the fourth lunar month of 1260.⁶⁹ Because the Song kept putting off receiving him, Hao Jing wrote a memorial to the Song government which says,

“[Our] court has actually sent two envoys, one to Koryŏ, the other to the Song. Even before our envoy has crossed the border, Koryŏ in response has sent two envoys, one celebrating [our Lord’s] enthronement, the other asking for restoring territory. Our Lord commended them and agreed. ... I have left the Lord’s Carriage for more than three months, and have been questioned for achieving nothing. In my humble opinion, if we lose this chance, border conflicts will occur again, and there will be endless war.”⁷⁰

This letter was written in the beginning of the seventh lunar month when Hao Jing had already arrived at the border of the Song. But he still kept following Koryŏ affairs and was well informed about the Wang Hǔ mission. Hao Jing expressed his worry about the outlook of Mongol-Song relations by comparing the situation with the Song and Koryŏ. Nevertheless, the comparison itself also shows his gratification in the achievements of their policies toward Koryŏ.

Epilogue

As pointed out in the Introduction, the Mongol’s new policies toward

69 YS 4.65.

70 “朝廷初發二使，一入高麗、一入宋國。使高麗者未入其境，而使者兩輦繼至，項背相望，一賀登寶位、一請復故疆。主上嘉之而許其請。……僕等自離輦轂，幾踰三月，未見次第，已被責問。區區之心，以為此機一失，邊釁復動，兵連禍結，何時而已？” Hao Jing (郝經), “Suzhou Zai-yu Sansheng Shumiyuan Shu (宿州再與三省樞密院書, The Second Memorial Written in Suzhou to the Three Departments and the Bureau of Military Affairs),” in *Hao Wenzhong-gong Lingchuan Wenji*, 817-8.

Koryŏ cannot be attributed to the personal attitude of Qubilai. The discussions above have proved that the transition of Mongol-Koryŏ relations was not originally an intention of Qubilai, neither did it seem to be actively promoted by the Qahan himself. The primary driving force for a new pattern of abilateral relationship was the interactions between the scholar-ministers in Qubilai's court and the Koryŏ missions.

There is still another question: how in the end would Qubilai have understood the status of the so-called eastern *fan* of Koryŏ? Two passages of Khublai's words are revealing. The first was said to Wang Hŭi on the banquet in 1260 comparing Koryŏ with the other "more than eighty states."⁷¹ The second was said to the Koryŏ king in 1270 comparing him with the *Iduq* of the Uyghurs and the Arslan Khan of the Karluks.

"Because you gave allegiance [to us] late, [in this assembly you] are arranged below the kings [of the Golden Lineage]. At the Cingis Qan's time, the *Iduq* gave allegiance early, so was arranged above the kings; the Arslan Khan gave allegiance late, so was arranged below. You should understand this."⁷²

It is quite clear that in Qubilai's opinion, his favor to Koryŏ didn't suggest a new framework for the interstate order, but rather a special treatment individually conferred within the tradition of the Mongol empire since Cingis Qan. In fact, Qubilai was not completely satisfied with the new policies. In the first lunar month of 1268, Qubilai expressed his dissatisfaction in person to a Koryŏ envoy,⁷³ and then issued the following edict:

"Our troops have been withdrawn as you had asked for. You

71 KRS 25.18b.

72 "汝內附在後，故班諸王下。我太祖時亦都護先附，即令齒諸王上，阿思蘭後附，故班其下。卿宜知之。" YS 7.128.

73 KRS 26.13a-14a.

promised to return-to-the-mainland in three years, but have failed to keep your words. It is the rule of Cingis Qan that all affiliated states must send hostage-princes, supply troops, provide provisions, establish *jams*, submit household registers, and accept *daruqaci*. I have had you notified clearly, but you have delayed until now without any commitment. ... So, I am inquiring about this.”⁷⁴

In contrast to the tortuous and ambiguous texts of the Jinejie edict, this berating one was straightforward and really “the principles of my forefathers.” It is noteworthy that the Jingjie edict neither confirmed nor exempted the Six Obligations but skirted around this issue. If this later edict truly expressed Qubilai’s ideas, then what he had expected for this eastern *fan* should be far more than that of a ritual vassal under the tributary system. And reaffirmation from the Mongol side of the Six Obligations should be understood as an adherence to the Mongol tradition rather than any result of mutable character or preference of Qubilai.

In conclusion, Koryō-Mongol relations transitioned around 1260 in a multi-dimensional political network made up of diverse actors including Qubilai, his scholar-ministers, Koryō, and also other forces that have not been discussed in detail in this article. Qubilai’s consent to a settlement by negotiation was a precondition for the transition, while Koryō and the scholar-ministers in Qubilai’s court brought elements of the tributary system into the new Koryō-Mongol relationship. However, Qubilai himself still regarded Koryō as a subject favorably treated in the framework of his forefathers. Under a kind of ambiguity, the new elements had altered the Mongol tradition, but never replaced it. This further laid down at least part of the foundation for a relatively high degree of independence of Koryō under the Yuan empire.⁷⁵

74 “向請撤兵，則已撤之矣。三年當去水就陸，而前言無征也。又太祖法制，凡內屬之國，納質、助軍、輸糧、設驛、編戶籍、置長官。已嘗明諭之，而稽延至今，終無成言。……故以問之。”YS 208.4613-4614. Cf. KRS26.14b-15b.

75 Cf. Chen, “Hubilie de Gaoli Zhengce yu Yuan-Li Guanxi de Zhuanzhe Dian,” 77

Due to conflicts and adjustments between different cultural traditions of and cognitions on inter-state/regime orders, it is very difficult to define the status of Koryŏ under the Mongol-Yuan empire. Historians have proposed a variety of views such as tributary state (Chogongguk)⁷⁶, appanage (投下領)⁷⁷, affiliated state (Sokkuk)⁷⁸ and military ally.⁷⁹ This paper doesn't intend to present a new concept, but only to underline the multi-layered and dynamic nature of the Mongol-Koryŏ relationship. It is inappropriate to regard it as either merely a return of the tributary system or a pure manifestation of general Mongol rulership. As David Robinson points out, it is vitally important to view Koryŏ within the context of both its local history and as part of a greater empire.⁸⁰ Morihira recognizes that at least part of the ruling elites of Koryŏ did acknowledge the Yuan as an orthodox dynasty of the Central Kingdom (中國). However, he defines it as, “the matter of cognition (認識上の問題)” which “should be strictly distinguished (厳密に区別すべき)” from “the matter of fact (本質上の問題)”, namely the actual rulership of the Mongols over Koryŏ.⁸¹

and 80.

76 Yi, “Koryŏ-Monggol Kwangye yesŏ Poinŭn Ch'aegbong-Chogong Kwangye Yoso ŭi T'amsaek,” 53-91.

77 Morihira Masahiko, *Mongoru Haken-ka no Kōrai: Teikoku Chitsujo to Ōoku no Taiō (Koryŏ under the Mongol Hegemony: Imperial Order and the Correspondence of the Kingdom)* (Nagoya: Nagoya University Press, 2013), 60-104.

78 Kim Hodong, *Monggol Cheguk kwa Koryŏ: K'ubillai Chŏnggwŏn ŭi T'ansaeng kwa Koryŏ ŭi Chŏngch'ijŏk Wisang (Mongol Empire and Koryŏ: Birth of Kubilai Regime and the Political Position of Koryŏ)* (Seoul: Seoul University Press, 2007), 92-101.

79 Ko Myŏngsu, “Monggol-Koryŏ Kunsu Tongmaeng Kwangye: Yangguk Kwangye rūl Chomaghanŭn Hana ŭi Kwanjŏm (The Military Alliance of Mongol and Koryŏ: a View on Bilateral Relations),” *Yŏgsa wa Tamron* 88 (October 2018): 195-230.

80 David Robinson, *Empire's Twilight: Northeast Asia Under the Mongols* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2009), 275-8.

81 Morihira, *Mongoru Haken-ka no Kōrai: Teikoku Chitsujo to Ōoku no Taiō*, 445.

However, from the discussions above in this paper, we could say that the Koryŏ ruling group and the scholar-ministers in Yuan did not submissively accept and whitewash all the decisions made by the Mongol Qahan, but actively affected the pattern of the Mongol-Koryŏ relationship from the very beginning under, at least partially, the framework of the tributary system.⁸² Cognition and fact, though they may be epistemologically separate, are interrelated and interacted with each other in history.

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Chronology

Year	Lunar Month	Lunar Day	Events
1258	12	29	The Pak Hũisil mission departed from Kanghai.
1259	4	21	The Wang Chỗn mission departed from Kanghai.
	7	21	Mỗngke died in Sichuan.
	leap 11	ca. 10	Wang Chỗn met Qubilai at Bianliang.
1260	2	?	Wang Chỗn left Yanjing.
	3	20	The Wang Chỗn mission returned to Kanghai.
		24	Qubilai ascended the throne at Kaiping.
		28	Conversation between Saridai and Wang Chỗn.
	4	9	Jing Jie delivered an edict from the Mongol.
		10	Hao Jing was sent for negotiation with the Song.
		24	Kitadai delivered an edict from the Mongol.
		29	The Wang Hũi mission departed from Kanghai.
	6	?	The Wang Hũi mission arrived at Kaiping.
		14	Conversation between Saridai and Kim Pojỗng
	7	?	Hao Jing wrote a memorial to the Song, mentioning two envoys from the Koryỗ.
	8	8	Saridai delivered an alleged oral instruction from Qubilai.
		17	The Wang Hũi mission returned to Kanghai.
1261	3	15	Wang Wentong was appointed to compose a reply letter to some Koryỗ mission.
	6	10	The Wang Sim mission arrived at Kaiping.

Abbreviations and Glossary

- KRS 高麗史 *KoryŏSa* (Chosŏn-printed edition 奎章閣藏朝鮮刊本)
 JS 金史 *Jin Shi* (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju 中華書局, 1975)
 YS 元史 *Yuan Shi* (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju 中華書局, 1976)

Bianliang	汴梁	Kaiping	開平
Ch'oe Ŭi	崔瑄	Kim Ku	金垵
<i>darugaci</i>	達魯花赤	Liupan	六盤
Ezhou	鄂州	Saridai	束里大
<i>fan</i>	藩	Sŏgyŏng	西京
Kaegyŏng	開京	Wang Hŭi	王僖
Kanghwa	江華	Wang Chŏn	王儼
Kojong	高宗	Wang Sim	王愷
Hao Jing	郝經	Wang Sun	王淳
Hong Pogwŏn	洪福源	Wang Wentong	王文統
<i>Jam</i>	站	Wang Yun	王惲
Jing Jie	荊節	Wŏnjong	元宗
Jingzhao	京兆	Yanjing	燕京

<Abstract>

Transition under Ambiguity: Koryŏ-Mongol Relations around 1260

Chunyuan Li

A Koryŏ mission led by Wang Chŏn visited the Mongol in 1259 and had intense contacts with pro-Qubilai forces. Especially the Confucian scholars in North China, and therefore turned to Qubilai in the political turmoil. With the mediation of the scholar-ministers in Qubilai's court, another Koryŏ mission led by Wang Hŭi in 1260 succeeded in seeking an allowance for postponement of the Koryŏ court's return to the mainland (出陸). An edict composed by some scholar-minister of the Mongols in 1260 used the word *fan* (藩) to refer to the Koryŏ and defined it as a vassal under the tributary system. But Qubilai himself still regarded the Koryŏ as submitted following the tradition of the Mongols. Under a kind of ambiguity, the Koryŏ missions and the scholar-ministers of the Mongol together had brought new elements into the Koryŏ-Mongol relationship and altered the mongol tradition.

Keywords: Kim Ku, scholar-ministers, tributary system, six obligations

〈국문초록〉

모호한 전환점: 1260년 전후의 고려-몽골 관계

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1259년 몽골을 방문했던 고려 왕전(王僊) 사절단은 화북(華北)지역을 지나갔을 때 친 쿠빌라이 세력, 특히 그중의 유학자들과 긴밀하게 접촉했기 때문에 그 이후 정치적 혼란 속에서 쿠빌라이를 지지했다. 쿠빌라이 측근 유학자를 매개로 1260년 고려 왕희(王僖) 사절단은 쿠빌라이 정권으로부터 “출륙”(出陸)의 연기를 받아내는 데 성공하였다. 1260년 쿠빌라이 정권은 한 조서에서 한자 “藩”으로 고려를 지칭하고 조공 체계의 문화배경 속에서 고려의 지위를 확정하였다. 그러나 쿠빌라이 본인은 여전히 몽골 전통에 따라 고려의 역할을 설정하였다. 고려 사절단과 몽골 정권의 유학자들은 정치개념의 애매모호함을 활용해서 조공체제의 요소를 여몽관계에 주입시키면서 몽골제국의 외교전통을 크게 전환시켰다.

주제어: 김구, 유신(儒臣), 조공체제, 육사(六事)